

# Xetra

A collection of insights from across the business and building materials industry, brought to you by **Artex Ltd, a Saint-Gobain company**.



Supply and sustainability challenges?



**REAL LIFE –**  
Awareness is not enough

Issue No.1

[www.artexltd.com](http://www.artexltd.com)

# A note from **Jason Smith,** Managing Director, Artex Ltd.

Welcome to the first issue of Xetra.

Xetra will be a bi-annual communication from Artex to share insight, opinion and research with our customers and the market. Following feedback received in our customer satisfaction survey earlier this year we wanted to find a way to engage with our customers. Xetra will share and explore some of the expertise, insight and research on some of the prevalent issues we as an industry or individuals are all experiencing.

In this inaugural issue you'll find articles on sustainability, supply chain management, the Artex journey and mental health and moving forward we will continue to share information and understanding that you will find either useful or interesting for yourself or your organisation.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for being here. We are so happy to have you in the Artex

circle. Moving forward Artex aspires to go beyond being more than 'just' a supplier. We want to build long lasting partnerships that stand the test of time. Our customers have been supremely loyal and supportive during very turbulent times and we are very appreciative. I think that deserves a special mention.

It's no secret that the industry has suffered terribly over the past couple of years and yes our industry can be stubborn at times, some might even say reluctant to change. But we want to help be a part of the change, drive the evolution and empower our customers through more significant support and collaboration. As the saying goes, sometimes it seems that it never rains but pours; two years of Coronavirus and now with the financial crisis and the rising cost of living. But despite all of this, there is still so much we can achieve. As an



industry there are clear opportunities in sustainability, diversity and inclusion, operational resilience and of course technological innovation. Technology within the construction industry is predicted to improve productivity rates by as much as 60% going into 2023, now that's something we could all benefit from!

But there are still so many questions to ask ourselves: like, how is your business looking at sustainability considering the new framework for environmental protection and the building safety bill? Does your business have a net zero target?

With the ever-increasing demand for more proof that your business is looking at diversity and inclusion, what strategy do you have to establish a positive work environment where everyone feels valued, and people are treated as individuals according to their needs?

There is no doubt that the increasing cost of living combined with industrial action and pressure on supply chains is an emerging risk for us all. Supply chain management is fast becoming a geopolitical, social and economic topic worthy of discussion amongst all, especially with individual consumers more aware of supply chain problems than ever before. How does your business manage supply chain risk?

But we can turn these questions into opportunity to enable us to survive and even thrive through the challenging upcoming years, and Artex is proud to be on that journey with you.

**We hope that you enjoy the first issue and we look forward to receiving your feedback.**

**Thanks very much, Jason**

# Artex Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022

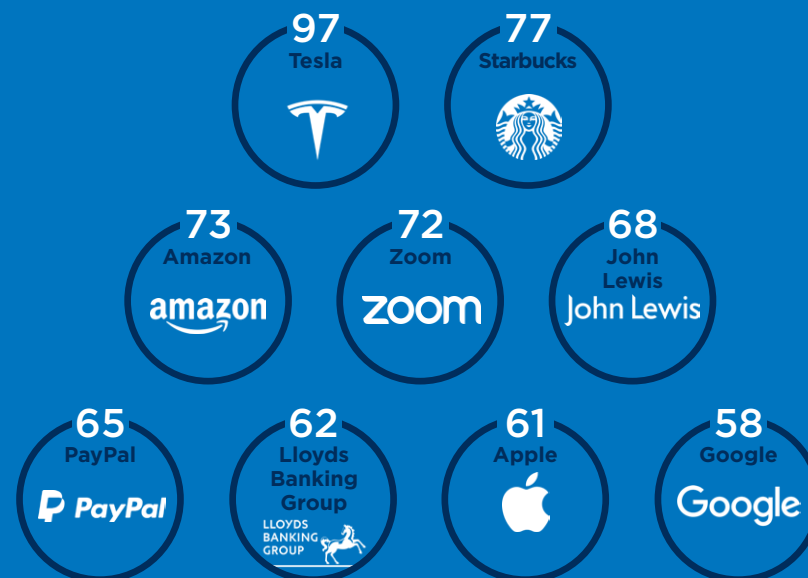
The past couple of years and the events within them have seen customer service take a back seat at many companies. We have all seen images of our airports full of enraged passengers and long lines at petrol stations. Most are focused on cost optimisation or operational augmentation in order to sustain through some of the hardest commercial times in our lifetime.

All customers are currently experiencing the same frustrations in one way or another. Lack of resource, increased costs, long delivery times. These disruptions have all led to operational problems and have had a massive impact on customer satisfaction. But customer care and operational excellence don't have to sit as silos.

**At Artex we measure customer satisfaction and loyalty and focus on using that data to improve our customer experiences.**

We recently conducted our Customer Satisfaction survey and with over 60% of customers responding to the survey we achieved an amazing score of 63. The NPS is a globally recognised and universally used, standardised methodology for benchmarking and trend analysing customer and employee engagement within a brand or organisation.

NPS Scores from 2022 looked like this:



## Artex Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022



“ Our NPS score is made up of a lot of things, what happens in the warehouse, on the road, in the office and through every interaction we have with our customers. Day-to-day it's difficult to pinpoint any particular success, issue or incident or say that's there's any one reason for the score Artex achieved. It's an accumulation of many things and it's the Artex team that really put the work in to make it all happen.

Our organisation and brand health are always evolving and optimising. Conducting the satisfaction survey enables us to measure our impact for both recognition of success but also identifying improvement areas. It's positive that our customers are generally having a positive experience and would advocate for others to become Artex customers. It's great to hear that our customers are happy.

Jason Smith  
Artex Managing Director

”

# 95%

OF OUR  
CUSTOMERS  
RATED OUR  
SERVICE AS

# 8/10

OR ABOVE



\*July 2022 - based on average score calculated from a survey of 294 customers.

# 9/10

OUR  
AVERAGE  
PRODUCT  
RATING



\*July 2022 - based on average score calculated from a survey of 294 customers.

# 9/10

OUR  
AVERAGE  
SERVICE  
RATING



\*July 2022 - based on average score calculated from a survey of 294 customers.





# The world is changing,

but there are opportunities for construction

Whether health, technology, the environment, politics or the economy, many parts of life and business are changing at a quick pace. As a key industry, construction has an essential role to play in the world around us, so it's important to keep up with the ever-evolving nature of living and working.

Although the last couple of years have brought several challenges, there are new opportunities as we move forward. Here, we reflect on some of the key events and trends that have impacted the industry, as well as the reasons to be optimistic.

## Construction and the Covid-19 catalyst

The Covid-19 pandemic affected most sectors. In construction, many businesses were forced to shut for a period and then change the way they operated to accommodate social distancing and other safety concerns. According to a report from September 2020, the biggest factors that impacted construction businesses during this time included travel and transport restrictions (42.2%), general demand for services (41.54%) and increases in operating costs (40.26%).

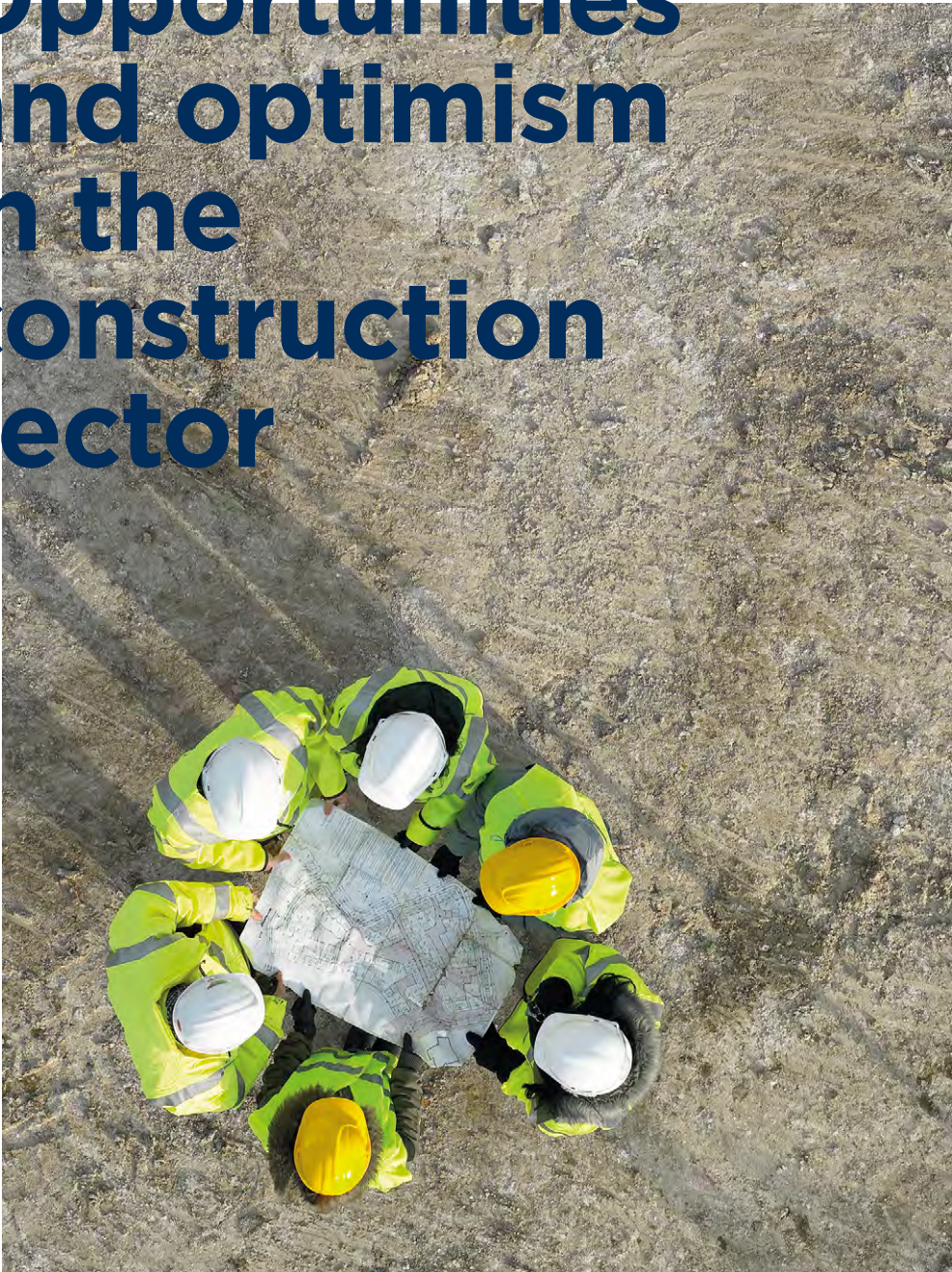
Although the first few months of the pandemic were very uncertain, the industry did benefit from a home improvement boom, with demand increasing in the home improvements sector by 50% as people looked to modify and improve their properties for a new way of living and working.

Yet despite demand in some cases being high, rising material costs, material shortages, supply chain

issues and skills shortages have continued to cause issues and delays. The pandemic teamed with Brexit and followed by the war in Ukraine have been the perfect formula for a concoction of challenges that are still taking their toll.

With rising prices, interest rates, and inflation, there may still be difficulties and uncertainties going into 2023. The August 2022 S&P Global/CIPS construction purchasing managers' index (PMI) showed the UK construction industry contracted for the first time in 18 months, with July's score down to 48.9 compared to June's 52.6. Anything above 50 marks a growth. The drop in housing and civil engineering activity was put down to rising inflation, lower consumer confidence, and higher interest rates. However, the report also noted that commodity prices, particularly for metals and timber, have eased.

# Opportunities and optimism in the construction sector



For those of us who have been in business for a number of years, we know all too well the highs and lows of the economic cycle. As an industry, it's important that we continue to learn, adapt and innovate to remain agile and open to new and changing opportunities as they arise.

In the UK, at the time of writing we've already gone through three prime ministers under the conservative government and there are certainly going to be more changes in everything from taxes and public spending to initiatives and incentives to support different industries and careers.

As well as keeping an eye on the financial implications of any future changes, the construction industry is likely to be watching out for opportunities around housebuilding and construction projects, more progress made towards net-zero and sustainability initiatives, support around job creation and training, and also technology and innovation as we further move towards the digitisation of the industry and embrace more modern methods of construction.

And in general there are opportunities and exciting developments in the

industry both in the UK and across Europe. For example, the European Commission is progressing plans as part of its Renovation Wave Strategy, which aims to double renovation rates in the next 10 years and could lead to 35 million buildings being renovated and 160,000 additional green jobs created.

Closer to home, the latest Glenigan UK Construction Industry Forecast 2022-24 acknowledges that although the coming months may impact the industry, construction activity across the private housing sector remains resilient with a 14% increase expected in 2023.

When it comes to embracing technology, it's positive news too. The NBS Digital Construction Report shows that most businesses are on the journey towards digital transformation, with only 8% saying they haven't started. The majority (69%) said the Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated the industry's adoption of digital technologies. And the benefits are clear; 80% agreed that digital is helping to create better buildings and places, 75% said it's having a positive impact on environmental sustainability, and 74% agree it's helping to create a safer built environment.

# How Artex is supporting our customers and the construction industry

As part of the Saint-Gobain group, at Artex we're committed to 'making the world a better home'. To achieve our purpose of being a sustainable supplier of building materials, we work hard to reduce the environmental impact of the supply chain by lowering our CO2 emissions and supplying products that make buildings better. As well as understanding our role in avoiding climate change and supporting the industry in our shared goal of becoming more sustainable, we're also committed to supporting and developing our communities and people.

Because we're always listening and engaging directly with our customers, we're able to identify where we offer value and where we can help more. With a large shift towards digital sales platforms post pandemic, we've developed our Gyproc Express model, providing our customers with access to our dropship capability, which is just one of the new added value services we offer.

We're also passionate about developing our people and giving them great opportunities to develop their careers through learning and development. Part of this includes

upskilling employees through apprenticeships to retain and nurture talent, which in turn benefits the individual, business and industry as a whole. We further support our people through flexible and agile working and have trained mental health first aiders who support their peers as and when required.

Recently we've transformed around a fifth of our site into a thriving biodiversity area that not only supports local wildlife, but benefits colleagues' wellbeing as they're able to use the space for walks and rest during the day.



## OUR JOURNEY TO A GREENER FUTURE

We're committed to further decarbonising our site and introducing sustainable initiatives, as well as achieving net-zero carbon by 2050 across our whole business.

### Hydrotreated vegetable oil lorries

We're transitioning our HGV fleet to run on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) by the end of 2023. HVO is a biofuel that originates from vegetable oils and is set to reduce CO2 emissions by 90% compared to diesel. HVO also produces much cleaner emissions with fewer nitrous oxides, meaning improved air quality for our colleagues, customers and local community.

### Moving to more eco-friendly packaging solutions

We're collaborating with our bag, film and tub manufacturers to reduce packaging wherever possible, switch to more recyclable solutions like paper and cardboard, and use at least 30% recycled plastic across primary, secondary and transport packaging. We're also improving the recycling and safe disposal information on our plastic packaging labels to make sure plastics that can be recycled are, and in a safe way. Clearer recycling information on pack informs users of how to dispose of product residues and recycle packaging safely, and our new eco stamp highlights where packaging has been made from recycled content.

### Biomass heating system

2022 saw the installation of our biomass heating system which runs off wooden pellets to heat our warehouse, offices and hot water.

The renewable heating system is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 150 tonnes per year through decommission and removal of our previous diesel heating system and gas boilers.

### Reduced plastic on site

As well as various recycling initiatives on site, we've replaced the plastic air packs in our Gyproc Express boxes with shredded cardboard produced from recycled cardboard on site. We've also rolled out sustainable PPE for our colleagues which is made from recycled plastic and are exploring ways to reduce plastic in our POS and merchandise.

### Sustainability Action Group

Our sustainability initiatives are driven directly by our colleagues through our Sustainability Action Group. Including colleagues across all areas of our business, the group manages our annual sustainability budget, gathering ideas and suggestions from their peers and putting these into action. So far the group have introduced Sustainability Action Days where colleagues can take a day of paid leave to volunteer on a sustainable project in their local community, they've organised the installation of animal nesting boxes in our biodiversity area, and have built strong partnerships with our local community.



### Biodiversity area

3.2 acres of our distribution site in Ruddington is dedicated to biodiversity, providing a natural habitat for local wildlife. We've planted over 4100 bulbs, 190 shrubs and 445 trees and continue to plant each year to sustain the habitat. Not only is it great for wildlife, our colleagues can also access this area to take a walk along the footpaths, have outdoor meetings or enjoy lunch on the picnic benches.



Recycled Packaging



Biomass



Gyproc Express  
recycling



HVO trucks



Sustainability  
group and nest  
boxes



## The journey continues...

The world remains an uncertain place, but at Artex we know that by working closely with our people, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders we can all continue to improve how we do things.

**Rob Stewart, Commercial Director at Artex,** said: “We’re focused on our people and have created an environment of trust, empowerment and collaboration. This has been vital in supporting our teams and customers over the last 24 months and will remain important as we navigate any future political and economic challenges. We continue to invest in people through job creation and by developing our existing team with training and development, as well as apprenticeships.

“Our way of working also enables us to remain agile and respond effectively to our customers’ needs. We listen and adapt to the evolving requirements of our customers and the industry at both service and product levels, allowing our customers to access the products they need while managing stock levels, improving cash flow and reducing working capital.

“Putting people first – both our employees and customers – has been an essential part of our journey so far and it will continue to be our number one priority as we continue working hard to improve our operations and offerings.”

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**Get in touch to place an order**

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## Gyproc EasiFiller Light



Ultra lightweight filler for deep holes and cracks

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Gyproc EasiPatch Plasterboard Patches are the perfect partner for the Gyproc EasiFiller range

# Get in touch to place an order





# Relieving Global Supply Chain Pain

By Stacey O'Connor,  
Head of Marketing, Artex Ltd

High inflation and rising interest rates are causing a nasty mess in the property markets right now, aren't they? My cousin rents a flat in London and his landlord has decided to increase the rent – just as food and energy prices have shot through the roof.

At first, my cousin was furious. But then he did some research. It turned out the landlord's 5% rent increase was less than the market average of 9%. It also turned out that the new

rent even after the increase would still be less than the average price in the area for a flat of the same size. Finally, it turned out that the landlord was unlucky enough to be renegotiating his mortgage. On his new fixed rate, the landlord's monthly mortgage payments would be going up by more than 20%.

In other words, set against all the turmoil in the property markets, the landlord's rent increase was actually a good deal – the best available.

## Why tell you all this?

Because we're seeing these same "perfect storm" conditions in the construction RMI sector, and prices are going up for all of us. I wanted to talk through the issues a little to help put your mind at rest that – like my cousin's landlord – we're doing everything we can to offer you the best possible deal even though we have to raise prices.

## Material shortages are driving up prices

As you may know already, construction and manufacturing have experienced a particularly troubled post-pandemic "recovery". There are plenty in the industry saying that even now, three years after the start of the pandemic, we've still not managed to recover fully.

We're facing continual supply chain shortages, increasing tariffs, labour shortages, exchange rate challenges – you name it. It's no wonder the sector is hurting so badly. Put simply,

global material shortages are driving up prices at rates we haven't seen in the industry for decades.

In a survey by McKinsey of senior supply-chain executives, 93% of respondents intended to address the function of their current supply chains. They intended to do this by monitoring the effect on the types and amounts of goods available and how quickly they reach shop shelves, alongside a planned increase in the emergency supply of critical products and the dual sourcing of raw materials.

The number of CEOs citing supply chain disruptions as one of their biggest challenges rose 36% in 2022, per IBM's latest CEO survey. This shortage of materials and goods has had a huge global impact. According to the Institute of Supply Management (ISM), about 75% of the companies surveyed recently reported supply chain disruptions, 80% expected some disruptions shortly, and 62% reported delays in receiving goods.

# The knock-on effect of supply chain uncertainty

Unfortunately, it's not easy to plan for supply chain uncertainty. Take Christmas shopping as an example. Products intended for sale during the Christmas period are usually made and shipped months in advance.

The current uncertainty on material supply is having a knock-on effect on companies' ability to forecast supply, leading to production decisions being made that will likely result in product unavailability and customer disappointment.

Once supply is difficult to forecast, that also has an impact on demand. If customers are aware of shortages, they will change demand accordingly. Now planners have to contend with forecasting shifting demand and supply at the same time. It is inevitable that some mistakes will slip through, especially as many systems are not set up to be flexible enough at such short notice.

Globally, the picture is a real mess, in some cases storing up serious potential problems for the next few years.

Research from Germany's Chambers of Industry and Commerce shows that 16% of its companies expect to either scale back production or partially discontinue business operations in the next 12 months due to energy shortages and possible recession.

In South-Western China, car assembly plants and electronics factories have already closed due to a lack of power. In Norway, fertiliser production has reduced significantly, which is going to affect food supply chains throughout Europe and the wider world. In fact, because Ukraine and Russia are two of the largest suppliers of the chemicals used to make fertilisers, a global fertiliser shortage is developing that will severely limit agricultural output in many countries.

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) said in June that inflation would likely persist at a lower level across most material categories for a few months, warning that inflation and the cost-of-living crisis will notably affect SME builders.

## Upgrading the Artex supply chain

With demand softening due to the increased cost of living, it's more important than ever for organisations to upgrade their supply chain capabilities. At Artex, we have invested significantly into our supply chain since the start of the pandemic. This is to enable us to review and update our supply chain continuously to adapt to these fast-changing conditions. In particular, we have invested in a new warehouse management system to help future-proof our operations. After all, the most important aspect of our supply chain is to ensure that you, our clients and customers, have access to the widest range of products possible, despite global shortages.

"At Artex, we're working hard as a business to ensure we have the

infrastructure and processes to identify our potential vulnerabilities and manoeuvre around them. We do our best not to get trapped in ongoing cycles of delays and out-of-stock issues, and this will impact our customer relationships," says **Artex Managing Director, Jason Smith**.

"We are an agile, people and planet-focused business. We are planning and executing better than before, have flexible and adaptable risk management strategies, and have diversified our suppliers," he adds, saying:

"Our new warehouse management system now gives us more visibility with real-time information so we can react more quickly and effectively to changing conditions for the benefit of all our customers in the months and years ahead."

## What can you do to reduce your supply chain pain?

From our experience, the best things you can do are:

- Prepare
- Plan
- Research

If you're not sure you're getting the best deal, research the market and find out. Can you get the same availability as from your current supplier?

Can you get products for the same quality at a similar or better price?

Review the flexibility of your product supply, contact your suppliers to see if you can negotiate bulk deals or payment plans, and satisfy yourself that you're in the best position you can be to help ride out the economic uncertainty ahead. We're also here to help if you need us.

# Awareness just isn't enough

Candice Russell, Regional Account Manager for Artex talks about her own mental health journey and how she now uses her own experience to help others...



“

Oh you're one of those people that strangers tell their life story to whilst waiting for a bus!

”

This is something I have been told a million times! When I was a little girl, I would chat away to other kids or grown-ups just for the sake of it. Being an empath, I'm quite good at picking up on other peoples 'vibes' and can usually tell when someone isn't quite right. People trust me and open up to me, I like to think that I am good at listening and giving good advice.

**So I must be great at telling people how I'm feeling? I'd never let things build up to the point where I felt like I couldn't breathe?**

**Wrong.**

Six years ago I experienced a complete mental, emotional and physical breakdown. I hadn't been feeling quite 'right' for a while, it started with not being able to sleep. Soon, I was crying in the car on the way to and from work. Eventually I was having panic attacks so bad that I actually thought I was dying.

I have experienced depression before but this was different. This was a constant feeling of dread; I was having suicidal thoughts. I barely held things together throughout the day and by the time I got home to my young family, I was too exhausted to even speak let alone maintain some kind of routine for them.

This went on for months before I finally went to the GP who prescribed me medication and told me to have a hot bath or a nice walk when I felt stressed. I didn't feel like I could talk to anyone, they would think I was over-reacting. I reluctantly told my manager that I was 'on tablets' when he found me in tears in my car one lunchtime. Two weeks later I had a panic attack so severe that I almost passed out whilst I was driving home, I went straight to the GP and begged her to help me. I was signed off work and I remember the fear of letting everyone down kept me awake all night. I was off for a total of eight weeks and thankfully in that time I received some incredible counselling through work, and I was really supported by my colleagues.

All I kept hearing though was “why didn’t you tell us how bad things were” I wish I had known that there was support out there, I wish I had spoken up sooner.

This is what led me to become a Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) in the workplace – I want to make sure that nobody ever feels like they are alone.

Around four years ago I was approached by our Managing Director to be a MHFA for Artex, at the time we had a really great team of standard first aiders, but no support for those who were struggling with their mental health. I am very open with people and speak frequently about my experiences to break the stigma and discrimination that is still around mental health.

I trained through St John Ambulance and now have access to a huge amount of resources and I have been able to utilise Peer Support as a Mental Health First Aider. The training has equipped me with the tools needed to support someone and how to approach them with care.

Everything is 100% confidential and people can trust me, they appreciate that I understand what they may be going through. I have provided everyone in the business with my contact details and encourage people to reach out, talk to me if they are concerned about a colleague/friend with no judgement.

Having this welfare support in the business has been invaluable and we are now in the process of training an extra three MHFAs, taking the total to five which is incredible for such a small company.

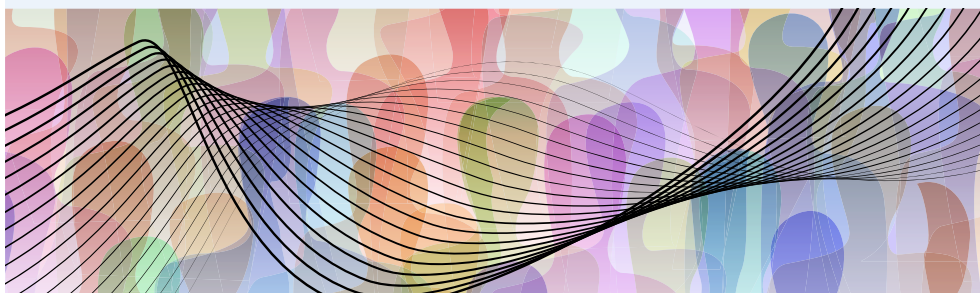
We talk a lot about being kind to each other – it’s now time that we are also kind to ourselves.

Candice Russell  
Mental Health First Aider



# How to improve diversity and inclusion in your business

A practical guide...



By Stacey O'Connor,  
Head of Marketing, Artex Ltd

Diversity and inclusion – also known by the initials D&I, or DEI – have become an important topic in today's workplace. Yet it can be difficult to create a diversity or inclusion strategy while also prioritising sales and business growth – especially during uncertain economic times.

That's why this blog aims to clarify why D&I is a positive thing for businesses in our industry. It also explores some of the practical steps we've taken with our D&I at Artex to help you come up with ideas that might work for you.

## Why is D&I important?

It makes sense firstly to clarify what 'diversity and inclusion' is. In brief, the term commonly refers to companies and public sector organisations becoming more responsive to the needs of diverse customers and recruiting a more diverse workforce. Inclusion usually refers to efforts to make workplaces more welcoming for diverse employees by ensuring they feel valued and are given the same opportunities for personal development and promotion as anyone else.

Our industry often struggles with a perception that we lack diversity and so might be hostile to those who are not able-bodied, straight, white, and male. The result of this is that talented people who are disabled, LGBTQ+, a person of colour, or female may actively decide not to apply for jobs in our companies. They miss out on a potentially rewarding career while we miss out on the benefit of their talent and hard work.

Statistics published by the Construction Industry Council (CIC) show the scale of the challenge. Only 5.4% of construction workers are from a Black, Asian or other ethnic minority background,

compared with a national percentage of 13.8%. Despite making up half the population and almost half of the UK workforce, women account for just 11% of the construction workforce. In terms of mental health, those who work in our industry are also three times more likely to attempt suicide than those in other sectors, according to the CIC.

In short, D&I is important to help companies in our sector benefit from the full range of talent available in the market – at a time when finding top talent is becoming increasingly tough. It is important for employees and colleagues to feel valued and motivated. It can break down social barriers and create more understanding and empathy, and it can create a nicer, more relaxed and more productive workplace.

## Common D&I obstacles

Alongside the problem of our industry being perceived as lacking in diversity, there are some other common challenges we face. One of these is the relative lack of data in most organisations around their diversity statistics.

Companies very often don't carry out regular surveys of employees. Even when they do, employees



often refuse to self-identify when it comes to their ethnicity, the gender they identify as, their sexuality, or their potential behavioural or mental issues. People commonly feel worried about being 'othered' (excluded or called out) and are often unsure how their employer intends to use this information.

On top of this, many in our industry don't know what best practice is around D&I, or how best to try and make lasting changes. It's easy to default to publishing vaguely supportive social media posts during Pride Month or Black History Month or International Women's Day, but these can quickly come across as insincere or even cynical.

## Real-life examples

It's easy to criticise, and easy to say we want to change without ever taking practical steps to do so. That's why I've put together this list of real-life examples of D&I policies and actions we've taken at Artex, to show how real change is possible when you know what to do.

### Example 1: Providing mandatory D&I training

At Artex, D&I training begins when people join the company. I myself have been with the company for just under a year and have had three half-day training sessions on D&I. Building this into your processes from

the start is the best way to make it stick. It's also well worth working with a qualified and well-reviewed training provider such as Mildon.

### Example 2: Providing unconscious bias training

This can be done as part of your D&I training, but unconscious bias training is an essential component. We all have biases, and this training helps us to become aware of them so we can avoid letting them influence how we act and make decisions in the workplace. Again, look for a provider that is well reviewed and covers all aspects of bias, not just gender or ethnicity, as there are many other kinds of bias that can impact how we treat others.

### Example 3: Removing unconscious bias from the recruitment process

There are several ways to do this. At Artex, we run all our job ads through software that highlights exclusionary or biased language. We also use a values and potential based approach rather than experience. When interviewing candidates, it's helpful to ensure they are interviewed by a diverse range of people and not just middle-aged

white men. The more diverse your interviewers, the less likely you are to keep recruiting people from the same narrow candidate pool.

### Example 4: Send out inclusion surveys to your employees

Again, worth doing in conjunction with a D&I training provider, as we did. Questions here should be about how your people feel in terms of how they are treated, how well they feel they fit in to the company culture, and so on. Any surveys you carry out must be anonymous and you must be clear why you are doing it – for example, to make policies, procedures, buildings, and work culture more accessible and inclusive for all, regardless of background.

### Example 5: Use survey results to come up with an inclusion strategy

An inclusion survey enables your people to tell you where issues exist that could be improved, so listen to what they tell you. Use the findings to come up with an inclusion strategy. Communicate it to your employees, along with any deadlines and specific next steps, so they know what to expect.



#### **Example 6: Be supportive and flexible for your employees**

Young parents, single parents, and those caring for relatives may need more flexible working hours. Just as you would be understanding of an employee needing to take time off for cancer treatment, so you should consider being similarly flexible and understanding of parents with disabled children, autistic children, sick parents, or other family emergencies.

#### **Example 7: Offer mentors to help with personal development**

Most experienced managers like to share their knowledge, so offer mentorship to more junior employees, particularly those that have recently joined the business. This helps them to learn the culture of your organisation.

#### **Example 8: Consider “reverse mentoring” to improve your D&I knowledge**

This is something that’s becoming increasingly popular in many organisations and which I have done myself. This is where managers and senior leaders get mentoring from people from different ethnic backgrounds, or who are LGBTQ+, or have a disability, to help better understand how your business can support them both as customers and as employees.

There are many kinds of privilege and disadvantage, and it is increasingly helpful to learn from those whose lived experiences are very different from our own to avoid accidentally discriminating against them.

#### **Example 9: Be authentic: support diverse causes and celebrate the achievements of your diverse employees**

Whenever our employees are successful, we like to post something about it on our Facebook and LinkedIn accounts. If you’re giving your diverse employees the opportunity to shine, then you’ll be able to do the same. By celebrating the achievements of your diverse employees, you send out the message that you are welcoming and supportive of diverse talent, which will make it easier for you to recruit in the longer term.

We also support a women’s refuge charity and a domestic abuse charity, causes that our Managing Director and senior leadership team feel very strongly about. It’s important

to support causes that you feel passionate about, otherwise you will come across as inauthentic, which can actually make it harder to recruit more diverse talent.

#### **Example 10: Set up and support a D&I employee resource group**

This can be expensive but is well worth it. In almost every company in every industry I know of that runs a diversity group for its employees, those employees really value it.

Our group works as a safe space for diverse team members to share experiences, challenges, and learnings without fear of pushback. It also functions as a place to host talks and debates on D&I for the wider business to attend. This helps to increase awareness of specific issues and challenges, and to effect change.

# Next steps on your D&I journey

The real-life examples I've given you here are far from an exhaustive list. These are just some of the steps we've taken. You might have tried some similar things yourself, or perhaps this blog has inspired you to try some of these ideas.

In summary, the best approach is to seek advice from someone you can trust who specialises in D&I to help with your training, recruitment,

and onboarding. Beyond that, it is best to be authentic – don't make empty gestures because you feel as if you have to. Just treat people with respect and be open minded about some of the practices and processes you may need to change. And be sure to include your employees in the journey and communicate clearly what you're seeking to achieve, and why.



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