

# NEWS



## Summer 2020

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### NEWS FOR THE MEMORIAL INDUSTRY



#### OPEN DAY POSTPONED

It's been a strange start to the year and one I don't think anyone could have predicted even in March. We certainly didn't see it coming and ended up cancelling our open day with a view to holding it in October. Unfortunately, with the current regulations it seems sensible to cancel this date as well. We will be re-scheduling the open day but at this point we don't have a specific date because we don't want our open day to fall at a similar time to any of the domestic trade shows. NAMM Tradex is scheduled for the middle of September 2021 so we are likely to push our open day back until mid 2022. However all is not lost!

#### ZOOMING

We discussed possibly holding our open day virtually but our experience of attending virtual trade shows has been poor to say the least. We have seen some virtual trade shows that worked OK but in the main they have been awful and one of the biggest benefits of attending a Blast Shop open day is the opportunity to actually use the equipment we have here, something we can't replicate in a virtual world.

That being said, one of the other benefits of trade shows and open days is the ability for people to meet and chat about problems they currently face or things they have seen that they think would benefit others. Historically we would never have considered anything other than face to face meetings but now we've all been forced to learn how to "zoom" suddenly a virtual gathering doesn't seem as daunting. Whilst we had staff furloughed we took the opportunity to get together via Zoom so that we could see friendly faces and have a bit of a laugh to take our minds off the situation we found ourselves in and I'm sure many of you did the same. It took almost an hour to get everyone online for the first call but subsequent calls took less time to get everyone on and by the time we were starting to bring people back into the office we started our virtual meetings almost at the time we said we would!

Since people have returned to work we've been chatting with our Blast Shop customers at length discussing how they were coping with lock-down and then how they have started to re-open their businesses. It's been interesting to see the different ideas people have had when getting customers into their showrooms with some people focussing more on how to provide the best service without face to face contact and others focussing more on making face to face conversations as normal as



possible without breaking government guidelines. We've certainly benefited from this if only to reassure ourselves that everyone is finding it difficult to provide the service they are used to and so we wanted to give everyone the opportunity to have similar discussions with other masons from around the country to share experiences and get ideas for how they might cope with the challenges that lay ahead.

We're going to hold a virtual meeting on September 9th via zoom to facilitate just that - masons from around the country discussing the lessons they have learned from the last 6 months. If you are interested in joining us then please get in touch with Lee so we can work out what time will work best for people. I promise we won't subject you to some of the games we played during lock-down. Watching Lee trying to act out Backstreet Boys was one of the many highlights of our lock-down meetings but not really one I can subject you all to!

## COVID RELATED NEWS



We have been using a simple, but effective, order form system for a very long time. We captured telephone order information on a paper order form. The order form would then make it's merry way around the business, from the warehouse for picking, then back in the office for invoicing and then back to the warehouse again for shipping.

During lock-down we had staff working from home which made the paper solution difficult to maintain. Now we are fully open again this process is just as challenging as we did not want everyone handling the same piece of paper.

We have therefore begun a much needed modernisation of the ordering system. The first stage of this process has been to implement a digital version of our original paper based system but in the future we are planning on offering a repeat order system where you can input your own orders straight into our own ordering system.

That final solution is still a long way off though and even when the new system is in place we remain committed to talking to customers regularly to ensure that we are identifying the right products for you. Hopefully, you will not notice the new changes when placing an order but Lee would love to hear from you if you do.

Alongside the electronic order forms we can now email VISA receipts direct to you . If you give us your email address we can also

email you your invoices - wonderful thing this internet!

Whilst we're talking about the wonderful internet, we have had issues with our new internet based phone system which we are addressing, please bear with us if you get a poor connection to us, if all else fails we will call you back from a mobile device.

Although as a business, we are operating near peak capacity, we are still, like everyone, else affected by the ongoing situation.

We have measures in place throughout our business to protect our customers, staff and families: extensive use of masks, social distancing markers, sanitiser stations and regular cleaning routines. We ask that visitors to The Blast Shop help us to keep following the guidelines making pre-booked appointments for visits and collections where possible. We have members of staff who live with vulnerable people so, on their behalf, thank you for your assistance in this and please stay safe.

## MEMORIAL DESIGNER UK



It seems that during the lock down, people have had the time and opportunity to look at their current software set-up and, as a result, sales of Memorial Designer UK have boomed

We even have our own exclusive MemorialDesignerUK Community Facebook group, where users can ask questions, share ideas and find regular updates and new designs etc.

The group is only currently available for subscribers to the package, if you have the software but are not yet a member of the group, drop Lee a line and he'll send you the link.

## SUMMER MAINTENANCE TIP



Our service engineer, Steve attended an emergency service call recently and upon arrival, it became apparent the problem was not the blaster but lack of regular maintenance.

It has highlighted once again that we all need to take extra daily maintenance precautions with it being summertime. In particular remember to empty water traps, monitor airlines and receivers daily because this time of year there will be an excess build-up of moisture due to the extra humidity. Failure to do this could result in more serious blockages further down the line, with damp grit potentially causing blocked mixer valves, nozzles and in the worst cases, an expensive call-out.

## INSTAGRAM

We've had a presence on social media for a while now with our Twitter, Facebook and Youtube channels bursting with lots of interesting content, but it can be a pain posting regularly across each network. Instagram is a great place for sharing photos, and we're using it to showcase our bespoke Photoblast service, with designs and artwork uploaded on a regular basis. The real beauty is that we have set Instagram up to feed the other popular networks with our posts. #PutsFeetUp