



Artex



Okarno

Xetra

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



Issue No.3

www.okarno.com

Dalapro®

okarno

- Ready-mixed all-round wall covering that is easy to work with.
- Excellent filling capability.
- Smooth consistency saves time, makes it more ergonomic and easier to work with.
- Suitable for plasterboards, concrete, brick, wallpaper, fabric and plaster.



Dalapro Roll Nova is a roller applied plaster to level the surface of existing walls and ceilings. Ideal for covering up damaged or textured walls. Suitable for most substrates on walls and ceilings indoors, such as concrete, plaster, fabric, and wallpaper for both new construction and renovation. Use with a medium pile roller to simply roll the Nova on to the wall and smooth over with a Dalapro Speed Smoother Broad Smoothing knife for a superior finish.

Interested in becoming a stockist?

Be one of the first in the UK

Email OkarnoRAM@saint-gobain.com for more information.

There
are no
others
like us.



A note from Jason Smith,

Managing Director, Okarno Ltd.

New Name, Same Team: We're Keeping Our Game Strong with a Simple Switch

As we celebrate the dawn of the New Year, we're thrilled to confirm the long-anticipated update of our legacy Artex brand – now we've officially embraced our new name Okarno!

You are all aware that this change has been in the works for a while, and now, from the various communications delivered we start the New Year with our fresh identity in full effect.

With our new name, Okarno, we are beginning a new chapter while keeping the positive aspects from before. It's the same great people, service and business it's just a new name above the door.

But it's not just the name that's evolving. We've laid out a solid plan for the year ahead at Okarno. We want to refine our strategies, enhance our services, and embrace new ideas and the new name serves as a symbol of our dedication to improvement, and we are excited to embark on this journey with everyone.

This is a special edition of 'Xetra' with a spotlight on our change of identity and the rebrand we have been talking about and working on for so long. So from explaining what 'Okarno' means to looking at all the other businesses rebranding for 2024 we hope that you enjoy this New Year edition of Xetra.

As we bid farewell to the old and embrace the new, we invite everyone to join us in this exciting time. With the New Year, and our new name, our fresh plan and our promise to keep innovating and evolving. Here's to the journey ahead, overflowing with new possibilities with our brand-new look.

Thanks, Jason

Why Artex is rebranding to



When Farrokh Bulsara joined his friends' fledgling rock band, Smile, he decided on a name change. But not just a name change – a complete change of image and personality. He wanted a new identity, to build a fantastical new world with his music that people would feel strongly about. An image and a world that would delight and intrigue many, while turning off and irritating just as many.

If you've seen the film "Bohemian Rhapsody" then you probably know who I'm talking about. But in case you haven't, Farrokh Bulsara changed his name to Freddie Mercury, and his band Smile changed to Queen.

This is one of the great rebranding stories in pop music history. Who now would remember a band called Smile? And while Farrokh Bulsara is a memorable name, it doesn't carry the same resonance or fantastical imagination as Freddie Mercury. Love them or hate them, pretty much everyone today has a clear image – even a distinctive sound – in their mind when they think of the band Queen.

This is the power of a great brand.

A great brand stands for something

Think of the young insurance company BoughtByMany. It had a great product and a great offer which resonated with the market, but the name wasn't quite right. Certainly nothing in the name suggested it was a pet insurance company. Since changing to ManyPets, this British company has expanded into the United States and Scandinavia and has been valued at over \$1billion.

In 1996, a new technology company started that was called BackRub. In 1997, it changed its name to Google. While the original name didn't really make clear what the company did or what it stood for, "Google" derived from the word "Googol" meaning an unfathomable number, which was one factor that increased its appeal to early adopters of technology who helped to spread its use across the internet.

Think of what these brands mean. "Queen" stands for loud, fun and irreverent glam rock and camp pop music. "ManyPets" is shorthand for the UK's fastest growing pet insurance company that's widely trusted to look after the furrier members of the family. "Google" is a techy in joke that made early adopters feel like part of the in crowd by using it.

Why rebrand Artex?

In short, a great brand stands for something. The reason I mention this is because Artex is rebranding to Okarno, and I wanted to explain why.

Artex as a name goes back to the 1930s when the business began as a manufacturer of textured finish. Since then, we've grown into an essential supply chain partner for a range of leading construction product brands. But for many people in the market, "Artex" always meant textured finish. Nothing we did would change that – as we found out by conducting several market surveys.

Not only did many people not realise that we were a supply chain solutions partner with a huge catalogue of products, but the Artex name got in the way and misled many into thinking all we did was make one particular type of product. It became a barrier to growth because people couldn't see past the name to who we had become as a company.

In other words, it created the wrong impression. It no longer represented who we are or what we want to achieve. And part of a great brand is to stand for something that resonates in the minds of customers.

A brand is a promise to customers of consistency, care, and commitment. It's the basis of a relationship with customers, one built on trust and familiarity. This is one reason why we're making this change now.

Why now is the perfect time for the change

Let's face it – today's construction industry is not an easy place to do business. We've seen a host of real and threatened regulatory changes in the wake of Brexit. We've seen continued supply chain disruption and price increases as the long-term impact of Covid lockdowns continues to make itself felt. And, thanks to the highest levels of inflation seen for a generation, customers and employees across our supply chain are suffering from a huge amount of financial stress.

This is the perfect time for us to rebrand. Because, although these are tumultuous times, we can see the promise of a brighter future. And we're making a promise of quality and consistency at a time when our customers – and their customers – need it most.





Why Okarno?

As Okarno, we're more than just a supply chain solution. Our vision is no less than to be the trusted, sustainable supply chain partner that the industry wants to buy from, and that people love to work for.

As Artex, people couldn't see beyond the product. As Okarno, we can be the brand that cares deeply about building better for people and the planet by offering flexible convenient supply chain solutions for premium building products to enable superior performance and sustainability.

We've spent the last year planning this change, searching within ourselves and our organisation to become clearer about who we are and what we stand for. To discover a mission and vision you can agree with and become part of. To create a safe space in a topsy-turvy world of constant change and challenge where you'll have the confidence to know that we've got your back.

Of course, if you're familiar with us as a company you'll know that Artex has been a part of the global Saint-Gobain organisation for a while now. As Okarno, that won't change. It also means we get to draw upon the broader organisation to deepen our commitment to customers.

Our dedication to our customers and our commitment to delivering flexible supply chain solutions and solving problems remains at the heart of everything we do at Okarno. Although we have a new name, we're still the same great business with the same great people.

As part of the Saint-Gobain group, we're committed to customer closeness – to be there for you when you need us. We want to develop innovative solutions to your challenges. To deliver solutions that have a direct impact on your margins and your bottom line. And we're dedicated to making our solutions sustainable and safer – meaning you'll always be able to order from us in confidence that you're making the sustainable and compliant choice.





Our customer commitments

But there's no need to worry. This rebranding is about finding our real identity and being able to communicate it more effectively to the market and the wider world. For our customers, it means just this: that we commit to offering you the following tangible benefits for your business:

- Flexible and convenient access to a premium and varied product range
- Improved efficiencies in stock holdings
- A wider range of delivery options than any of our competitors
- Premium construction brands available at low minimum order quantities (MOQs)
- Transparent value through price, integrity, and sustainability

We hope you'll join us in celebrating this big milestone for us and holding us to our promises to you in the future. After all, that's why Okarno is here – to be your trusted supply chain partner in the years ahead, regardless of what challenges lie in store.

If you have any questions about the Okarno brand and what it means for you, drop us a line. We'll be happy to talk it through.

Stacey O'Connor, Head of Marketing

STICK WITH WHAT WORKS!



**Xtreme Extra Wide
75m x 100m**

Gyproc® FibaTape range

- **High Performance** - plastering tapes
- **Self-adhesive** - for faster application
- **Open fabric** - avoids blisters and bubbles

All available in (apart from Xtreme Extra Wide) **90m x 48m**

Get in touch to place an order

What does Okarno stand for?

As Okarno, we're more than just a supply chain solution. Our vision is no less than to be the trusted, sustainable supply chain partner that the industry wants to partner with and that people love to work for.

Fine words, you might say. But what does all that really mean?

Part of our rebranding from Artex to Okarno includes explaining the reasons for the change – who we are and what we stand for. And the easiest way to explain it is via three pillars:

1. Our people
2. Caring for the planet
3. Customer centricity

Let's take a deeper dive into each one of these in turn:

Pillar 1: Our people

This pillar is all about how we recruit, develop, and support our people in a way that makes for a great employee experience and helps ensure that we reflect the communities we serve.

Our employees receive extensive training from day one, and are continuously supported and coached to help them reach their full potential. This is why we're able to trust and empower our employees to work autonomously and make decisions for our customers – because we can be confident that they understand what our customers need.

We regularly measure employee engagement and send out surveys to get feedback on how to improve our internal processes. We also have several employee groups – for example our Sustainability Action Group – which give our people a way to contribute to the community and to have a real impact outside of work.

Diversity and inclusion are important to us at Okarno too. We review all our job ads for unconscious bias, hold diversity and unconscious bias training sessions, offer flexible working arrangements, mentoring – and reverse mentoring – to support the development of untapped and under-represented groups in the business.

All so our people feel able to bring their best selves to work and offer the best possible service to our customers.



Pillar 2: Caring for the planet

This is all about sustainability and the focus on Net Zero. Here's exactly how we're improving our sustainability.

By installing biomass heating at our warehouse and offices, we're reducing our CO2 emissions there by 150 tonnes per year. But that's not all. We've also been replacing our old delivery vehicles with lorries that run on biofuel from vegetable oil. By the end of 2023 we achieved a 100% biofuel core delivery fleet. This will result in a 90% reduction in carbon emissions from our distribution and core delivery fleet.

And there's still more. We've also been rewilding a 3.2-acre site next to our Ruddington distribution hub. We've planted over 4100 bulbs, 190 shrubs and 445 trees and continue to plant each year to sustain the habitat, and there have been several sightings of badgers, foxes and other wildlife on the site.

We're also collaborating with our bag, film and tub manufacturers. This is helping us to reduce packaging, switch to more recyclable solutions like paper and cardboard instead of plastic, 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 it easier for our customers to recycle plastics. To top all that off, we're continually reducing plastic use onsite, for example by using personal protective equipment made from recycled plastic, and by replacing plastic packaging with shredded recycled cardboard.

We assess the sustainability of all our supply chain partners, and work with them to improve still further. All of this is helping to reduce our carbon footprint across our entire supply chain. We are on a journey and there's still so much more to achieve.

Pillar 3: Customer centricity

We offer an extensive range of products and support services to ensure our customers make bigger profits from selling our products. For starters, we offer a wide range of building, repair and decoration products from market-leading brands Thistle, Gyproc, Weber, Artex, and Blue Hawk. All these products have been fully assessed and certified to meet all applicable laws and regulations. They're sourced from ethical and responsible companies, and we're continually working with our suppliers to reduce our carbon footprint. This helps to support our customers sustainability and compliance goals.

This means customers can order and use our products, secure in the knowledge that they're of the highest possible quality and fully compliant. On top of that, we also offer flexible delivery options to suit customer needs, from full and mixed pallet delivery to express parcel delivery for smaller loads.

We also support our customers if needed with point-of-sale merchandising, marketing support, and product training for staff or your customers. Everything you could need, in fact, to increase customer chances of making more sales.

With this flexible and convenient next-day access to products from premium and trusted construction brands, transparent pricing, and a wider range of delivery options than any of our competitors, Okarno is here to do everything we can to support and empower our customers.



The proof's in the eating

So these are the key pillars of our new, refreshed, and revitalised brand. This is who we are and what we stand for – a flexible, customer-focused company offering the widest range of quality construction products on the most flexible terms in the industry. We're here to be a trusted partner, and to make construction and home improvements a more accessible, more profitable, and more sustainable business both now and in the future.

But in the end, the real value of all these promises will come when we deliver on them. So give us a try and see how we deliver for your business. Or get in touch to see how we could help your business grow its revenues with products.

For more on the story of Okarno and our rebrand, click here www.okarno.com



GET YOUR HANDS ON THE BEST BRANDS. QUICKLY.



WITH OUR FLEXIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS



Full pallet delivery
£375 MOV*

Mixed pallet delivery
£375 MOV*

Express parcel delivery
£100 MOV*

Interested in becoming a stockist?
Email okarno@saint-gobain.com for more information.

Prices Exclude VAT. Minimum Carriage Applies. Delivery Areas: UK Mainland and Highlands & Islands
Max. weight for Gyproc Express: 200kg *MOV = Minimum Order Value

okarno

**There
are no
others
like us.**

What official UK sources say about making construction more sustainable: a brief guide for contractors

We all know the environmental impact of the UK construction industry. Some say it's over 30% of all UK carbon emissions. Some say it's over 40%. Some put it even higher than that. It's an easy target for many who believe reducing carbon emissions is more important than economic growth.

Just Google the topic and browse the hundreds of results you get. You'll see a host of recommendations about how to make construction sites and processes greener. Most of them seem to be written by people with no experience of construction or of running their own business. After all, if reducing the carbon emissions of construction projects was so easy that we can just create a nice simple checklist, we would have done it by now.

This article is designed to cut through the nonsense and act as a handy summary of the most recent UK government guidance, as well as summarising practical recommendations on sustainability published by the UK's Chartered Institute of Building.

Use this to check that you're doing everything you can and then all you have to worry about is keeping on top of new regulations and guidance.

How the UK government defines “sustainability” and “Net Zero” in construction

The UK government uses the United Nations' definition of Sustainability: “a balance between the economic, social and environmental elements of society in a way that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

At the level of a construction project, the government says sustainability can consist of measures to:

- Reduce energy use
- Reduce the use of natural and manmade resources
- Improve waste management
- Protect or improve the condition of the environment or the wellbeing of people

The government's definition of “Net Zero” is to reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases by 100% of the levels emitted in the UK in 1990, and to achieve this by 2050. Note that this includes all greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide, and that – for better or worse – the British government actually adopted this as a legally binding target in 2019, unlike many other countries who have yet to do so.

What the government will do in the event that we don't actually meet Net Zero is an interesting question. Who, legally, will they punish for missing a target that they themselves are responsible for?

Whatever else this might mean, it's a dead cert that our industry is going to come under increasing pressure to help the government avoid breaking its own law by missing its own target. As the government's Net Zero guidance note says:

“Achieving net zero should be considered as part of a broader approach to achieving sustainable outcomes, and the design, delivery and operation of all infrastructure and construction projects and programmes should support this policy objective.”

In practical terms, what can contractors do to ensure they don't fall foul of any regulations? Probably the best way is by keeping in mind the advice of the Chartered Institute of Building, first issued around ten years ago in a document called the **Carbon Action 2050 Action Plan**, which is still the best practical guidance on this issue.



8 practical recommendations for greener, more sustainable construction practices

As you read these subheadings – taken directly from the action plan document, you’ll see this advice is not written for contractors and subcontractors – or indeed for SMEs of any kind. As usual, this is written for large organisations and comes off as somewhat condescending towards smaller contractors or subcontractors who aren’t themselves large corporates.

What we would say is to take this advice and apply it as best you can to your business and the parts of a project you might be involved in.

1. Adopt best practice energy use in corporate offices

In essence, this means turning off the lights, the air con, etc., when offices are empty, and is implied to be relevant to any companies involved in any construction project in their own offices rather than onsite.

As the report says: “initiating good-practice energy management of corporate offices results in cost savings with regards to energy, and demonstrates leadership in carbon reduction.”

According to the document, this applies specifically to contractors and subcontractors as much as anyone else involved in the project.

2. Adopt best practice energy management onsite

According to the document: “efficient energy-management on site could result in an annual reduction in carbon of 28,000 tonnes.”

Specific suggestions include monitoring and analysing energy use onsite – and the employment of “energy advisers” on larger projects. There are no specific recommendations for how to better manage energy use, but contractors and subcontractors are of course included in the list of stakeholders who should be helping reduce energy use.

3. Adopt fuel efficient freight driving and renewable transport fuels

“All sectors within the building process have an input to ensure that fuel-efficient freight driving is adopted and renewable transport-fuels are used,” the report says.

4. Connect to the long-term energy source earlier

This means that sites should connect to local power and energy sources as soon as practical rather than rely on diesel-powered generators. For contractors and subcontractors, be aware that this is regarded as best practice and look to recommend it where you can.

5. Encourage subcontractors and the supply chain to reduce their own carbon footprint

This point is unfortunately quite vague and amounts to asking larger contractors to monitor their subcontractors. Here's how it reads:

"Contractors should encourage their supply chain to adopt best practice carbon management. Using this approach, individual businesses involved at every stage of a building's life-cycle work with each other to create a full carbon footprint, allowing carbon management across the supply chain."

Use the other points in this article to inform your carbon management and be prepared to monitor your carbon emissions as much as you can, since your clients and project partners will increasingly look for you to provide them with evidence of what your carbon footprint is.

They may also want to know what you're doing to actively reduce that carbon footprint. Consider investing in carbon reporting software if you haven't already.

6. Promote greener business travel

Use video conferencing rather than site visits where practical for meetings or briefings. When you must travel, encourage the use of public transport or ride sharing if you can, to reduce the number of private journeys. If you need to use private cars, try to use electric or hybrid vehicles, and to pick models with the lowest emissions.

If you are forced to travel at short notice, make sure to note that and record the carbon emissions related to that trip where you can. The point here is to cover yourself from the charge of having too large a carbon footprint when the client is the one actually responsible for it.

7. Use energy-efficient plant, efficiently

The report says is: "The use of energy-efficient plant in an effective way should be adopted by contracting firms, suppliers and manufacturers, and training providers."

If you have control over the plant you're using, make sure you have a paper trail to prove you leased or bought the most energy-efficient plant you could. If you have no choice, be sure to lodge some kind of formal notice that you're not responsible for the choice of plant.

8. Use energy-efficient site accommodation

Do what you can to raise this issue if it's something that will apply to your time onsite.

As well as these eight recommendations, we'll add a ninth that's not mentioned in the Construction part of the Action Plan document, and that is:

9. [EXTRA BONUS RECOMMENDATION] Choose energy-efficient/sustainable materials where possible

Materials providers like Okarno are keen to provide an increasingly wide range of more energy-efficient and sustainable materials throughout the building and construction trade. Indeed, this is one area where you should be able to relax and put the pressure on us (or another supplier where you use them) to give you a choice of materials that offer good value for money and support sustainability goals.

Ask for evidence or proof of the energy efficiency or sustainability of materials you're looking to buy. Any good materials provider should have no problem sharing that information with you.

Know the rules and prove that you're following them

In the end, making construction greener is such a priority for our policymakers and other special interest groups that in some ways, it makes it easy for SMEs in the sector. By keeping an eye on official government sources on Net Zero – and the construction trade press – you can keep up to date with any rule changes. Then it's a matter of making sure you record and report on everything you can, so you have a paper trail in the event that anything goes wrong, and you need to prove you acted responsibly.

In any regulated environment, the trick is to make sure not just that you follow the rules, but that you can prove you're following the rules. It might be an irritating way to have to work, but on something like this when you can't control every aspect of the projects you're working on, it is the safest way to work.

And if you have any questions on the sustainability or compliance of our products, don't hesitate to reach out and ask.

Effi-Svende Ball, Value Chain Director

Gyproc® EasiFill



WHAT A LINE UP!

Powder fillers for every job size



For more information on the full range visit www.okarno.com

What's the difference between Gyproc EasiFill 60, 45 and 20?

The numbers on our bags of Gyproc EasiFill refer to the recommended working time of the product, making the range perfect for any size job depending on the working and drying time needed.



Contact OkarnoRAM@saint-gobain.com
to become a stockist.

There
are no
others
like us.

Can ethical pricing ever work in the UK construction industry?



“Ethical pricing” is one of the latest hot button topics facing the business world. But what is ethical pricing? Are there any potential benefits to it, or is it just the next excuse for activists and bureaucrats to make life more difficult for struggling firms during an economic downturn?

In this article, we examine where the idea comes from, how it could be applied to construction, the practical barriers, and why it might actually be worthwhile – especially for those businesses that lead the way.

Paying the “true” price for goods

A recent Raconteur article explored the concept of ethical pricing – or paying the “true price” for something, an idea being championed by a social enterprise of the same name. The goal of this enterprise is simple: “a world where all products are sold for a true price to enable a sustainable global economy.”

What is a “true price”? One which adds the environmental and social costs into the final price charged to consumers for the goods they buy. The example given in the Raconteur article is that of Dutch supermarket chain Albert Heijn where, if you buy a cup of coffee, you’re presented with the choice to pay €2 or €2.08.

The first is the normal price. The second is the “true price” which adds more for the workers in the supply chain, the water and other raw materials, and the CO2 emitted. In this case, when the customer pays the higher price, the retailer donates the eight cents to the Rainforest Alliance.

Right away, there’s a lot here to raise the hackles. Firstly, the highly questionable idea that factoring in all those extra costs results in only a 4% increase in the price. Secondly, that the difference goes to an unelected NGO that pursues political campaigns in developing countries – rather than to the suppliers of the coffee that the supermarket sells. Thirdly, who decides what the true price is, and what anti-business agenda might they have? Fourthly, how soon before the “true price” becomes not optional, but mandatory?

Fifth is the idea of applying this to the construction industry, where it can easily become a political hammer used to crack an increasingly demonised sector. Yet another cost to add to all the rest.



“Ethical” pricing is the wrong name – but the idea could be beneficial

We have a lot of sympathy with this suspicion. And if this idea was ever imposed by politicians and thereby became a kind of tax, it could be very damaging, especially to smaller contractors.

But if we back up for a moment, we can see that the idea of “ethical pricing” for construction makes sense – if certain criteria are met. Changing the name, for one thing. Instead of so-called “ethical” pricing, let’s take the same basic idea and call it “transparent” pricing. That way, we can reshape it into a tool for better business and increasing consumer choice rather than just another stealth tax on guilt.

In fact, the industry has to take the lead here, because otherwise it will likely be forced on us. As the Construction Products Association has written: “The Grenfell Inquiry put a public spotlight on the sector and exposed shortcomings in our industry’s leadership, culture and ethics with regards to building safety. The subsequent regulatory changes expected from the Building Safety Act will impact every part of the construction industry...”

At the same time, the Modern Slavery Act of 2015 requires companies to promote transparency in their supply chains, meaning they “will be accountable for slavery and labour abuses in their whole supply chain.”

And then there’s sustainable sourcing – or ethical procurement, or responsible sourcing. Several names for the same thing – buying more sustainable materials for construction projects. This was a hot topic around a decade ago, and is sure to come around again soon, probably piggy backing off the upcoming Building Safety Act.

Clearly, there are those in the industry who have acted irresponsibly and cut corners in the past. But every proposed solution means more paperwork, more data gathering, more analysis, more reporting, more man hours, and more cost. Including for those who have always followed the rules, acted ethically, and not cut corners. Inevitably, this means a rise in



prices to customers, who won’t be happy. And how are we to justify these price rises unless we can prove where the costs have come from?

It’s all very well to be competitive and to set prices a little higher or a little lower than your competitors in line with your branding or value proposition. But with such a large proportion of the prices charged being fixed and non-negotiable, transparency can only be a good thing in the long run.

Not only that, but those end consumers who want to pay more for sustainable materials – or to offset the CO2 emissions of what they’ve bought, or to pay an extra few cents to the Romanian workers of the suppliers of the Italian marble going into their new bathroom – will know which companies to buy from. The ones who pay more for these things, and who itemise these costs at point of purchase.

Transparent pricing could work as a way to accurately communicate fixed costs while also providing information to the customer to help them choose their supplier. But of course, there are some obstacles standing in the way.



Higher prices could drive away customers

DIY chains that start raising prices for ethical reasons could soon find themselves being abandoned for more value-focused competitors. Similarly, construction contractors could soon find that being ethical means losing business to the unethical. Especially if procurement rules are not similarly reviewed and revised.

Politicians are bound to use the idea politically

Once the idea of ethical pricing is out, politicians of all parties who thrive on gesture politics – and, let's face it, we can already picture them – will find ways to start levying compulsory “ethical” prices. It's not a big jump from the sugar tax, banning fossil fuel vehicles, and extending emissions zone charges to imposing taxes on construction firms for failing to hit arbitrary ethical targets set by people who don't know or understand the industry.

Poorer customers and smaller contractors could be priced out of the market

Top-down price increases impact the poorest the most, so expect less well-off DIY customers to spend less on their hobby as it becomes the preserve of the wealthy. And for smaller contractors to be unable to compete with larger firms who can operate on narrower margins.

Here's how it could still work

The key to making ethical pricing work as a concept for construction is to adopt it in a way that answers all these objections. The first step is to avoid it becoming compulsory, which means – as already mentioned:

- Change the name to “transparent” or “open” pricing. “Ethical” sounds compulsory, as if it's unethical for people not to pay more, and therefore wrong. This horrible hairshirted name makes it far more likely that it will become compulsory – because, after all, only an evil person would possibly object to something “ethical”, right? “Open” pricing makes it sound optional, which it should be. With this step taken care of, it means that poorer consumers can still afford to buy cheaper goods that don't carry the extra costs, and smaller contractors can still afford to bid for business.
- Impose procurement rules on clients. This avoids clients lowballing contractors and squeezing them on margins – or indeed, from acting unethically themselves and simply hiring contractors who don't intend to act ethically at all. There's no benefit to society if clients are not held to the same high standards of transparency as the contractors.
- Stock – and sell – normal products alongside the “ethical” ones. This is essential. Supermarkets already specialise in basic, quality and luxury versions of own-brand products. The same could be done in construction for products that cost more for social or sustainability reasons.
- Itemise all the fixed costs so clients and consumers can understand them. This is where the greatest potential benefit could be to suppliers. If every receipt was able to say how much of the price went on sustainable products, how much on labour costs, how much on CO2 emissions, how much on regulation, when the costs of these things go up, the customer knows where the responsibility lies.

- Push for industry-wide standard definitions and rules. This would help set common standards that would make it easier for everyone to compete. At the same time, this would help keep politicians at bay – or at least make it harder for them to justify getting involved. If the construction industry could settle on its own self-regulated set of rules, this could help keep the focus on what's best for customers, suppliers, and employees, while also recognising responsibilities to wider stakeholders, rather than having those wider responsibilities ride over what's best for customers, suppliers, and the industry, as so often seems to be the case.



Start thinking about it now

Ethical standards are important in any industry, we all know that. And no one wants to work with suppliers using forced labour, or underpaying workers, or polluting waterways. But forcing only one part of the supply chain to be accountable for all of it is unfair.

Frankly, this is where the UK is heading with its treatment of the construction industry. Unless we, as an industry – and as concerned and responsible citizens – take action and take the initiative. Ethical pricing could fast become just another stealth tax. Transparent pricing? That could promote ethical practices, reinforce customer choice, improve operating margins, support smaller contractors and keep DIY accessible to people from all social and economic backgrounds.

The sooner we start making waves as an industry on transparent pricing, the less likely ethical pricing will be imposed from above. The more we in the industry can control it, the better for all stakeholders – including our employees and customers.

Rob Stewart, Commercial Director



The current rebranding trends: why are so many companies rebranding in 2024?



Do you remember the soft drink Lilt?

If you're of a certain age you'll remember its Caribbean-themed TV ads, with the slogan, "the totally tropical taste". I was shocked when I looked them up to see just how old those original ads are!

Well, Lilt doesn't exist anymore. Or at least, not under that name. Earlier this year it changed its name to Fanta Pineapple and Grapefruit. My childhood is ruined.

Maybe you've heard about the Johnson & Johnson rebrand? Not content with being known as a purveyor of baby powder and baby oil, the company's logo change has caused a flurry of controversy among branding experts. Why would any company throw away the customer recognition of a logo that's been around since the 1880s, they ask. Why, that would be like Coca Cola changing its logo – utter madness!

(Actually, Coca Cola did change its logo – and its entire recipe – in the 1980s, to New Coke. The ensuing collapse in sales and hurried return to the classic recipe and logo have gone down as one of the most notorious branding case studies in history.)

And then there's the rebranding of Twitter to X – the latest move in Elon Musk's playbook of doing stuff just because he can. Cue a lot of complaining from many existing Twitter users.

People don't like change

What all these rebrands have in common is that they ruffled a lot of feathers. People don't like change. More importantly, it's incredibly difficult to build a brand that resonates in the minds of consumers so that they'll choose that product over another. Growing up, ours was a HP sauce household – we wouldn't be seen dead buying Daddies, much less an own-brand brown sauce. And when it comes to ketchup, who on earth doesn't buy Heinz?

True, there have been plenty of TV programs with blind taste tests that prove branded foods don't really taste better. But that doesn't matter. The power of brand is real and valuable, which is why it's always worth questioning the reasons why anyone would change a product name or logo that everyone knows.

Yet if you look around, you notice that rebranding is happening all the time. Remember when Aviva used to be Norwich Union? Or when Midland Bank became HSBC? Or when the Marathon bar became Snickers?

Why do companies choose to rebrand?

There's no doubt that 2024 will be full of more rebrands. A quick search reveals the following brands planning to rebrand in the next twelve months:

- US car maker Cadillac
- Thorpe Park
- FedEx Express
- US manufacturer Apollo Products
- UK-based battery metals recycler Technology Minerals

But again, the question remains: why does rebranding happen? What's the point of it and who is it for? Let's take a look at some of the examples we've already mentioned.

When it comes to Lilt, facts are facts. In the UK, Fanta was outselling Lilt by a factor of 18 to 1. With this in mind, the name change becomes a no-brainer way of trying to boost Lilt sales by turning the drink into an offshoot of a more popular brand. It remains to be seen whether this will work, but the thinking makes sense.

What about Johnson & Johnson? Why change the well-known logo? Well, when it comes to its famous baby powder, the company is facing over 40,000 lawsuits in the US alleging that the product has caused health problems. The company strenuously denies this, though it will be changing the formula globally.



So, on the one hand, we have a potentially tarnished brand. On the other, the move from the cursive Johnson & Johnson to J&J is said to be easier to replicate digitally. In that sense, it's a future-proofing measure. Today's digital and social media can be a challenge for older brands to negotiate successfully in a world where being easy to share is the most important measure.

More important, however, is the fact that the company is much more than consumer products. It also includes a pharma company and a medical technology arm, both of which now share the Johnson & Johnson name. The identity of the group – and what the brand stands for – has changed. It now wants to be regarded as being a healthcare innovator.

Whether this rebranding will succeed is another question. But the reasoning is sound.

Established brands can be a barrier to change

This is an important factor to keep in mind: that, on the whole, brands change and evolve when the company changes what it stands for. When that happens, an established brand can be a barrier.

This was the case for us at Okarno, for example. As a company, our origins go back to the 1930s. But the nature of the company had changed. No longer just a manufacturer of textured finish, we had grown into a trusted supply chain partner for a wide selection of leading construction brands. We had also become a part of the global Saint-Gobain group.

But for many people in the market, our original name “Artex” would always mean textured finish and nothing else. Nothing we did would change that – as we found out by conducting several market surveys.

Not only did many people not realise that we were a supply chain solutions partner with a huge catalogue of products, but the Artex name got in the way and misled many into thinking all we did was make one particular type of product. It became a barrier to growth because people couldn't see past the name to who we had become as a company.

For the full story on our reasons for rebranding to Okarno, click here www.okarno.com



Uncertain times will lead to more rebrands

It's no secret that we're going through challenging and uncertain times. Not only do questions remain about whether or not the UK will go into recession, but Germany's been in recession for months, while the Chinese economy is the weakest it's been in two decades. War will keep prices high on certain goods for a long while yet, while everyone looks to see if the United States can go into 2024 without a recession.

In challenging times, companies must change the most. Some go bust. Some acquire competitors. In this environment, who these companies are and what they stand for will inevitably change. That, in turn will lead to more rebranding to reflect that.

So yes, when brands we know change – or when familiar products change their name – it can be annoying. But just remember that there's usually a reason behind it. Rebranding itself is often a symptom of a bigger, more profound change, or a response to a significant challenge. Either way, it rarely happens in a vacuum.

For more on the Okarno name change and rebrand, click here www.okarno.com

Stacey O'Connor, Head of Marketing

BLUE HAWK Cement, Mortar and Concrete from Blue Hawk



All Blue Hawk bags and tubs are made from at least 30% recycled plastic

Ideal for outdoor DIY jobs such as repairing concrete and masonry, brick laying and pointing, bedding slabs, setting posts or repairing steps, paths, drains or garden ponds.

Visit www.okarno.com to view our trade catalogue,
 and contact us at OkarnoRAM@saint-gobain.com
 to become a stockist.

okarno

**There
 are no
 others
 like us.**



Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information contained in Xetra, neither Okarno, nor Saint-Gobain can accept any responsibility for any omissions or inaccuracy it contains. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Okarno or Saint-Gobain.

© 2023 Okarno Ltd.

Okarno Ltd
Head Office
Pasture Lane
Ruddington
Nottingham
NG11 6AE
okarno.com
E: okarno@saint-gobain.com
T: 0800 032 6345

Editorial
Stacey O'Connor
T: 07717 178349
E: stacey.oconnor@saint-gobain.com

Advertising
Stacey O'Connor
T: 07717 178349
E: stacey.oconnor@saint-gobain.com

Designed by **4BS**