A Review of Compressed Air Suppliers and Maintenance Providers
Introduction

Compressed air is often referred to as the fourth utility. It is essential to many sectors as a safe, reliable and versatile source of power.

It does however take a considerable amount of energy to produce the clean, dry and pressurised air that is needed for so many processes and applications. It also needs to be used responsibly, with personnel receiving the correct training to ensure safe, reliable and efficient operation – backed by professional service and maintenance support.

Sourcing a competent and high-quality supplier and maintenance provider of equipment for your compressed air system is therefore critical. The right partner can help ensure its ongoing efficient use to help you manage this critical business resource for improved productivity – and profitability.

The British Compressed Air Society (BCAS) is the only dedicated UK trade association that represents manufacturers, distributors and end users of vacuum and air treatment.

In response to this industry-wide need for highly efficient, cost-effective compressed air provision, the society recently surveyed end users of compressed air systems to gauge their views and opinions on a range of issues that affect compressor performance and productivity.

The online questionnaire covered the importance of a variety of factors in the supply and maintenance of compressed air equipment and also asked respondents to rank suppliers for different aspects of the services that they receive. Finally, participants were asked for their views on some of the issues facing industry now and in the future, such as Industry 4.0 and the integration of data.

This report provides a detailed summary of the findings of this survey, with supporting commentary on how the market should continue to adapt to provide the high levels of service and support required.

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For a copy of the full survey results, please contact Vanda Jones at vanda@bcas.org.uk

Survey Methodology

Respondents represented a broad range of common industry sectors and disciplines, including manufacturing and assembly, building, facilities’ and energy management. Both large-scale and smaller organisations were among the participants.

Respondents also included those who use both BCAS members and non-BCAS members for the supply of their equipment and for routine service and maintenance.

The research was promoted on a variety of BCAS’ own media channels and in the trade press, with all respondents choosing to participate at their own discretion. The online questionnaire was prepared, and the results collated, without bias, by a third party organisation.
The Role of a Trade Association

How important is it to you that the compressed air trade association (BCAS) provides the following?

**Behind The Numbers**
The provision of training is a strong requirement from many end-users, reinforcing the high importance that industry places on receiving quality support. Many respondents also consider a supplier audit to be important, demonstrating how industry expects a trade association to offer guidance on the factors to look for when choosing a provider.
Supplier Performance

How important is it that your compressed air supplier/maintenance provider does the following?

**Behind The Numbers**
This clearly shows that suppliers must keep their delivery promises in order to provide the right level of support.

This is, presumably, linked to the overarching industry need to maintain productivity and the importance of a supplier in helping to meet these targets.
Supplier Rating

When asked to rate their compressed air supplier across a number of factors, where 0 is the worst possible supplier and 10 is the best, there were some startling differences between those using BCAS members and those who use non BCAS members, see below.

**BCAS Members**

- 2-5: 17%
- 6-8: 49%
- 9-10: 34%

**Non BCAS Members**

- 0-1: 19%
- 2-5: 19%
- 6-8: 31%
- 9-10: 31%

**Legal Compliance**

**Behind The Numbers**

BCAS members have access to a wide range of training and support materials to help them stay abreast of changes in legislation so it is encouraging to see that 49 per cent of respondents ranked a BCAS member in the best two possible ratings.

**Effective Support**

- 6-8: 49%
- 9-10: 51%
Behind The Numbers
Over half of the respondents rated BCAS members in the best two possible rankings for the effectiveness of their support, which rises to 66 per cent for the responsiveness of their personnel. In contrast only 39 per cent and 31 per cent respectively rated a non-BCAS member in the same way.

This could be one positive outcome of the additional training that BCAS members receive, which helps service engineers to provide a more comprehensive level of support.

Behind The Numbers
In an increasingly health and safety conscious marketplace, it is very encouraging to see that the highest number of respondents (54 per cent) believe a BCAS member is best-placed to offer expert advice.
Behind The Numbers
The management of cost is crucial to an organisation's bottom-line profitability and there is a clear contrast between the perceived positive impact that a BCAS member and a non-BCAS member can have in this area, with respondents ranking BCAS members more favourably across all the rankings.

Supplier Sourcing
How do you source suppliers/maintenance providers for your compressed air equipment?
Supplier Sourcing (Continued)

Would you use an online review site to source or compare compressed suppliers for...

![Bar chart showing the use of online review sites for different categories of suppliers: Equipment, Maintenance, Advice/Consultancy, Training.]

**Behind The Numbers**

Recommendation or word of mouth remain the best way to source new business, re-emphasising the need for suppliers to provide a professional, high quality service.

In addition, more than 50 per cent of respondents revealed that they would use an online review site to source or compare suppliers for equipment.

Industry 4.0

How important do you think Industry 4.0, the Internet of Things and the rise of new digital technology is?

![Bar chart showing the perception of the importance of Industry 4.0 over time: Now, In 5 years' time, In 10 years' time.]

**Behind The Numbers**

There appears to be a slight lack of urgency in industry regarding Industry 4.0 and digital technology with only 24 per cent considering that Industry 4.0 and digitisation is very important at the moment, although this rises to 45 per cent rating it as very important for five years' time and 58 per cent for ten years' time.
Commentary

There is a clear differentiation between those users of compressed air who source equipment and maintenance through BCAS members versus those who use non-BCAS members.

BCAS Versus Non BCAS suppliers

Most noticeably there is a high level of dissatisfaction among the respondents commenting on the support provided by non-BCAS members. For example, some respondents expressed virtually no confidence in non-BCAS members for compressed air equipment and service.

Over 19 per cent (19.23 per cent) scored their supplier either 0 or 1 out of 10 for legal compliance relating to health and safety or environmental compliance and 15 per cent scored these either 0 or 1 out of 10 for value for money.

This contrasts with high satisfaction levels among respondents for the service received from BCAS members, who scored higher across all categories for the effectiveness of support provided, responsiveness, quality of advice and value for money.

Trade Association’s Role

There appears to be a high demand for the work that trade associations and member-based organisations provide as independent sources of information. In particular there is a requirement for industry-specific training with 73 per cent stating that it is very important or important. Also highlighted was a requirement for technical and legislative advice where 67 per cent deemed it very important or important.

Sourcing Suppliers

When it comes to sourcing suppliers and maintenance providers for compressed air systems, the majority of end users (81 per cent) rely on word of mouth or recommendation. The next most popular method is by searching online with 55 per cent using the Internet.

Taking this one step further, we asked about online review sites and discovered that 50 per cent of respondents would use one to source compressed air equipment suppliers for a number of different services.

BCAS, for example, runs an independent supplier review site called AirRated. Based on a peer-review system, it is helping businesses to build a clearer picture of the quality of potential suppliers.

Industry 4.0

Of some surprise is the apparent indifference towards Industry 4.0 and the rise of new digital industrial technology with only 24 per cent stating that it is very important at the moment, although a further 36 per cent state that it is important.

In fairness, these figures do rise when asked if it will become important in 5 years’ and 10 years’ time, but it may reflect a lack of urgency to take action in an area where UK manufacturing should take the lead. This is clearly an area to watch as the technology becomes more readily available and more easily integrated in to an existing operation.
In Conclusion

The survey reveals that BCAS members provide significantly better service than those not belonging to the association.

All BCAS members adhere to a code of conduct that sets out strict criteria, so it is really encouraging to see such high satisfaction scores. These reinforce our commitment to enforcing standards, promoting good practice and helping our members deliver best value for money.

When you consider that compressed air is such a vital component in modern industry, it clearly pays to use a BCAS member to deliver the reliable service and support required.

Our website includes a dedicated ‘Find a member’ area where you can search for a BCAS member by region, by product or by services provided. Visit www.bcas.org.uk to search for a BCAS member near you.

BCAS Members Code of Conduct

Principles of Conduct

• We will seek to achieve the highest standards and will offer our Products and Services honestly and honorably in a fair manner.

• We will ensure that our Products are fit for purpose and are delivered and installed in a safe and serviceable condition.

• We will ensure that only competent and trained personnel specify our Products.

• We will ensure that only competent and qualified engineers are responsible for the installation, service and repair of our Products.

• We will carry out all Health and Safety requirements as appropriate.

• We shall behave in a professional manner and will respect the reputation of our Sector.

Insurance

• We will have suitable public liability and product liability insurance and make the insurance documents available for inspection.

Integrity

• We are committed to maintaining the highest degree of integrity in all our dealings.

• We will exercise care in the day to day conduct of business relationships and transact business in such a manner as will reflect credit on ourselves and the industry.

• We will deal promptly with all queries or complaints from a customer.

• We will never offer any financial or other inducement, including direct and indirect payments, offers of employment or substantial gifts or entertainment to anyone in an attempt to influence any decision making process which may affect our organisation or our industry in any way.

Discriminatory Conduct

• We will strive to take reasonable care that all professional duties are conducted without causing offence on the grounds of gender, race, religion, disability or any other form of discrimination or unacceptable reference.
About BCAS

BCAS is the only dedicated UK trade association that represents its members in the manufacture, distribution, export, disposal and usage of compressors, compressed air, compressed air treatment, gas, vacuum, blowers, pneumatic tools and allied products.

We provide an expert and impartial united voice in the face of an ever-changing industry and legislation. As an unbiased authority on technical, educational and legislation, the society provides a reference point for best practice and actively represents the interests of the compressed air industry to the UK government and many European and other overseas institutions.

BCAS and our members have the following aims:

• To promote the safe, efficient maintenance and use of equipment and services

• To cooperate with diverse groups such as governmental departments, regulatory authorities, research organisations, retailer and consumer groups and agencies in matters affecting the industry

• To bring industry specific training and the experience of the members to bear on the conduct of business for common good

• To develop and publish, standards, engineering data and statistical information

• To engage in cooperative educational research and activity providing development for the next generation of compressed air and vacuum engineers

• To promote cooperation amongst its members for improved production, proper use and distribution

• To provide a best practice forum where members can develop their professional competence

More Information
For a copy of the full results of the survey, please email vanda@bcas.org.uk