Survey of Trusted Trader Members 2013 – Results Report

Every year the Trusted Trader Team at Derbyshire Trading Standards does a survey to find out what our Trusted Traders think about the scheme. Early in 2013 we sent 1224 members an email with a link to the survey – and 558 of you filled it in; that's a response rate of 46% which is the best we've had since the scheme started back in 2008.

This report summarises the key results and gives details of how Derbyshire Trading Standards Service plans to deal with the issues raised. You can see the full results and members' comments on the Trusted Trader website.

1. Results

Boosting your business
Questions 1 and 2 looked at whether Trusted Trader membership has helped your business, 75% of you said it had. Of those who responded positively, 11% reported a "significant" increase in business and 33% a "moderate" increase.
81% of members think that being a Trusted Trader gives them the edge over competitors who are not part of the scheme (question 4).

Trusted Trader Branding
94% of members are happy with the Trusted Trader branding (question 3).

Publishing Feedback on the Trusted Trader Website
- 81% of you think that publishing feedback has improved the Trusted Trader scheme (question 5).
- 92% felt that we should only publish negative comments after we've heard both sides of the story from you and the customer (question 6).
- 99% of you wanted the opportunity to respond to any negative comment we were considering publishing about your business (question 7).
- Just over half of you (52%) thought that customer confidence in the scheme would be damaged if we never published negative comments (question 8), and
- The two most popular ways for us to encourage Trusted Traders to generate feedback from their customers were to;
    - keep on reminding members about the need for feedback (37%), and
    - promote feedback through the website - avoiding the need to post cards in (36%).

Although the publication of feedback has clearly been a popular development with the majority of members, there were a number of feedback-related issues which emerged from the comments made.

- There was a feeling that members have to give a lot of cards out to get a few posted back in from their customers. The idea of an incentive scheme to encourage customers to return cards was suggested.
- Several members suggested that the comments should stay on the website for longer than the current 12 months.
- Members wanted Trading Standards to check the feedback carefully to make sure that it's genuine.
- Some members commented that getting feedback was a problem if you have regular customers or are members of a similar scheme which also requires feedback.
- Members felt that, even if online feedback was encouraged, there was still a need to keep the feedback cards. This is because some customers would not go online to give feedback.

2. Response by Derbyshire Trading Standards

It's good to see that so many Trusted Traders were so positive about the scheme. This was the best response rate we've ever had to a members' survey and clearly shows the high level of commitment to the scheme.

The main area explored by the survey was the use of customer feedback on the Trusted Trader website. This change was made in April 2012, so the survey was our first opportunity to explore these issues with members.

Just to get things into context, here are the feedback facts and figures;

Feedback comments received since April 2012	11,003	
Positive comments published	10,922	(99%)
Negative comments received	81	(1%)
Negative comments withheld by us	74	
Negative comments published	7	

The fact that we do not publish a negative comment does not automatically mean that it's not justified. It may be withheld simply because the customer tells us that they don't want it to be published – we always respect their wishes.

Our policy for dealing with feedback is already featured on the website at;
[Online feedback - how it works: Community and living - Derbyshire County Council](#)

The section headed "Trading Standards checks" explains how we deal with the tiny number of negative comments that we receive.

Negative Comments
Our policy is that we will only publish a negative comment if all of the following three conditions are met;

1. the customer gives us permission to discuss it with the Trusted Trader,
2. we have investigated it by speaking to the customer **and** the Trusted Trader, and
3. we have concluded that the customer's concerns are justified but are not serious enough to remove the Trusted Trader from the scheme.

We believe that this approach is consistent with the views from the members' survey about us hearing both sides of the story and giving the Trusted Trader the opportunity to respond.

Whilst we do discuss each case with the Trusted Trader concerned and consider their response before reaching a decision, we do not give a formal "right of reply". We feel that it's our role to adjudicate on these issues rather than have an online tit-for-tat where the customer says one thing and the Trusted Trader says another – that sort of thing could damage the scheme.

Encouraging Feedback
In terms of encouraging feedback, there are currently around 1300 members of the scheme and 77% of them have feedback comments listed on the website.

We know that feedback cards are the source of 92% of the comments received. Only 8% of feedback comments are currently submitted online via the Trusted Trader website. Over half of the feedback received (55%), comes from customers over the age of 50.

Members had different views when it came to encouraging feedback or taking action against other Trusted Traders who don't have feedback. Some suggested removing members with no feedback from the scheme, whilst others thought that we should do nothing - on the basis that the members with no feedback would lose out because customers would not use them.

On balance, we feel that it's best for us to keep reminding members to gather feedback from their customers and also to make sure customers know that they can give feedback online if they prefer see Rate a Trusted Trader: Community and living - Derbyshire County Council

In this way, we feel that the members who have the most feedback will benefit and those who continue without generating feedback will be less likely to attract customers as a result.

Other Feedback Issues

Issue	Response
Members have to give a lot of cards out to get a few posted back in from their customers. What about an incentive scheme to encourage customers to return cards?	**Accepted.** We will promote the online feedback option so customers can use that if they prefer. We will talk to colleagues in the Council's public relations team about other ways to encourage customer feedback.
Feedback comments should stay on the website for longer than the current 12 months.	**Accepted.** We will increase the time period to 2 years. However, members have to realise that this means that any negative comments will also be listed for 2 years.
Trading Standards should check feedback carefully to make sure that it's genuine	**Accepted.** We already do this and one member has been removed for abusing the feedback system. We will review the checks we carry out to make sure they are as effective as they can be.
Getting feedback can be a problem for members with regular customers or members who are in similar schemes which also require feedback.	**Accepted.** We are aware of this problem but our Code of Practice is clear on this – members must give their customers the opportunity to provide feedback. Trading Standards will continue to encourage customer feedback and promote the website as an alternative feedback route. **Members must also make seeking feedback part of their routine of dealing with clients. Members can direct customers to the website feedback page if that is better for the customer**.
Feedback cards have to remain part of the scheme as not all customers can go online to give feedback.	**Accepted.** We will keep issuing feedback cards. The cards themselves will be re-designed. We want to move to a fold-over design to protect customer confidentiality.