

Comment

The Customade Group has failed yet again and put people quite cynically out of work just before Christmas – I suspect the announcement on 18 December was contrived to avoid press attention – yesterday’s news, as we know, becomes tomorrow’s chip wrapping.

On 19 December, much of the Group was then acquired by a company that had only been incorporated on 28 November – it is called Real Aluminium Products Ltd...it has ‘purchased’ REAL Aluminium and Atlas Roof Solutions. Polyframe Norwich and the Stevenswood network of 22 trade counters have also been sold. Another remaining Group company, Virtuoso Doors, has closed its doors – all employees have been made redundant...Happy New Year! You can read more on Page 5 – News.

Seen coming

This latest failure had been predicted by the market and it’s imminency was clear to those in the know – but not it seems to the companies that continued to supply or more to the point, concede and decided to again supply the Customade Group after its collapse in 2020. When that happened, the unfairness of the redundancies (the people at the helm all continued in their highly paid jobs) and the unfairness of the Pre-Pack Administration that was entered into (the company that pretty well owned the Customade Group bought it out of Administration – and then legally failed to pay any of the accumulated debts) caused many in the supply chain to declare they would not re-engage in supplying the new edition. The Installer and sister publication, The Fabricator Magazine refused to take Group company advertising and the FIT Show refused to allow the Group or associates to exhibit.

But the lure of the Dollar meant many who should have continued to show solidarity, relented – and now they have been caught with their pants down yet again. When will suppliers in this industry ever learn – this is not the first Group of companies to become serial failures who then re-emerge like Phoenixes from the flames of disaster...supported by suppliers who think they won’t get their fingers burnt. The fallout again will be felt in 2025 – in a year that is full of the promise of slow build to a new boom; a year when ambitious companies want money in the bank to invest, not be writing off debt acquired by bad business decisions.

Overly ambitious

Was it overly ambitious or completely delusional for those suppliers to think it would not happen again? After the Covid boom there was a post-Covid lull of such epic proportions that business has been tough ever since. Did our business leaders not anticipate this?

Alexander de Haasf who ran Nimbus at 30 June 2020 when his company ac uirws it, declared that the demand for Customade Group products was going to be on the up and up. All the company needed was an injection of cash (and to run away from its debts). Fast forward to Christmas 2024 and de Haasf was citing the predictability of a declining market for Customade Group products as the reason for its second failure in just over four years.

Get Real

Jamie Newall, the new CEO of Real Aluminium Products Ltd, has said: “We will provide firm financial foundations and the focused investment the business needs to grow. For all our customers, it is very much business as usual.” You have to admire Newall’s confidence for Real Aluminium...or choose not to touch it with a barge pole.

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