

Sale of Goods Act Project 2010-11

Summary

Building on insights from the Drivers of Compliance research¹ and the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) market study outputs, OFT's business communications are targeting businesses with skills and knowledge development projects.

Rationale

Consumer detriment in the UK economy in 2007 was £6.6 billion². This research³ also estimated that consumers experienced 26.5 million problems with unsatisfactory goods and services, and that 34 per cent of the problems were unresolved.

High level of complaints and enquiries to Consumer Direct in 2008 revealed dissatisfaction with remedies offered by new retailers of electrical goods and big ticket items and differences in interpretation of 'reasonable period of time' in the Sale of Goods Act.

More recent research by Trading Standards Institute (TSI) in September 2009 showed that only 45 per cent of businesses provide consumer rights training for staff as part of their induction; and that 24 per cent of traders never updated full-time staff on consumer rights.

2010 IFF Research⁴ findings showed that businesses appear to make general efforts to treat consumers fairly but they do so with low levels of awareness of consumer law and specific legal requirements.

MORI research conducted for the Drivers of Compliance project shows that some businesses rely heavily on their relationships with Trading Standard Services and/or trade associations while others rely increasingly on the internet for the information they need.

On the basis that efficient markets need informed businesses and consumers, a new tool for businesses on the Sale of Goods Act (SOGA) has been developed in partnership with TSI, the British Retail Consortium (BRC), B&Q, Home Retail Group and other partners.

Objectives

¹ Drivers of Compliance research can be found at www.oft.gov.uk/OFTwork/policy-and-research/drivers/

² Consumer detriment from goods only estimated at £2 billion

³ 'Consumer detriment Assessing the frequency and impact of consumer problems with goods and services' can be found at www.oft.gov.uk/shared_oftr/reports/consumer_protection/oft992.pdf

⁴ IFF research 2010 can be found at www.oft.gov.uk/shared_oftr/reports/Evaluating-OFTs-work/OFT1228.pdf

The OFT's strategic objective is to increase business awareness of the Sale of Goods Act and minimise consumer detriment.

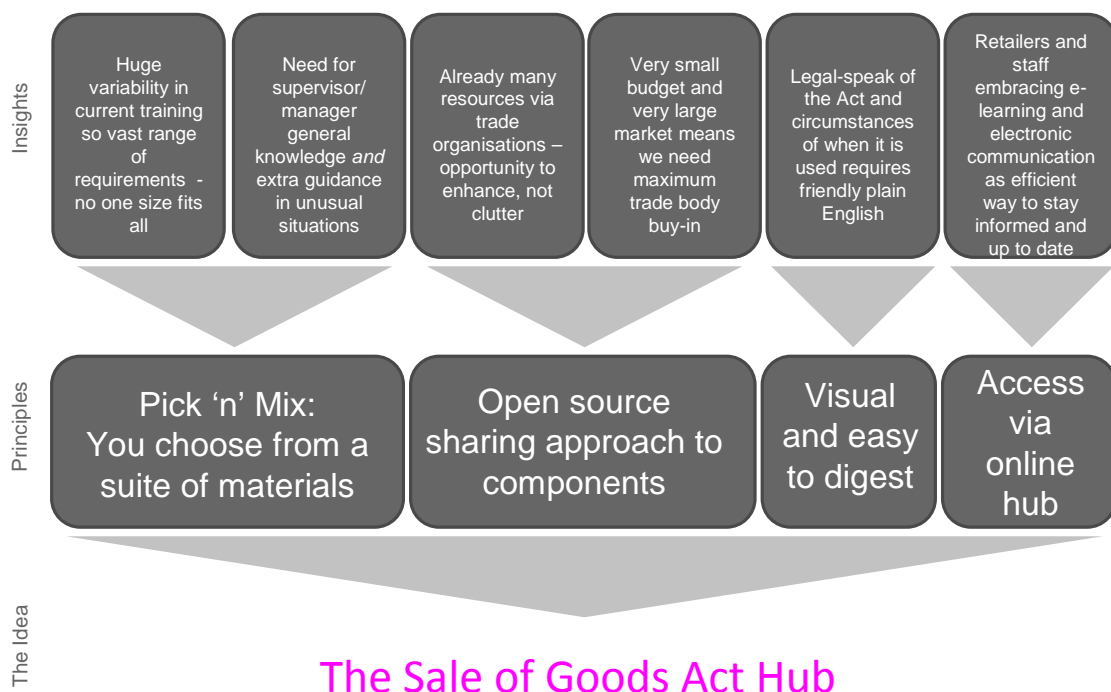
Our communication objective is to support delivery of the strategic objective by:

- Working in partnership with stakeholders and industry to develop an understanding of consumer rights training delivery and needs across the board.
- Developing an increased understanding of consumer rights amongst front line sales staff via educational and promotional materials.
- Promotion of the campaign to increase impact and awareness.

Consultation

The consultation stage of the project gathered insights from retailers and industry bodies to inform activity.

This process (see summary below) resulted in the development of a definitive source of SOGA materials for retail staff, retailer training and consumer affairs departments and the industry bodies that advise them.



Target audiences

- SMEs (via trade bodies and industry partners)
- Larger retailers
- Stakeholders and industry partners.
- Wider stakeholder activity - trade associations, information providers

Key messages

- Everything you need to understand the Sale of Goods Act in one place
- Understanding the Act means staying on the right side of the law, and customers.
- A little confused about the Sale of Goods Act. Don't be.
- For advice on the Sale of Goods Act visit www.offt.gov.uk/saleofgoodsact

Activity 2010/11

Validation and Production

- Produce the online hub and the suite of materials developed as concepts in 2009/10
- Validate the materials with the retailers and industry bodies involved in the consultation

The suite
SOGA made simple
SOGA in practice
SOGA at a glance
SOGA for customers
SOGA in session
SOGA factor
SOGA for internal communications teams

All in three formats:

Online – read on screen as fast reference



Well-designed PDF to download, save and print



Design layout to be adapted by retailer or trade body and/or printed professionally into hard copy



Partnership

- Targeted roll-out to larger retailers
- Work with businesses to evolve tailored partnerships to integrate materials developed into their training programmes.
- Work with support organisations, trade associations and industry bodies to create awareness of the website\materials amongst SMEs

PR

- Regional and Trade press via partners and stakeholders
- National PR coverage
- Free channels both on and offline

Evaluation

- Web tracking
- Feedback from larger retailers and stakeholders
- Identify the number of larger retailers and stakeholders participating

- Review the downloads and dissemination of campaign materials

KPIs

Building on drivers of compliance research, to increase the number of businesses who provide consumer rights training for staff as part of their induction by:

- working in partnership with stakeholders and industry to develop materials that can be used by business to increase front line staff understanding of consumer rights under the Sale of Goods Act.
- promotion of the materials to increase take up by business and trade associations

Timings

Business Partnerships – Ongoing

Development – April/May

Validation – June

Production – July

Web Development - August

Roll-out/Promotion – September

Evaluation – October - Jan