Introducing the Better Business Toolbox

Here we go then – a major milestone for the Association in its agenda to support companies of all shapes and sizes be 'fit for the future'.

In business, companies generally start out with a single inspirational enthusiastic person (or partnership) with the drive and ambition to try to control their own destiny. Over time the business will continually be challenged as the economy ebbs and flows, or, as the company expands and they take on more staff. Also, companies and people trading with can also change a business landscape, and what was once considered good practice could need an update.

A new area of the NAJ's member website is now devoted to offering practical and useful guidance to member companies to ensure they stay the right side of the law, keep up-to-date with changes in the supply chain and access to promotions to help achieve a profitable business. 'Better Business' is split into three main categories. How to use them is up to you. You decide what you believe needs to be implemented to make your company operate as a Better Business. You can work at your own pace to make the changes you want.

On officially launching the Better Business initiative, Harriet Kelsall, NAJ chair, said:

"Better Business will give you the basics like a sample contract, information on the living wage, how to manage your finances or how to source more responsibly, but it's much more than just a reference guide; it's a movement which we at the NAJ are trailblazing.

"If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got. Better Business pushes members slightly out of their comfort zones and challenges them to hold up what they're doing against examples of good practice, in order to find out whether they're fit for the future and figure out how to be prepared.

"We don't want to stop at good practice, Better Business also shows the way to great practice which helps all of our members stand on the shoulders of our experience and reach higher as a collective jewellery industry. Success stories are also being shared back into our membership community in order to highlight just what is possible."

The Better Business 'movement' is overseen by a committee of representatives from across the Association's membership structure, chaired by Paul Greer of Bentley & Skinner. The group has undergone some change as part of the NAJ's governance evolution, but originally started out by identifying a need to offer sound and practical support for member companies. Over the last 18 months, the committee has developed a framework built on three key pillars: Doing Right, Doing Well and Doing Good.

Doing Right is focused on being compliant – following the letter of the law
Doing Well is focused on being profitable – delivering commercial success
Doing Good is focused on being sustainable – anticipating and managing external risk

Each pillar includes toolboxes for Planning, Operations, People, Sales & Marketing, Product & Money areas of business activities, and it's the responsibility of the NAJ through its Better Business committee to keep toolboxes up to date.

What's in the 'people' toolbox?

Doing Right -Compliance

- How to hire other nationalities
- How to hire interns, apprentices and volunteers
- Why use a freelancer vs employee
- Sample employment contracts
- Ensuring equality and diversity
- Legislation on full time, part time and zero-hour contracts
- Working hours
- How to pay your employees
- Following wage requirements
- Staying legal with pensions
- Commitments for training
- Template grievance procedure

Doing well - Profitable

- Measuring performance – metric samples
- Health & Safety guidance
- Induction programme templates
- Training and education policies
- Staff incentive suggestions – retention
- Investors in people accreditation (guidance)
- Appraisal form templates
- Using freelancers and staying profitable
- Account platforms directory

Doing good -Sustainable

- Customer reviews on your website
- Training (investment in people)
- Mental health policy
- Ethical policy on contracts
- Safety education
- Public interest or pro bono work - employees doing charity work of choice
- Diversity practice
- Flexible working policy
- Unlimited holiday entitlement
- Parental rights policies
- How to promote sustainable behaviours
- IT purchase schemes



A wealth of informative links and templates exist for members to use and apply to their business, but what if you don't know what you're looking for, or even where to start?

As part of the password-protected area on the NAJ website, members can login and take the Better Business health check, a form of an online MOT. The health check will help members identify where potential gaps might be and suggest specific areas of 'Better Business' which should be explored.

Paul Greer, Better Business chair said:

"The data we generate from members completing the health check remains confidential and allows us to identify where the committee needs to prioritise products and services which will deliver a beneficial impact to the membership."

Over time the NAJ will use the Better Business health check to develop research on subjects where members are confirming practice is, and is not, in place, and continually provide Association members with the support they need.

The Better Business toolkit and health check is the first of its type offered by a trade association.

NAJ CEO Simon Forrester said:

"As the trade association for the jewellery industry, we have a responsibility to support members fulfill their potential, never mind our 'fit for the future' mission. Better Business is a form of an MOT but it's down to the member to take the time to carry out the review.

"We're not here to dictate, but to help. We hope you take what you need from these guidelines and hopefully you will be ahead of the curve if you implement as many as you can. Despite the toolboxes living online, we don't want this to be a barrier for members to benefit. Therefore, if members do want to take the health check, please contact us in the office and we'll be able to talk through an alternative solution."

But what about great practice?

As an industry there are some fantastic examples where companies have gone above and beyond a certain standard. Better Business also wants to regularly share these success stories with the membership.

Each month a new success story harvested from the membership will feature in the monthly e-bulletin, free to all. Recent entries into the blog have included 'Giving Feels Better Than Winning' from Elliot Brown Watches and 'The World of Jewellery Upcycling' from Kerry Gregory.

The Better Business committee and team supporting it openly invite members' news, views and stories regarding the Better Business initiative, which should in the first instance be emailed to membership@naj.co.uk.

Discounted online training courses for BATF

iHasco, market-leading provider of Health & Safety and HR Compliance eLearning, is offering 20 per cent discount on its training courses and packages for British Allied Trades Federation members. iHasco has over 12,000 UK clients, over 2.7m training sessions delivered to date and a course library of over 80 courses.

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- Manual Handling
- Mental Health Awareness
- Noise Awareness
- PPE
- Risk Assessments
- Slips, Trips and Falls
- Stress Awareness
- Working at Height