

Email response from Good Corporation

Dear Kate

I was very pleased to be invited to the consumer protection conference and found the debate very stimulating.

The one point that I would like to make is I'm afraid a self-interested point from GoodCorporation. We have developed a Standard of good practices which we have applied in many sectors with over 100 organisations audited since our start in 2001. We asked the OFT to consider our assessment for inclusion in the OFT approved scheme programme. However the OFT turned us down with the logic that we are not a trade association and do not represent a sector. We were also turned down because our Standard covers many more areas than simply consumer protection.

This seems to us to be a very strange logic for the selection of an approved schemes. We would argue that you are unlikely to find trade associations that are really in a position to police their members adequately, because they have such a clear conflict of interest between including and helping all their members, versus the cost and effort of sanctioning a member that does not comply with the provisions of the association's code.

We are an independent audit/assessment organisation and as such will thrive to the extent that company's want to use our assessment and certification. In contrast, a trade association has a natural incumbent position which will surely prevent it from causing waves within its sector by establishing a genuinely robust consumer protection scheme.

Our Standard covers many aspects of 'good behaviour' including good employment practices and fair behaviour towards suppliers. While these do not naturally sit in a consumer protection code, we believe that consumers should be given information on these wider aspects of business responsibility so they can reward such good behaviour with their spending. We therefore do not think that our wide remit should be a reason for rejection by the OFT approved scheme.

Our Standard has a 23% fail rate in over 270 audits. This we believe demonstrates its robustness. It might be worth the OFT considering forcing each approved scheme to publish its 'fail rate' as part of its credentials.

I would welcome the chance to discuss these remarks with the OFT if this would be useful.

Please keep me posted if you are planning any follow-up events on consumer protection and approved schemes.

Kind regards

Leo Martin
Director

www.goodcorporation.com