

Oops We Did It Again – Another Customade Fiasco

The Customade Group went pop again on 18 December and most of it was 'bought' on the 19 December 2024 by a company incorporated barely a month before.

Curiously, the purchasing company has a name almost identical to the company it purchased. Real Aluminium Products has acquired Customade Group's REAL Aluminium and sister company, Atlas Roof Solutions. Real Aluminium Products was incorporated on 28 November 2024.

The Group has a reputation for emerging like a Phoenix from the flames of disaster – whilst leaving employees and suppliers with more than burnt fingers.

Despite the callousness to those made redundant, the move looks to have been deliberately timed for the Christmas holidays to avoid the glare of press scrutiny. The Installer, however, has been hard at work getting the low-down for its loyal readers.

On 18 December 2024, the Customade Group issued a statement that read: 'We have completed a significant financial restructuring aimed at ensuring the long-term stability of our trading brands and securing the future of hundreds of jobs within the Group'. The truth is the firm had continued to lose money since the last time it went out of business in 2020 and was also struggling with the spectre of having to refinance its main banking facilities by the end of December 2024.

Outrage sure to come

Outrage spread across the industry last time the Group folded (as a much larger consideration of nine companies)



putting hundreds out of work. This time fewer people were told they had lost their jobs just before Christmas – but outrage is likely to blossom again as we enter the New Year.

All the workers of Virtuoso Doors have been made redundant along with some Group employees and some employees of Stevenswood.

The Customade Group in December 2024 consisted of not only Virtuoso but also Stevenswood with 22 trade counters specialising in the supply of PVC-U and aluminium fenestration. Stevenswood's aluminium products come primarily from REAL Aluminium and Atlas Roof Solutions which were both Customade Group companies.

The last in the list is fabricator Polyframe – known as Polyframe Norwich under the previous iteration of the Customade Group – which when it went bust also owned Polyframe Halifax and Polyframe Livingston, where 800 jobs were lost.

Phoenix

During Covid, the previous iteration of the Customade Group got itself into trouble and turned to a pre-pack administration to sell itself to the highest bidder who took the company on but did not pay any of its bills.

Finance company, Nimbus, together with financing source Midcap Financial, agreed to buy the majority of the Customade Group out of administration in June 2020. Outrage stemmed from the fact that Nimbus was already the majority owner of the Customade Group.

Present day

Will Gold, the now former CEO of the Customade Group says: "Over the past two years, the market for our products has been contracting and we've seen businesses within our sector struggle and go into insolvency.

"As part of the restructuring, the assets and trade of Polyframe, Stevenswood, REAL and Atlas have been sold to new buyers in two separate transactions. The Virtuoso business has ceased trading."

Get Real

Jamie Newall, the new CEO of Real Aluminium Products Ltd, said: "REAL Aluminium and Atlas already work from shared facilities in Gloucestershire with shared staff. While it is vital to safeguard the nearly 190+ jobs in the new combined business, we will also provide the focused investment the business needs to grow. For all our customers it is very much business as usual." 

Kiddy Loses Part Of Finger In Door Gap Disaster



A five-year-old boy lost the tip of a finger when he stuck his hand in the door-gap on the hinge side where hinge guards should have been.


The Door & Hardware Federation has now urged caution regarding reducing gaps at hinges, following the accident at a Surrey school and a prosecution brought by the HSE.

In a newer building at the school, hinge guards had been fitted on the doorsets. The School Trust was convicted as it holds a duty of care to persons other than employees. In October 2024, it was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay an additional £6,875.70 in costs.

"The investigation discovered

the trust had failed to identify the hazard which meant hinge guards were not installed on the doors in the older building," said the DHF's senior training & compliance officer, Nick Perkins. "This case serves as a timely reminder that all significant hazards must be identified and risk assessed and where necessary, protected or eliminated, even on manual doors and gates. Clearly, the risk based on degree of harm, likelihood of occurrence and frequency of exposure means that reducing hinge gaps are high risk in premises with considerable numbers of vulnerable people present."

The installer of the doors was not prosecuted, however, if the accident had occurred in the newer building, might have been brought to justice as any knowledgeable contractor must advise its client of relevant laws and hazards.

Perkins added: "Ultimate responsibility for safety within and about a premises lies with the owner or manager but it is important to note that maintenance providers also have a legal obligation to identify and inform their clients about hazards and they are required to return anything they have worked on in a safe condition." 

Lean Green Belt Training

Employees at Quickslide have undertaken Lean Green Belt Training offered by West Yorkshire Manufacturing Services.

This latest training is just part of a continued commitment by the window and door supplier to offer all staff across all levels of the business and operations personalised professional development opportunities that upskill not just each individual but also the business as a whole.

And it provides measurable improvements that Quickslide's customers benefit from too.

Production manager Lyndon Rattigan was one of the attendees to the five-day programme, which was undertaken over a 6-week period. The course focused on ways to analyse and

tackle specific role-based productivity challenges. He says: "Our training centred on how best to ensure the smooth and effective introduction of new products and processes, while maintaining and even improving our quality standards and low wastage."

During training, employees were introduced to new ways of thinking and working, learning about the principles of lean productivity and how to apply them through practical exercises. "We came away with practical tools that we've already put into day-to-day use," says Rattigan. "We've introduced communication boards throughout the workshop, so we can document challenges and work together to identify solutions and deliver



improvements. We now have observation stations to both spot and share good practice and identify areas of improvement, to increase output across the board. And new call points at each workstation means no time is wasted by employees leaving to look for supervisors, which has improved our productivity rate." These are regular small gains that day in, day out, add up to measurable improvements with real financial value." 