

Annual Review iKBBI 2008



2008 has been an eventful year for the industry as a whole with many KBB installers and retailers facing new and uncharted territory. Most notably the collapse of a leading retailer is affecting thousands of people, including suppliers, distributors, staff and installers. Our thoughts and best wishes are with all involved during this difficult time.

There have been several reports published in 2008 highlighting the general state of the KBB installation industry, including shocking results published by Consumer Direct detailing complaints received this year involving KBB installation.

More recently distributors, including *Ideal Bathrooms* have surveyed consumers and have found that many of them are put off by cost and disruption that a new bathroom installation would bring. That coupled with the economic downturn will inevitably make a challenging year for 2009, although it's clear that quality and service will play its part for any successful business.

Positively there are lots of things to look forward to this year. The gaping chasm left in the industry by the closure of MFI will no doubt be seen as a positive for other retailers looking to capitalise on the shift in market share. As one leading furniture brand closes, several new will open or expand operations in preparation for good times, including giant supermarket chains like *TESCO* and the high street giants *NEXT HOME*.

The Institute will work with its members in 2009, focusing on business development for those installers in need, whilst continuing our ethos around quality and ensuring our members stand out amongst the many thousands of KBB installers and retailers in the UK. We recognise that being viewed as 'being better' by consumers in 2009 will make the difference and we certainly see membership to the UK's first and only institute dedicated to those providing KBB installations as providing solutions for many businesses.

We are pleased to have significantly impacted on our members and believe that 2009 won't be all 'doom and gloom' for the industry. Industry expert Tim Foley published a comment on his website recently, speaking about the iKBBI, and said: "I believe 2009 will offer installers a new beginning, a professional identity and an opportunity to shape their future that they previously never had the luxury of". We're confident that we couldn't have summed this up better ourselves and whilst this statement refers to the installers it's clear that consumers will always need to find quality, reputable and reliable installers and retailers, which means a win, win situation for all stakeholders is more than feasible.

The Institute has certainly not been without its own challenges; however we have achieved some remarkable feats and therefore take this opportunity to review some of the highlights from 2008.

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Website Development

Recognising the importance of the World Wide Web and communication benefits a credible website offers, the board decided to invest in a new website in early 2008. The new and vastly improved site boasts several features including a free-to-use consumer area in addition to a password protected members website including forum, industry information and online business support from our associates at Business Link amongst others.



Retail Membership Launched

The introduction of a retail membership tier was launched to specifically support KBB retailers with their installation proposition, offering tailored solutions for small to medium sized retailers. As the *kbbreview* magazine has reported twice since the launch, membership is offering significant benefits to our founding retail members and we're pleased to have worked, on a consultative basis with several members including John Lewis of Hungerford as well as smaller independents throughout 2008. Importantly we believe that iKBB retail membership will confirm the business is a preferred option for our installer members looking or seeking new working opportunities or associations with retailers.



Sponsorship Support

We're pleased to have created new and exciting relationships with our founder sponsors, a group of industry giants that have offered huge support, including financial contributions. Blum, Bupa, Classic Marble (the creators of the award winning Classi-Seal), Dupont Corian, Franke & Hippowaste became founder sponsors in 2008 and we're pleased to be working with these huge brand name businesses moving forward. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved.



Formation of The iKBB Consultation Panel

In August we announced the formation of a consultation panel to support the board and our members build on the foundations of the Institute. This panel would be made up from a voluntary group of industry people with an objective to strengthen the iKBB board and add vital experience to the team. The first panel member was Dean Thomas, a founding iKBB member, multi-installation team business, CORGI and Part-P registered electrician. The second member was Tim Foley (pictured), founder of the website www.kitchensfitted.co.uk, and industry expert, who has previously represented the industry on television including the *Tonight with Trevor MacDonald* programme. Plans to add to the panel continue in 2009 are already underway, so watch this space!



The KBB Installer Magazine

We have been working with leading publishers DMG World Media, producers of the leading industry magazine *The kbbreview* to produce another industry first. *The kbbinstaller* was launched in October and is the first publication that communicates with KBB installers specifically. We've had some fantastic feedback from the readership and are pleased that the first edition reached over 6,000 installers! Next edition is due in February so again watch this space! Subscription is FREE at www.kbbinstaller.com



Industry Training Questionnaire Commissioned

Another first for the Institute was an online questionnaire, which targeted the training needs of installers and those responsible for managing installations. We managed to achieve a reasonable response for the first questionnaire, which we'll share in 2009. In addition, there are plans to repeat the questionnaire throughout 2009 to measure effectiveness.



Members Testimonials is the REAL Measure of Success

Something we pride ourselves in is the communication made with our members. We continually work with members with an objective of continual improvement. We're proud to be achieving great results within the industry in general, but prouder still to be having a positive impact on our members businesses. We have collated a few of the member's testimonials and have published a selection on our website. We see this as our primary measure of effectiveness.



World Class Support During Changing Times

As a direct response to member requests, The Institute joined forces with the leading UK law firm, Lawdit Solicitors in Southampton. The new relationship has seen the iKBBI and Lawdit work with members in the recovery of debt owed by their customers, with debt recovery being a real topical issue during the recent economic situation. Their professionalism, understanding of the industry and legal expertise will benefit The Institute and our members, and we're delighted to be working with Michael Coyle, partners and team (See: www.lawdit.co.uk).



Members Register is Launched

December saw the launch of the new online tool for consumers, allowing them to source local KBB professionals. The register contains details of our members including contact details and member's credentials. We see this as a huge step in the right direction, helping our members win more business. An e-marketing campaign has already been commissioned, along with web optimisation aimed to drive consumers to the iKBBI website where they have access to free and impartial advice, find local members and even validate members online including photographs.



Increasing Membership Numbers

Applications to join The Institute reached an all time high in December 2008, with applicants applying from all over the country including Northern Ireland. We even had an application from France for an installer that occasionally installed in the UK. Predictably this was rejected! We're pleased to announce that recruitment has continued to grow into 2009 as installers and retailers see the iKBBI as a cost efficient and credible solution for their respective businesses.

For more information about The Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom & Bathroom Installers, including free advice for consumers and details for installers and retailers wishing to join plus industry news, visit the website at:

www.ikbbi.org.uk

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