

'Wholesaler front-line staff are essential' – contractors

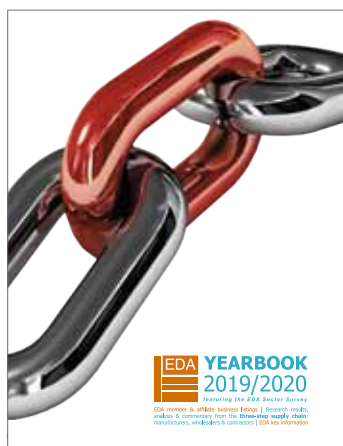
From human touchpoints to the rise of e-commerce, the EDA's research reveals the concerns of manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors

Well informed professionals on the wholesale trade counter continue to be a much-valued source of information and advice for the electrical contractor. The significance of personal contact in the sales process is just one of the findings to come out of the latest major piece of research by the EDA.

In this sector-wide survey, manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors were polled for their views across six key themes:

- Business concerns
- Product quality and new competitors
- Quality, price and validation
- Ecommerce
- Challenges to digitalisation
- Information channels – where does the contractor go for advice and information?

Common ground between audiences surrounds cash flow, costs, margins, payment and pricing. Digitalisation and globalisation have trans-



formed the market. New brands and channels create uncertainty for contractors and direct threats to manufacturers and wholesalers alike. Despite the might of Amazon, the quality of face-to-face trade counter interactions is still highly relevant. Turn to pages 4-5 for selected survey findings, with sector leader reactions on page 8.

The wholesale trade counter is the most important source of in-person information and advice for today's contractors



FROM THE BOARDROOM

There are many topics fighting for front page prominence this month: the 2000th EDA apprentice start, awarding of CPD accreditation to our suite of Product Knowledge Modules, the big developments in our EDA Product Data activities, including the appointment of Richard Appleton to lead our new industry datapool project – to be called EDATA – and the publication of our first White Paper on a Product Data topic.

These are all covered inside.

However, we want to showcase our most recent sector survey carried out this summer. We asked manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors the same questions and compared their responses. In many cases they align, but in some cases they diverge significantly, particularly when it comes to the selection by lowest price rather than quality.

We present key highlights here but the full survey is published in our Yearbook, which will be distributed to EDA members in early October. Look out for your copy or visit our website to download a digital copy.

Margaret Fitzsimons

EDA Board of Management

Turn to page 4 for a sample of the survey's findings, then read reactions from the industry on page 8.

BIGGEST BUSINESS CONCERNS

A sample of responses from three supply chain responders.

Not understanding what a brand can do for them. Only focusing on price. Unrealistic margin aspirations. Thinking specials are sale or return

Manufacturer

Transparency of pricing with the ever increasing presence of digital channels. The increasing pressure on margin as a result. New suppliers in the sector becoming disruptive with aggressive pricing and lower rebates that will make traditional wholesalers rethink their business model

Wholesaler

Fair pricing, reasonable product range, reliable and efficient service. I don't want to be waiting four days for a product I was told would be in stock the next day. It makes me look incompetent to my customer and will result in me going elsewhere next time

Contractor

EDA modules are now CPD accredited

With more than 1,500 modules ordered by EDA members and affiliates to date, CPD accreditation is another reason to use the EDA Product Knowledge Modules

All 12 distance-learning modules in the EDA's Product Knowledge Programme have been assessed by the CPD Certification Service and are now officially CPD Accredited.

CPD – or Continuing Professional Development – describes the process of maintaining and enhancing the knowledge and skills you need to deliver the best professional service to your customers.

Claim your certificate

Each EDA module takes between 30 and 40 hours of study to complete (depending upon previous knowledge). Each hour counts as one CPD point. If you have achieved a Pass, Credit or Distinction in an



EDA module, and you'd like a CPD certificate for your portfolio, please contact the EDA.

Better performance

Don't forget, the EDA Product Knowledge Programme is available

to all EDA members and affiliates. You have access to this training so you can develop your teams to improve your business performance.

In the government's most recent biennial Employer Skills Survey, published in August 2018, 'two-thirds of establishments with skills gaps (66 per cent) said they had an impact on their organisation's performance' and 'small businesses were more likely to report major impacts'.

To find out how the EDA's Training and Apprenticeships can benefit your business, visit www.eda.org.uk or contact Rose at training@eda.org.uk or on 020 3141 7350.

2,000TH EDA APPRENTICE SIGNS UP

Nineteen-year-old Jonathan McArdle, pictured on the left with his manager Dan Harper at Edmundson Electrical Ltd's Middlesborough branch, is the 2,000th apprentice to join the UK's electrotechnical sector through EDA Apprenticeship Plus, the organisation behind the apprenticeship service for members and affiliates of the Association.

There's also real growth and progression in the way EDA members and affiliates are using the service. An average of 15 apprentices start in EDA member and affiliate businesses every week. In 2009 there were 15 starts in the whole year.

Trade Supplier Apprenticeship Standard Level 2 represents 30 per cent of all apprenticeship starts for EDA members. It is packed with £4,000-worth of added-value training, but SMEs pay just five per cent (£200) – the rest is funded by government. You will need to pay the apprentice's salary.

Demand for Level 3 (equivalent to two A levels), 4 and 5 (Foundation degree level and above) has grown substantially, and the variety of topics – from Accountancy to Supply Chain Leadership Professional – requested has increased from two to almost 60.



Member and Affiliate Member round-up

Five new members and affiliates have joined the Association.

Members

Two of the members are with the AWEBB buying group. They joined on 1 July. The first is Electrical Wholesale Express of Newtonabbey, Northern Ireland. The second is EW Group (UK) Ltd, in Bristol and with a branch in Beckton, East London. Ablectrics Ltd in Bristol, from the IBA buying group, joined the Association on 1 September.

Affiliates

On 1 July, WAGO Ltd joined the Association as an affiliate. A month later, it was joined by Deligo Ltd.

MEMBERS

Electrical Wholesale Express

ew GROUP
THE ELECTRICAL WHOLESALE

ABLECTRICS
Electrical Wholesaler & Fully Fitted Lighting Showroom

AFFILIATES

WAGO

DELIGO

Obituary: David Cartwright



The EDA regrets to announce the death of David Cartwright, who twice held the role of Chair of the EDA's Scottish Section.

David's grandfather started John T Cartwright & Sons in the early 20th century. David was the third generation in the business. His father, George W Cartwright, was EWV President in 1951.

After farming in British Columbia for several years, David came back to Scotland and joined his father and brother Arthur for eight or nine years. They were strong domestic appliance distributors and David's father sold out to Thorn, which had a major appliance business, in 1972.

David moved South to run Wessex Wholesale, looking after about 15 branches until 1976. He then ran EA Woods' Glasgow branch, which he and brother Arthur took over in 1979, renaming it A & D Cartwright Ltd. They were members of the Crew buying group and then ANEW.

He is survived by his wife Audrey, three children and six grandchildren.

Supporting digitisation of the electrotechnical sector

In August, Richard Appleton joined the EDA team. He'll be applying his years of experience to work with manufacturers, wholesalers and third-party tech providers to create a UK industry datapool for product information – with ETIM at its heart.



decisively to overcome challenges and embrace new opportunities.

Engagement & education

Market engagement and education will also be a focus. As an industry-led initiative we are ideally placed to work with industry experts to develop data standards and best practice (for example, for product images, descriptions and identification). We are also actively engaging with PIM (Product Information Management), e-commerce and ERP system providers, representing the sector's needs and helping develop links with EDATA. Again, the aim in taking on this role is to enable wholesalers and manufacturers to focus on implementing their own unique digital strategy.

White paper

The first in a series of white papers specific to the electrical sector is available to download. Authored by Richard, 'Effective E-Commerce: 3 product data essentials for electrical wholesalers' gives a more detailed look at product data held in EDATA. www.eda.org.uk/publications-and-resources/white-papers

Product data pool

The business's primary role is the creation and management of EDATA: an industry-owned pool of manufacturers' product data, independently verified for conformance and available for wholesalers to integrate into their web sites and digital business processes.

At launch, EDATA will contain the three key elements of product data required for effective e-commerce:

- Manufacturer Master Data
- Technical Attributes in the ETIM structure
- Digital Assets (images and documents, for example)

Similar industry-owned data pools are now in operation in various sectors in the UK, Europe and the US. They are a clear sign of an industry that wants to control its own destiny, that is not afraid of change and can act



DIARY DATE

The first ever ETIM-UK Digital Forum with international guest speakers.

Monday 2 December 2019, 1.30pm – 6.00pm
Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1NT

Book your place online at www.etim-uk.co.uk or call the EDA on 020 3141 7350



EDATA FOUNDER MEMBER PROGRAMME

The EDA is currently visiting the sector's key companies and digital leaders, both manufacturers and wholesalers, who can show their commitment to the digitalisation of the sector by signing up to the EDA's datapool before it is launched in January 2020. Founders commit for three years and enjoy many advantages.

To find out more, contact margaret.fitzsimons@eda.org.uk or richard.appleton@eda.org.uk.

DIARY DATES FOR EDA MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES

Visit www.eda.org.uk for updates, plus a sector-wide calendar to help you avoid diary clashes.

Tuesday 8 October - Friday 11 October 2019

EDA Scottish Function, Old Course Hotel, St Andrews
Networking event.

Call Margaret Fitzsimons at the EDA 020 3141 7350

Wednesday 13 November 2019

EDA Regional Business Forum
LuxLive 2019 at ExCeL, London.
Book online at www.eda.org.uk

Monday 2 December 2019

First ever ETIM-UK Digital Forum

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) London

To book your place visit www.etim-uk.co.uk or call Richard Appleton at the EDA on 020 3141 7350

Thursday 5 March 2020

EDA Awards Dinner 2020
At the InterContinental Hotel, Park Lane, London.
Call Maeve O'Dea on 0117 909 9550

Monday 9 - Wednesday 11 March 2020

Light + Building, Frankfurt
EDA visiting delegation.
Call Margaret Fitzsimons at the EDA 020 3141 7350

Thursday 7 May - Saturday 9 May 2020

65th EUEW Annual Business Convention, Barcelona

EUEW

For members committed to growing their business in Europe.
Call Margaret Fitzsimons at the EDA on 020 3141 7350

Thursday 2 July 2020

EDA Summer Event
Thames trip on the Dixie Queen.
Call Margaret Fitzsimons at the EDA on 020 3141 7350

Read a sample of the findings of the EDA Sector Survey 2019 from the new-look EDA Yearbook. The publication – made possible with the support of 28 businesses – contains full results, analysis and commentary, along with comprehensive member and affiliate listings and EDA key information

People, prices and products: opportunities and threats

EDA SECTOR SURVEY 2019

INTRODUCTION

This year's Sector Survey is the first piece of major research from the EDA since 2016.

For this survey, we've polled a new audience – the contractor. The results give us a clear line of sight along the three-step supply chain.

Three steps

Manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors were all invited to

share their views, anonymously, on 15 questions – a combination of free text and prompted questions – designed to give us the latest insights into the challenges and threats facing businesses in our sector.

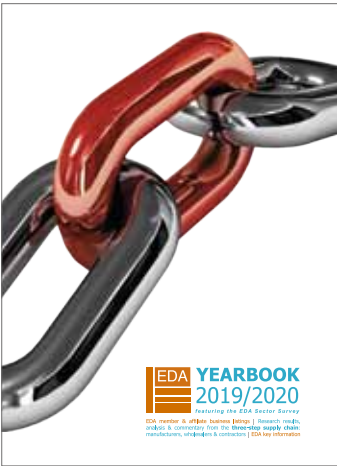
On this spread we've chosen a sample of the survey's findings for you to review. The full results of the survey are published in our new-look EDA Yearbook which is due

out shortly – look out for your copy.

You can also download a PDF of the full survey at www.eda.org.uk

Comments welcome

As always, the EDA welcomes your feedback on the survey results. Are you surprised by the results? Do you disagree with the findings? You can call the EDA head office on 020 3141 7340 or email info@eda.org.uk



INFORMATION CHANNELS

Which channels do contractors say they would struggle to do their job without?

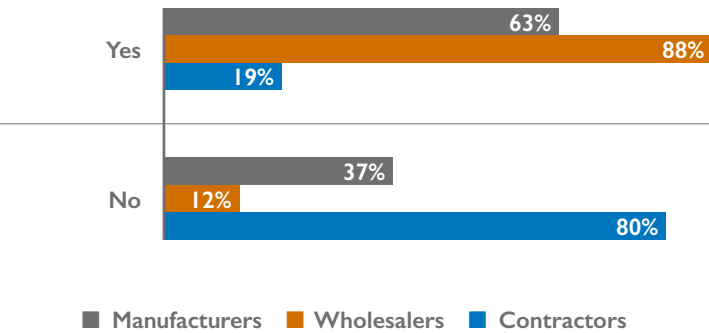
The wholesale counter provides the sole source of in-person information for today's contractors

There is an opportunity for wholesalers to take advantage of this window of opportunity to ensure the trade counter experience is one that future generations of workers will value.

No other wholesaler channels – breakfast events, brochures and catalogues or helplines – made this critical contractor selection, therefore the trade counter experience is the key source of influence.



QUALITY, PRICE AND VALIDATION



Manufacturers, do you think contractors are happy buying brands they don't recognise, if the price is low?

Wholesalers, do your customers ask for the lowest price product even if the brand is unfamiliar?

Contractors, are you happy buying brands you don't recognise if the price is low?

Here we can see a potentially significant disconnect between contractors and wholesalers.

Nearly ninety per cent of wholesalers say contractors ask for the lowest-priced product available, even if the brand is unfamiliar. Over 60 per cent of manufacturers believe contractors are happy to buy unfamiliar brands if the price is right. Yet only 19 per cent of contractors agree that they are happy to buy unfamiliar brands if the price is right.

BIGGEST BUSINESS CONCERN

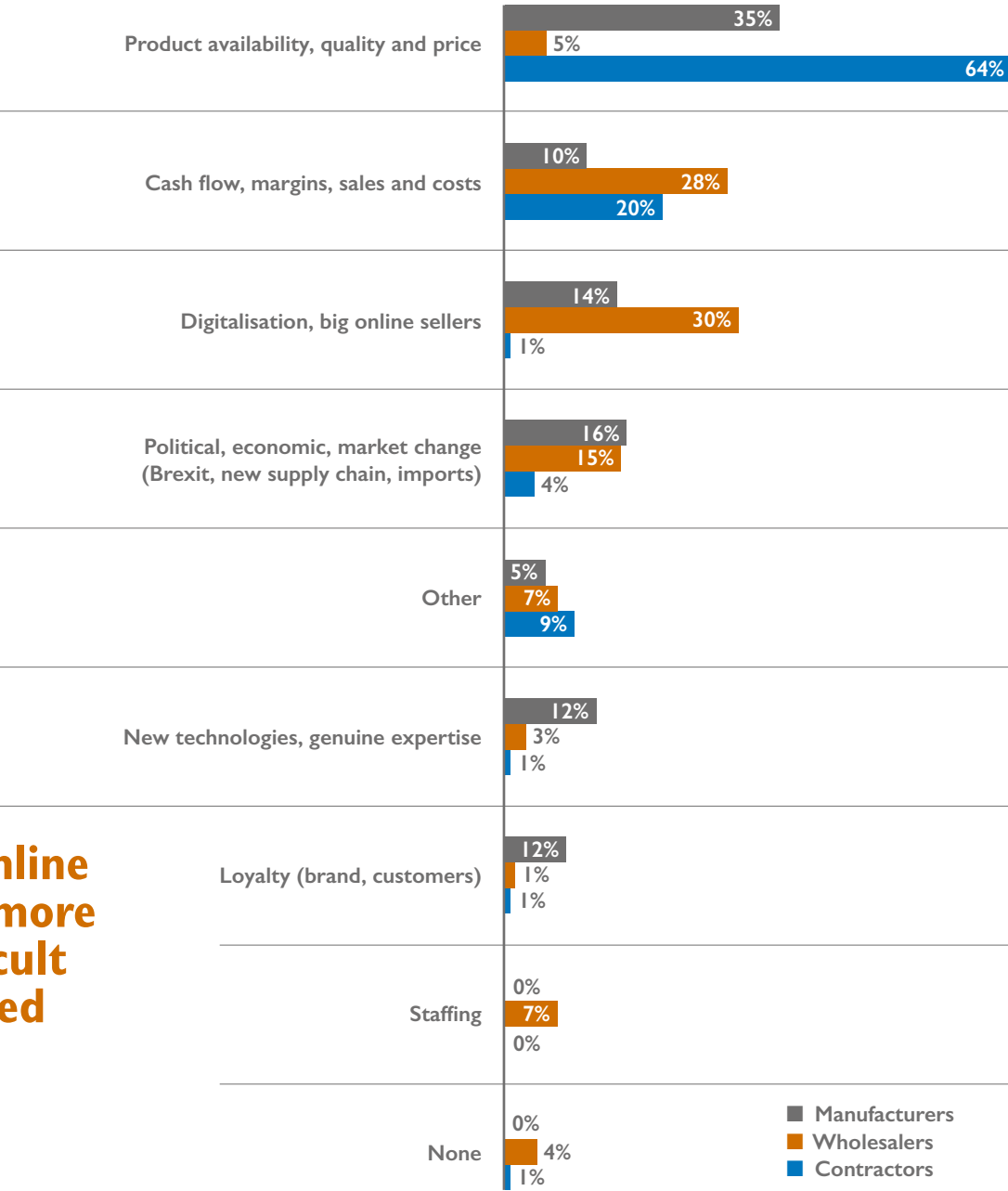
With regard to the issues facing your business, what is your greatest business concern?

Contractors are most troubled by product availability, price and quality, with almost two-thirds of respondents citing concerns in this category.

Product quality and availability ranked equally high for contractors, with 40 per cent citing either quality or availability as their greatest business concern. There were also questions for wholesalers and manufacturers as to stock levels and on-time delivery.

Availability, price and quality was mentioned by only 5 per cent of wholesalers, who are more troubled by the threat from online competitors and digitalisation.

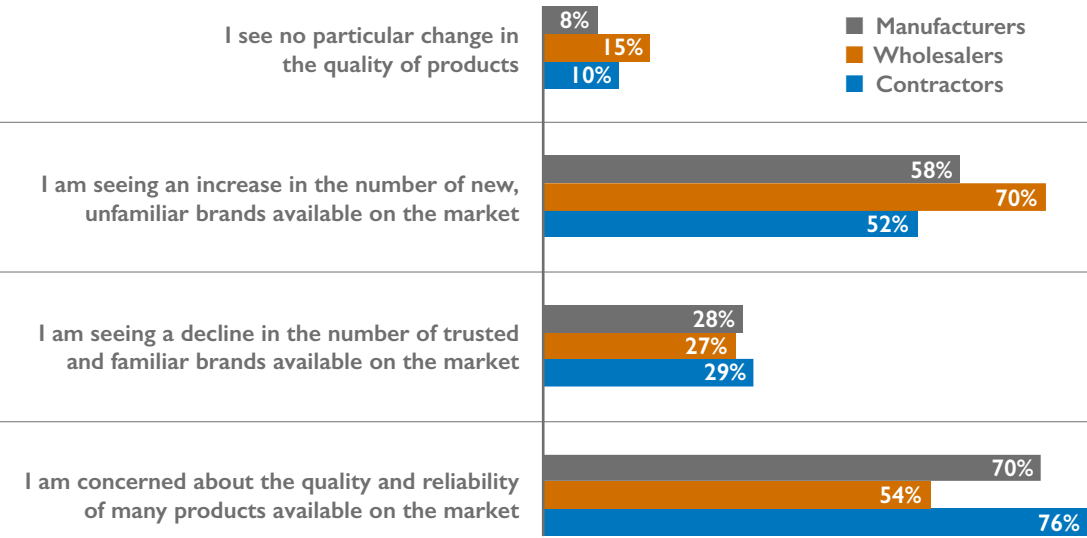
Directly related to all of the above are commercial pressures across the supply chain. These are particular concerns for wholesalers and contractors – who are typically smaller businesses than the manufacturers.



“Amazon and online are making it more and more difficult for branch-based wholesalers to compete”

Contractor

PRODUCT QUALITY AND NEW COMPETITORS



What are your views about the quality of products flowing through the marketplace?

Contractors' customers are demanding lowest prices and are increasingly adept at using digital channels to identify and price products themselves. Wholesalers are forced to compete with the prices available through e-commerce channels.

With contractors unsettled by the emergence of new brands and products, there is a clear opportunity for wholesalers to leverage their trusted intermediary status and to provide their customers (and suppliers) with expert insight into new brands and products.

Cloud-based smart lighting from ROBUS

ROBUS Connect is a cloud-based smart lighting system. Ever more people are using digital assistant products – Alexa, Siri and Google Assistant, for example – at home. ROBUS Connect products are compatible with these systems and can be used alongside other smart products.

ROBUS Connect-compatible products have built in Wi-Fi connectivity, so all that is needed is a wireless network and an internet connection to control any ROBUS Connect light fitting using the ROBUS Connect app. There is no need for a hub. The app controls from anywhere, allowing many users – ideal for scheduling lights to turn on and off.

The range comprises: GLS Connect 8W tuneable LED lamps, B22 and E27, Ultimium Connect 7W downlight, Vegas Connect LED flexi-strip

single colour, RGB and RGBW controllers, plus Pulse Connect LED flexi-strip single colour and RGB controllers.

Most homeowners will start dabbling with smart lighting products by first buying a smart lamp for their lamp or ceiling. The GLS CONNECT is available with bayonet and Edison screw caps, which allow the lamp to be used in fittings of UK and European origin. GLS CONNECT will replace and provide more light than most traditional light sources and cut energy use by 90 per cent.

The firm's area sales reps across Ireland are hosting training days for contractors and wholesalers to demonstrate how easy it is to pair and control the fittings with the app.

www.robust.com



Knightsbridge lighting and wiring catalogue

Knightsbridge, a leading importer and distributor of lighting products and wiring accessories, has launched its 2020 catalogue. This edition provides still more complete lighting and wiring solutions.

Additions include an extended grid wiring range, new CCT adjustable LED luminaires, high-power LED floodlights and smart downlights.

Knightsbridge also provides a first-class customer service and expert technical assistance wherever required. Alongside the growth, the company is also determined to reduce its carbon footprint – it introduced FSC-compliant packaging earlier this year.

www.mlaccessories.co.uk



Integrated CCT LED batten in 40 and 60W variants

Crompton Lamps' Photius Integrated LED CCT from Phoebe LED is an IP42-rated batten with correlated colour temperature technology. This allows the colour temperature to be quickly and easily changed between 3000, 4000 and 6000K with the easy access colour-changing switch.

The batten has an efficiency of 120lm/W and is available in four and five-foot lengths with standard, microwave sensor and three-hour emergency models. Each slimline flicker-free model can be suspended or surface mounted, and is suitable for offices, residential/commercial properties and other lighting applications where dependability and quality light are required.

Cable suitable for food and beverage applications

In the food and beverage industry, choosing the right cable material is crucial to avoid unplanned downtime. The Ölflex Robust 200 from **LAPP UK and Eire** is a flexible power cable made with LAPPTPE outer sheath compound P4/11 and other RoHS compliant materials. It is non-porous, microbe-resistant and estimated to last up to 10 times longer than standard SY, CY and YY cables.



Ideal for applications in contact with vegetable and animal fats and oils, the features and benefits also include a high resistance to fresh, processed and sewage water – as well as beverages such as fruit juices, wine, beer and lemonades.

Well-suited to steam cleaning, this power cable boasts a repeated longer service life when compared with a standard rubber outer sheath and is harmless when exposed to foodstuffs. No evaporating substances such as softening agents are used; neither are heavy metals.

www.lappgroup.co.uk



A low-cost screwless upgrade to box-fix

Hamilton Litestat has launched Hartland G2, a 'second generation' screwless faceplate that the company says is 'the perfect competitively priced upgrade' to its Hartland box fix plate.

Sleek, streamlined and screwless, and with a new patented clip (spot-welded for durability), installation is simply push-to-fit. Its simplified design and reduced manufacturing costs means the Hartland G2 delivers a popular screwless design at a low price.

Now available at many wholesalers with a fit-and-forget 25-year product guarantee and many options, it comes in six high-quality finishes. Inserts are available in white, black and now quartz grey. More will be added soon.

www.hamilton-litestat.com



All your info in one place with Schneider Electric

Schneider's Distributor Portal is the fast, reliable and easy way to get all the information you need to grow your distribution business. It gives users access to digital tools and resources to support distributors in an increasingly challenging market.

The portal provides accredited product and services training, business advice, technical support, product information and up-to-date industry news. It also comes with benefits such as access to exclusive on-line promotions, allowing distributors to treat their customers while benefiting themselves. The portal also acts as the gateway to mySE where distributors can place/amend orders and check on price and availability.

Distributor statements will soon be available through the portal. These will let distributors see their purchases across the Schneider business to ensure they reach their targets.

www.schneider-electric.co.uk/en/partners/distributors/



Flexicon provides cable protection peace of mind

When it comes to protecting people, property and processes, cable protection can be critical, but is often overlooked, says **Flexicon**. Failure to consider the hazards and subsequent consequences can be costly.

For example, non-metallic and polymer-coated metal conduits should be considered carefully when they are specified for installations subject to high UV exposure. When degraded by UV radiation, incorrectly specified system materials can become cracked and brittle, resulting in less impact strength, flexibility and compromised ingress protection.

Specifiers should choose products designated 'UV-resistant', which have undergone extensive UV testing.

With more than 60 flexible conduit systems, in both metallic and non-metallic options, Flexicon designs, tests and manufactures its products in the UK – all backed by third party approvals.

Flexicon says it 'goes above and beyond with testing' to ensure maximum, market-leading protection by subjecting its conduit solutions to 1,000-hour Xenon arc testing to UL 1660 to support its claims.

www.flexicon.uk.com



SWA's glands – taking the market by STORM

SWA says its zero-halogen STORM® armoured cable glands are not only 'revolutionary' but quicker, safer and easier to use than conventional CW glands.

The new products are designed to revolutionise the way armoured and non-armoured SY and CY braided cables are terminated.

With improved ingress protection (IP68) and faster fitting over conventional armoured cable glands, the low-cost STORM glands can be used from -20 to 80°C.

An innovative anti-rotational design eliminates the damaging



effects of rotation on the armour wire.

Furthermore, with their UV-stabilised non-metallic outer bodies, these glands need no shroud to prevent corrosion, speeding up installation and allowing later inspection of the armour clamping by simply unscrewing the upper assembly.

The BS EN 62444:2013-approved range is available in standard or Taurus versions in thread sizes from 20-32mm. It is suitable for use with both armoured and non-armoured SY & CY braided cable.

www.swaonline.co.uk



Connected lighting means remote monitoring for Tata

Tata Steel, one of Europe's largest steel producers, wanted to upgrade the lighting in its innovation room to impress visitors and save energy.

Signify offered the ideal solution with Interact Pro, allowing Tata to remotely monitor the system, and to provide easy and simple-to-use lighting controls for employees.

Interact Pro is a connected lighting system that works with Philips Interact-ready luminaires, allowing real-time energy monitoring. A wireless network connects luminaires, sensors and switches, so no extra cabling is needed and installation is much quicker than for many existing systems.

Light switches were fitted, but employees stopped using them because the automation allowed by sensors and the personal control app mean that they are not required. This reduces energy consumption beyond a standard LED upgrade by ensuring the lighting is only on when the room is in use.

www.interact-lighting.com/pro

Don't miss out...

As an Affiliated Member of the EDA, you can feature your products/services in this section for FREE.

Contact Anne Vessey on 020 3141 7350 or anne.vessey@eda.org.uk

EDA SECTOR SURVEY

Senior sector leaders have their say

By now you will have read about the Association's Sector Survey on the front page and seen some of its findings on pages 4 and 5. Here, leaders from across the sector react to the research

PRODUCT QUALITY AND NEW COMPETITORS

Steven K Davies, CEO, The Lighting Industry Association



'The LIA's market surveillance programme over the past two years has shown new entrants, poor quality, unsafe products as well as non-compliance with the WEEE regulations has created a "minefield" when it comes to the selection of lighting products.

Dr Jeremy Hodge, Secretary General, British Cables Association



'There is remarkable consistency between the views of manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors on questions about product quality and new competitors. Positively, only a quarter are seeing any decline in traditional brands, but about half are seeing a number of new, unfamiliar brands in the market.

Dr Howard Porter, CEO, BEAMA



'That 70 per cent of manufacturers are troubled about the quality and reliability of certain products on the market is, unfortunately, not a surprise to BEAMA. As the association representing manufacturers, product safety and compliance is an established pillar of our work with members.

'58 per cent of manufacturers are also concerned about unfamiliar brands. Unfamiliar does not mean non-compliant, and in this fast-paced hi-tech sector, challenger brands are to be expected. However, post-Grenfell legislation is likely to focus on electrotechnical products and we must work together as a sector to ensure that safety is at the very top of our collective agendas.



'Wholesalers must be prepared to interrogate their suppliers and demand the proof that the products they buy meet the UK's standards. We all have a role to play in policing our supply chain.'

E-COMMERCE ATTITUDES

Chris Gibson, EDA President



'Wholesalers feel threatened, that's clear: 68 per cent see the growth of online sales by companies like Amazon or Screwfix as a threat, 69 per cent feel the same way about unknown or new entrants offering online sales, and 69 per cent feel the threat from other wholesalers who are operating online.

'Let's be honest, no wholesaler has the resources to beat Amazon at e-commerce. But what we can do is add value where they can't. They cannot supplement their online presence with one-to-one professional expertise or advice, they cannot troubleshoot, or offer training, or tool repair and calibration days and so on. Warren Buffet talks about moats (the economic equivalent of medieval moats protecting a fortress) as the opportunity to maintain a competitive advantage. As a sector, we need to get creative with what sets us apart and do it better.

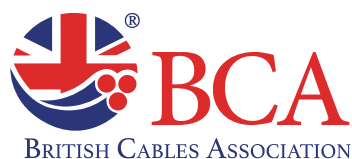


'Neglect the development of your staff at your peril, or fail to introduce new young talent who bring with them great ideas about how the next generation of electricians and contractors want to do business.'



'However, despite a "rush to the bottom" in terms of price, LIA Members have, to their credit, stuck with the philosophy that quality comes at a price and compliance is not optional.

'The simple adage that "you get what you pay for" has never been truer and the challenge we now face is to "educate" contractors, specifiers and wholesalers about what to look for when making purchasing decisions and perhaps more importantly, what is "missing" from the cheaper ones.'



'Concerns about the quality and reliability of products is high, with around three-quarters of contractors and manufacturers concerned, while more than half of wholesalers share their concerns. Contractors want to be able to easily check specifications and quality. Manufacturers and wholesalers together can provide product information and assistance using a combination of online methods supported by traditional telephone and face-to-face approaches.'

QUALITY, PRICE AND VALIDATION

Steve Bratt, CEO, ECA



'EDA's survey findings generally highlight the importance of collaboration and communication among businesses in the supply chain. This particular finding shows an interest-

ing fault line in these efforts; while suppliers (particularly wholesalers) assume that contractors are looking for low-price materials, this is not necessarily the case.

'In fact contractors, including ECA members, are often seeking long-lasting, high-quality products that will align with their own business values – notably to provide excellent service and capability to their own clients, who are them-

selves a core component of the supply chain.

'Quality is the name of the game, not a race to the bottom...'



Find out more

Visit www.eda.org.uk to download the full results of the EDA Sector Survey 2019. Or look out for your copy of the EDA Yearbook 2019/2020.