

CCAS: Consumer Campaign plan 2009-10  
July 2009

**Summary**

Following dialogue with each of the CCAS (Codes) sponsors, the core OFT objective for Code publicity in fiscal year 2009/10 is to raise awareness of the codes in the sectors where they exist and not generate demand where it cannot be met. We need to launch activity in this fiscal and ensure ongoing activity over the medium term (3 – 5 years). The strategy outlined here should be considered for the medium term though the individual activities may change from year to year. The annual evaluation of the campaign should be considered in that light.

The campaign will focus on generating the space to explain what the codes are about working with code sponsors, and driving online shoppers (shopping in code sectors) to the OFT search page. Given budgetary constraints and the challenge of shifting consumer awareness, this campaign plan does not contain specific proposals to target new Code sponsors.

**Background**

In devising this campaign plan, we have analysed previous promotional activity and talked individually to code sponsors about their ideas for effective promotion. OFT research is currently underway into consumer attitudes in the carpet retail and car repair sectors. Any key findings will feed into this campaign as it evolves.

**Objectives**

- To work in partnership with each Code sponsor to raise awareness of the Codes in the sectors in which they operate.
- To improve the impression of OFT promotion by existing code sponsors during FY 2009-10.

Developing significantly greater awareness of the Codes among consumers cannot realistically be achieved within one financial year. This kind of change requires a longer term plan. By engaging the code sponsors and developing closer working on promotion, we hope to amplify our activities and utilise the network of member businesses on the ground. Re-energising this network will have impact this FY and beyond.

## **Audience**

Previously our focus has been on vulnerable consumers, but we can't get away from the fact that code sectors will be heavily used by ABC1 consumers. To generate greater awareness of the code, we should focus on whoever is shopping in the code sectors, rather than segment by socioeconomic group. This group is likely to be homeowners and car owners. The average age of a first time buyer in the UK is 34. Our work needs to target both men and women. Focus group work suggests men are more sceptical about the value (or variability) of trade association codes than women. This means the tone of messages will need refining when we are using (for example) Talk Sport radio versus lifestyle magazines.

## **Messages**

Key messages are:

- the OFT Approved code is a source of reassurance when choosing a trader, and
- the OFT Approved code sets out higher standards of consumer protection than that required by law.

The Codes exist in those sectors where purchases are infrequent and consumer knowledge more limited, compared to everyday, high street transactions. Several Codes operate in sectors where the consumer may be faced with stressful situations (for example, home buying and moving, car repair, debt management, having a trader in their homes). To make the Codes relevant to people's lives, we should position them as a source of reassurance in potentially stressful situations.

## **Campaign Strategy**

We know from previous research that unless consumers understand a) that 'OFT' refers to the Office of Fair Trading and b) have some sense of what the OFT does and have confidence in it, it will be difficult to convey what the Codes are.

Our campaign needs to address this by getting the Codes talked about, rather than relying on spot advertising. We also need to better capitalise on the activities of sponsors and the thousands of channels we have in the form of member businesses. Finally, we need to target some promotion at the point at which consumers are looking for traders and to encourage them to use the OFT search facility. One way of delivering highly targeted ads cost effectively is digital marketing. These requirements resolve themselves into a campaign strategy made up of three strands.

1. **Creating the space to convey the benefits of the codes** in the sectors where they exist.

Opportunities to talk about / raise awareness of the codes at greater length include:

- **Radio sponsorship** – buying time during which DJs talk about / carry out interviews relevant to codes
- **Consumer PR** – getting coverage in broadcast and print media in consumer programmes / columns using external PR resource. A separate PR plan will be drawn up with the external agency once appointed.
- **TV filler** – a public information film – will need careful creative treatment and it may not be possible to include all the codes.
- **Radio fillers** – audio version of TV filler

It will be important for spokespeople and print pieces to refer to the 'Office of Fair Trading' frequently in association with the term 'OFT Approved'.

2. **Working with code sponsors and large member businesses** to promote the code at points in the customer journey.

As discussed previously, the Codes exist in sectors where consumer purchases are more infrequent. As a result, there is an opportunity for our promotion to act as 'infomercials'. Rather than promote the Codes through straightforward advertising literature, we should give consumers key facts, checklists, questions to ask etc. to support them in their transactions, providing something the consumer actually needs and wants.

For example, a checklist of 'Questions to ask your removal firm' is more likely to engage than a leaflet explaining what the BAR code is. With the checklist approach, the Code is effectively positioned as the shortcut to asking those questions for those consumers who want that reassurance quickly and easily. The effectiveness of this approach may vary from sector to sector.

We will review existing (OFT and sponsor) collateral and support the use of the logo in members' paperwork for example, invoices, letterheads, customer satisfaction surveys. We will seek to include info in sponsor mailings, newsletters, websites etc. We need to promote the Codes as widely as possible through sponsors and large members, but note this is labour intensive and we don't have the capacity to follow up every opportunity. Some member businesses are large organisations with considerable marketing budgets. However, we need to be careful about

links with private business and we will clear these with policy and legal colleagues as necessary.

We cannot hope to energise all individual member businesses, but we should do a better job of supporting those firms which are keen on the Codes and who see the code logo as a key part of their own competitive advantage.

3. **Digital Marketing:** drive consumers looking for code businesses to the **OFT search function** to find a supplier in their area.

OFT pages need to be improved in the short term with more considered improvements in the medium term. We will use pay-per-click advertising (coordinating with sponsors) as well as Google Content Network activity, which allows ads for Codes to appear on relevant sites. For example, we might include a Carpet Foundation Code ad on the Carpet Information Centre website or a VBRA Code ad on car insurance sites. We should also consider advertising on price comparison sites. We will also encourage links from relevant stakeholder sites. We will consider the development of a microsite, embedded within the OFT site, hosting the search function and including some of the infomercial guides referred to earlier.

**Budget (£418,000)**

	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
TV and radio filler - production		25	25						
Advertising (mainly online)		25	25				25	25	
Collateral - code sponsors		25	25			15	25		
Radio sponsorship/PR work	25		25	50				50	
Research and evaluation								25	
Contingency									3
Totals	25	75	100	50		15	50	100	3

**Evaluation**

We will seek feedback from code sponsors at the end of FY 2009-10. We do not expect to significantly raise consumer awareness this year, but we will track this over the expected 3 – 5 year life of this plan.