

Aggregate Industries

Product innovation has dramatically changed the face of the asphalt industry in recent years. Now Aggregate Industries is applying the same philosophy to transform its approach to customer and technical services.

Innovating for a better service

Aggregate Industries had one major aim when it decided to rethink how the company serves its customers – keep it simple. With this in mind, the concepts of Brand Managers and Branded Product Helplines were conceived within an already evolving customer orientated environment.

Aggregate Industries Product Development Manager Roger Warmington says: "We were aware that a lot of our product information and technical services were highly regionalised. Our new approach is to centralise services so that there are fewer and clearer routes through which customers can contact us for specialist information.

"The aim of centralisation is not only to save customers time but to enable enquiries to be directed to the right department first time and dealt with quickly and efficiently."

Under the regionalised system it was noticed that when something new was launched, each region went through the same curve as it learned how to market and apply the new product. Warmington says:

"The role of Brand Manager was created to help centralise the learning process and to market the product countrywide rather than regionally."

In a pilot scheme Aggregate Industries has a brand manager focussing on its coloured asphalt, Europave 2000, used extensively at the Millennium Dome.

Aggregate Industries Europave 2000 Brand Manager Chris Marchesi says: "Europave 2000 is well known in and around the London area where the product was first launched but is not as familiar elsewhere. My initial task is to confirm that best practice is being carried out during production and laying, and that any new knowledge gained is transferred across the board."

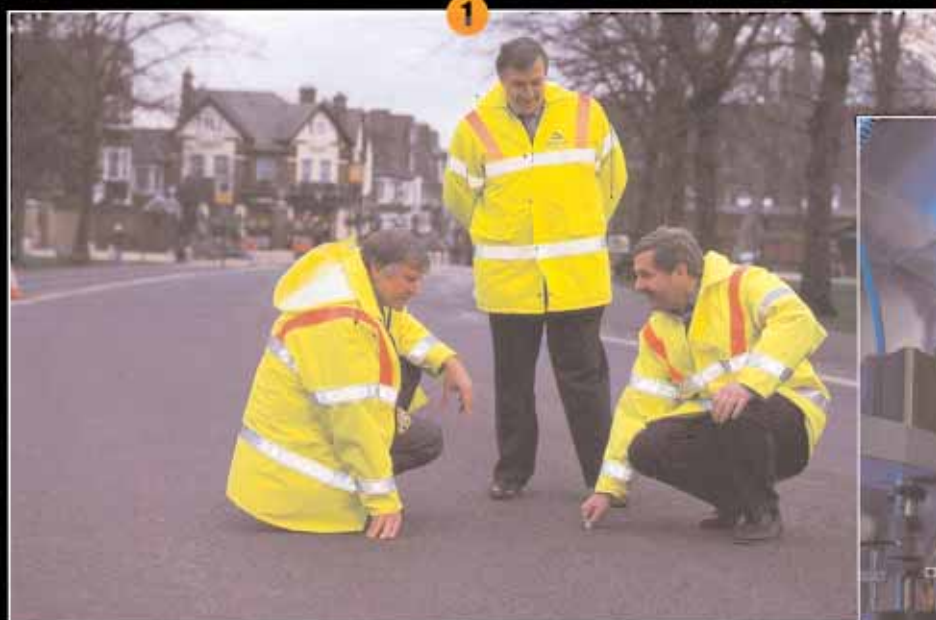
Once established, Aggregate Industries hopes to develop the Brand Manager role into a more commercial position with brand managers acting as 'super salesmen' for their products across the UK. Marchesi says about his particular position: "Once the technical side is established, my main job will be to target specifiers, such as architects and town planners, to raise awareness of the scope of Europave 2000 in hard landscaping and road demarcation."

The Branded Products Helpline was launched in spring this year to complement the role of Brand Manager. "Initially the helpline only covered Europave 2000, but now it is established the helpline embraces all our specialist and branded products," says Warmington. "The helpline provides direct access to technical information and is manned by experienced staff seconded internally."

So far, the direct phone line appears to be very popular with over 120 calls received in the first month, resulting from just one advert. "Over 50% of the calls have been project specific, with some leading to negotiation, rather than just general product enquiries," says Warmington.

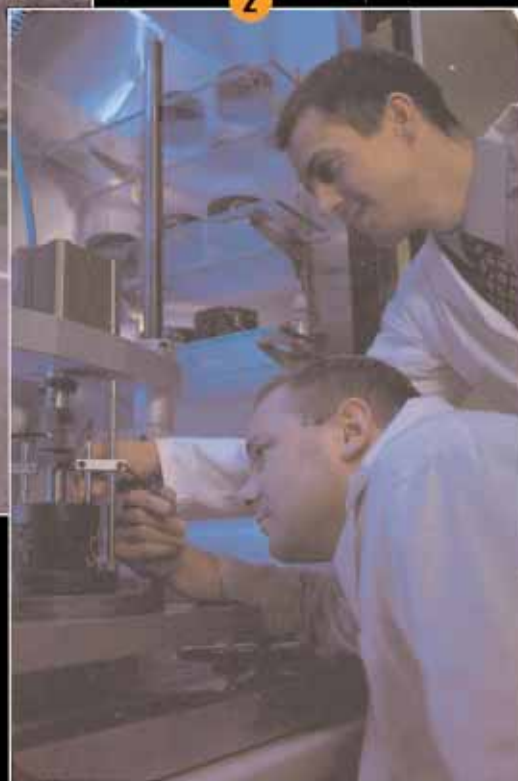
The company's website, relaunched as aggregate.com, provides another product awareness tool and contact portal. Aggregate Industries Commercial Director Chris Allwood says: "Aggregate.com links together information on our products and services and gives an overview of the company which is open to anyone – within the industry or otherwise – who is on line. Interactive email facilities built into the site are another contact channel which is open 24 hours a day, even if our offices are not."

According to Aggregate Industries this is just the start of a development process for the website and the next phase is now ready for testing. Pilot trials are planned for later this year.



1: Europave 2000 was used extensively in Greenwich Royal Park and at the Millennium Dome.

2: The technical services laboratory provides essential testing facilities to all Aggregate Industries regional operations and research and development programmes.



Aggregate Industries' technical services laboratory, pavement design and new product development services have been continually developed over recent years to provide customers with an extensive range of technical facilities.

Technical & Development Director Paul Phillips says: "All of the changes to our technical services are driven by customer requests and Aggregate Industries aspiration to lead market developments, not follow."

Pavement design is one Aggregate Industries facility that has been wholly customer driven. Phillips says: "Customers started to come to us with specific requirements, most fundamental being guaranteed lifespan at minimum price or minimum maintenance.

"Since we started the service several years ago we have gained considerable experience in the pavement design field. We now offer a design service for the complete construction from sub base right the way through to the wearing course."

The company's design service is covered by professional indemnity insurance and includes analysis of samples at its technical services laboratory to ensure

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that the supplied product complies with design.

Performance testing forms just one part of the function of the technical services laboratory within Aggregate Industries. Technical Services Laboratory Manager Tony Bellamy says: "Our lab offers UKAS accredited analysis, design and performance testing. These services provide quality assurance and verification functions which are available to both Aggregate Industries' regional operations and external organisations."

Technical laboratory services form a vital part of the research and development process into new products within the company. Warmington says: "Much of the testing and assessment of our new products is carried out at our own laboratory but we also have strong links with a number of universities.

"Our research and development programme is based on using innovative solutions to meet customer requirements and market research into potential new opportunities within the industry. Many of our new products are developed using tweaked existing technology which helps us to provide customers with cutting edge innovations at minimal cost."

Future developments at Aggregate Industries are likely to include the introduction of additional Brand Managers creating a pathway from R&D to established products and helpline support for all of its products. "These changes to our customer services are just the first stages of what we plan to be a continually evolving process," says Warmington.

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Technical Services Laboratory 01404 821 301