



The Kitemark: a symbol of a secure future

"Having the BSI Kitemark definitely benefits the business. It's not just that insurance companies and customers like it, it's that it ensures we have the right procedures in place. It's made life so much easier for us; things are now so much more uniform."

Mick Summers,
Body Centre Manager,
East Bilney Coachworks (KL)

The business in brief

East Bilney Coachworks (King's Lynn), formerly Bennett Accident Repair Centre, is part of a Norfolk group of six bodyshops owned by the Baldwin family, which has been in the vehicle repair business since 1975. At the end of 2014, the centre was forced to shut down for several months after a fire destroyed its site, but it has 're-emerged' as a newly confident and expanding business. Like all the bodyshops in the East Bilney Coachworks group, it has the BSI Kitemark for Vehicle Damage Repair, which it achieved less than a year after re-opening.

BS 10125: the benefits for the business

The company believes the BSI Kitemark:

- Aligns with corporate values of quality and service
- Helps reduce risks
- Helps foster teamwork and a collaborative culture
- Reassures the customer



BSI Case Study: East Bilney Coachworks (King's Lynn)

Company background

At the beginning of 2015, Bennett Accident Repair Centre, then part of Marriott Motor Group, an East Anglian car dealership chain, was in crisis. A fire on November 30th, 2014, believed to have been caused by an electrical fault, had devastated its premises on the North Lynn Industrial Estate and written off 23 vehicles. With no workplace to go to, staff feared for their jobs.

"There was a period of uncertainty for about three months," says Mick Summers, Body Centre Manager. "The insurance company were paying our wages, but we really didn't know what was going to happen after that."

Today, the picture is very different. Now part of East Bilney Coachworks, which bought the business from Marriott Motor Group in March 2015, the centre has moved to another part of the industrial estate, complete with state-of-the-art equipment, and has more than doubled its number of employees, from ten to 21.

What's more, it's been able to prove its long-held commitment to customer service by achieving the BSI Kitemark for Vehicle Damage Repair — less than a year after re-opening.

"In the space of 15 or so months, we went from not knowing how long wages were going to be paid for to moving to new premises with the latest equipment, and taking on new staff ... The recovery from the fire's been remarkable, really — and the BSI Kitemark sort of symbolises that," Mr Summers says.

Protecting the business and reducing risks

The BSI Kitemark is more than a celebration of the centre's achievements, however. It has practical and commercial benefits, too. Mandated by insurers, it helps the bodyshop get work. It can also help bring people to the door.

"It's difficult to know how much sway it has with customers, because we were busy when we were Bennetts, but when we achieved it, there was a piece about it in the local paper, and the next day, a man brought his

Ford Mondeo in. He said, 'If you've got a BSI Kitemark, you must know what you're doing,'" Mr Summers continues.

There are other, perhaps less obvious, advantages. BSI Kitemark schemes can tighten internal 'discipline', creating a single 'system' — both within and across sites.

"It's ensured that we have consistent processes for things. There are set procedures to follow, and everything's recorded so that fewer things are left to chance. It helps us remember things — for example, customer requests to remove personal effects from their vehicles — and it also makes work more transferable," Mr Summers explains.

"We want to treat every customer as an individual — that's one of the keys to putting people first — but we also want them to receive the same level of service, and ISO 9001 and the BSI Kitemark help us achieve that consistency. It's about managing risks, really, and making sure standards are being maintained."

The BSI Kitemark can also help endorse 'corporate values' — and this can have a positive impact on morale. "It's nice for our employees to know that we bother, that their work matters," says Mr Summers.

Working with BSI

The BSI Kitemark and certification require investment — in terms of time as well as money — but Mr Summers believes they're worth it.

"To set it up initially, there's a lot of paperwork involved and, yes, it can appear a challenge, and we were lucky in that we had the group internal audit consultant, Richard Piercy, to help. However, it's really not that big a deal — and once it's set up, it quickly becomes a habit, routine."

Mr Summers adds that the 'system' can easily be adapted if changes to procedures need to be made to improve customer service or to take account of new technologies.

The King's Lynn repair centre has proved, what's more, that qualifying for the BSI Kitemark doesn't have to be a long, drawn-out process. "We were audited for ISO 9001 one day, and for the BSI Kitemark the next," Mr Summers recalls. "It was all achieved pretty quickly."

The future

The takeover of the staff from Bennett Accident Repair Centre has become something of a local 'good-news' story, with the mayor officially opening the new site in August 2015. The bodyshop currently occupies about half of its site, formerly the Norfolk Sofa Factory, and has plans to expand into the remainder of the unit. It is committed to 'future proofing' the business by training new staff, and three of its current employees are apprentices.

"We have an apprenticeship scheme, and we're training people with the BSI Kitemark, so that commitment to service will cross the generations," Mr Summers says.

The BSI inspectors will return twice a year to check that standards are being maintained at the site. It's an arrangement that Mr Summers believes will work well for the centre and its staff. "What's really nice is when the BSI guy came, he took time to speak to the apprentices. He involved everyone... Everyone felt part of it," he says.

Contact us to find out how the BSI Kitemark™ can help your business make excellence a habit.

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