

Heating Hot water Renewables

The Little Book of Business



We help you take care of your business so you can take care of life



Vailant

Comfort for your home

Introduction

A little book with some big advice

Whatever the size of your business, everyone needs a little help from time to time.

At Vaillant, we aim to support you in as many ways as we can. We're not here to tell you how to run your business - think of us instead as a helping hand that's available whenever you need it.

We recognise that installers are our greatest ambassadors. The work you do showcases our products and our partnership is crucial for shared business growth.

That is why we've created the Little Book of Business. Packed with hints and tips on how to build your business, the book is designed to promote best practice with specialist advice on some of the most common industry issues - from marketing and customer service to security and wellbeing.

If you've not yet checked out the Vaillant Advance loyalty scheme, register now for even more online content and support services than ever before. What's more, with our FREE app you can benefit from paperless product registration, gas safe and service notifications, Advance also enables you to earn rewards for all your hard work.

Enjoy the book, and remember, we're here to help.



Also, while you're here why not enter our competition to win a van. We're giving away two Volkswagen T32 vans, as well as the opportunity to fully wrap it in your business branding.

Enter by buying any Vaillant domestic boiler and register it on the app.

*Terms and conditions apply, see website for details.



As your chosen business partner, we want to share as much best practice and valuable knowledge as possible to help support you and your business development.

Throughout the year, we will be touring merchants across the country to offer advice. Keep an eye out for our iconic Vaillant VW camper van, where we will be raising awareness of our new business support clinics that you can sign up to.

These will take place at nine locations across the UK, including our seven Vaillant Centres of Excellence, between June and October. Here, you will be able to get one-to-one business advice from independent experts on everything from selling for success to homeowners, marketing and branding, finance and tax matters, to your own personal wellbeing.



Your Brand

04



Your Customers

06



Your Assets

08



Your Wellbeing

10



Your brand

A brand is the personality of your business



Why is having a brand important?

A brand is the personality of your business. In the same way that you get a sense of someone's personality after you've dealt with them, customers will experience the same with your business and the personality or brand it projects.

As a busy installer, it can be easy to overlook your brand as part of your day-to-day business. But whether you are a one-person company or a large enterprise, branding can make the difference in building your customer base.

Here's how.

Strong brands are easily recognised

Give your business a face through a logo - something simple and memorable, and strong enough to leave an impression on prospective customers. A local design agency will be able to help you create the ideal logo for your business. Put it on your van, your website, your business cards, and everywhere you have a visible presence.

It's also worth getting stickers created which include your logo and contact details, and adding these to each boiler you install, so the customer knows exactly who to call should anything go wrong.

What's more, branded workwear, quote folders and stationary can all add to that consistent brand recognition, and are available through our Advance scheme.

Strong brands build trust

People always prefer to do business with businesses they have confidence in and can trust - and trust means referrals. Give opportunities for your customers to leave reviews on the leading trade review sites, such as Checkatrade, or if you have one, on your website.

It's also worth going the extra mile to reassure customers that you are able to provide ongoing support. For example, sending a follow-up email after the completion of a job is a quick win which leaves a lasting impression.



Strong brands are easier to find

Make sure your brand is easily found by being present on social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as well as the local business directories (including online listings such as Google Maps). Don't forget to post regular updates to your social accounts and focus on things that will add value for customers, such as showing your installation and service skills.

Strong brands are worth more

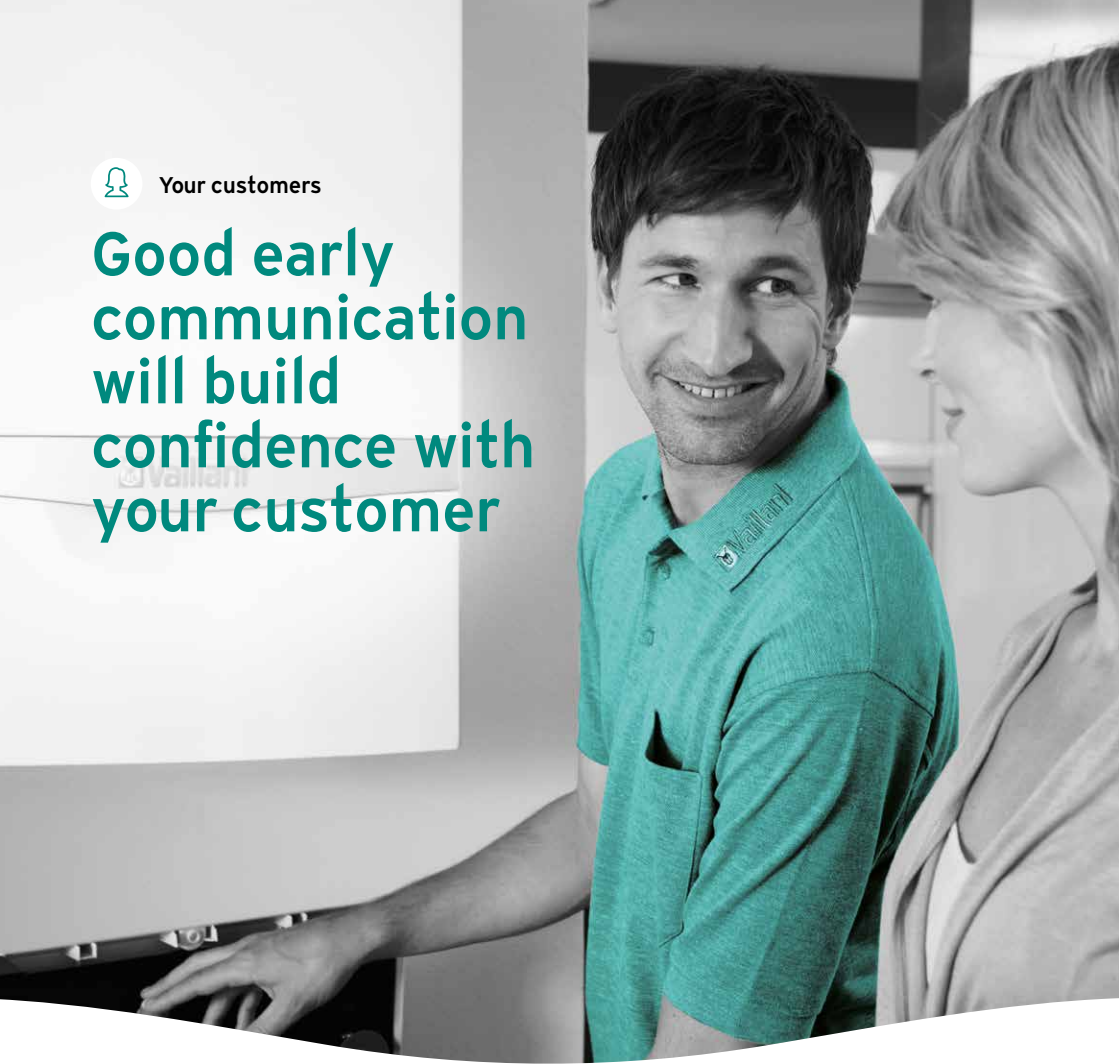
A strong brand can make for a more profitable company, with repeat business, and long term loyalty. Make sure you make it clear to prospects and customers that there are tangible benefits from working with you. Things that you can prove, or demonstrate, that show your service and your offering is a cut above the rest. For example, hosting testimonials and images of former projects on your website, and distributing leaflets which list your services along with comments from happy customers.





Your customers

Good early communication will build confidence with your customer



As an installer, you typically spend pretty much all your working hours in other people's houses. Keeping customers happy is even more of a challenge because the work can often involve a lot of mess and noise.

We all know that it's important to turn up on time and to clean up afterwards. But what else can you do to make the customer feel extra special?

Clear communication

Communication is key in any service business. But with the boiler world a minefield of technical terms and abbreviations, it can be easy to forget that customers might not know all the lingo - with the PRVs, VRCs and the TRVs, it can all be a little overwhelming!

When speaking with customers, try to use simple language and cut through the jargon. This will help them feel comfortable that they know what exactly is needed and how it will be done. Vaillant is committed to plain speaking and has a useful guide to boiler jargon that can help - download it from our website.

Little touches

As we all know, sometimes it's the small things that can make a big difference. If you're really keen on impressing your customers think about what you can do to let them know that you appreciate their business.

Little touches, like taking note of the toiletries they use in the bathroom and leaving a small gift set on completion of a job, or, leaving cuddly merchandise, like a soft Johann Vaillant toy, for customers with kids can make a big impression. Personalised 'thank you packs' with details of when the next service is due and links to your social media are also an effective way of making yourself memorable.



Respect the space

Different people will have different standards, but it's good practice to ensure high levels of cleanliness and safety in a customer's home.

It's worth having a quick chat to advise them to move precious items to a safe place. You should also use dust sheets to cover furniture and desktop work mats to protect surfaces, run a vacuum over the site at the end of the day, and double-check you've removed all waste before you leave.

Above and beyond

Customer service that exceeds expectations will help to differentiate your business, boost loyalty and spread word of mouth.

Building a relationship will reap rewards. Try checking in with your customer after you've completed the job, which might lead to an extra bit of work. Maybe even send a Christmas or birthday card to really stamp yourself in the good books. And, whilst it might feel uncomfortable, ask them to review your work - sending a link to an online review site makes it as simple as possible, and satisfied customers are usually more than happy to share their experiences.



Top Tip

Checking in with your customer after you've completed the job will get you in the good books



Your assets

Stolen tools can be devastating



Securing your van

Worryingly, a van is broken into every 23 minutes in the UK - and the rate of tool theft is up by over 30% compared to last year. A recent survey shows that July is the month where thieves are at their most active, while Mondays see the biggest weekly spike in activity.

Stolen tools can be devastating. Beyond the financial loss, it takes away people's ability to carry out their work and negatively impacts customer relationships too.

So, what can you do to cut down the risks?



Choose where you park carefully

Try to park with sliding or rear doors against a wall or sturdy fence so that they can't be opened. Busy, well-lit areas, preferably in view of a CCTV camera are best.

Don't leave valuables in your van

We know you may already know this, but it needs to be said. Many vans have a sticker that informs would-be thieves that no valuables are left unattended in their vehicle overnight. But how many installers actually practice what they preach? Protect valuables overnight by storing them in a secure location.



Mark your property

If your tools are stolen, having identification marks on them will help make sure you're recognised as the owner if they're recovered.

Check your insurance

There are modifications, such as vehicle tracking GPS and alarm systems, that you can make to your current van to improve its security. However, choose these carefully because some modifications - even if they are undertaken with van security in mind - could actually increase your premiums or even void your policy. So make sure that you discuss any proposed modifications with your insurer first.

Sign the petition

An online campaign for action on van crime has gained a lot of traction in recent months. Get behind it by signing the petition and using the hashtag #NoVanBer across social media.



Top Tip

Try to park with sliding or rear doors against a wall or sturdy fence so that they can't be opened

It is about time we did more to support our mental health and wellbeing



Many of us consider what foods we eat, what we drink, how much exercise we undertake and numerous other aspects of life in order to reduce our risk of illness. So why don't we take the same care of our emotional health?

For busy installers, owning and running your own business is tough, and we often work alone with no one to turn to when things do start to pile up. It's about time we all did more to support our mental health. If you're ever feeling stressed or anxious, try out some of these tips.

Understand your feelings

The best way to deal with stress that you can't escape is to understand where it is coming from. Is the source external or is it coming from yourself?

Lauretta Wilson, a Health & Care Professions Council registered psychologist based in south London, says that sometimes, simple techniques such as breathing exercises can quickly help you get in a better frame of mind. But at other times the problem may run deeper.

People often overthink situations, dwelling on imagined outcomes that are unlikely ever to happen. Ask yourself how likely it is that the bad scenario will occur, and then try and adjust your frame of mind accordingly.

Prioritise tasks

When you have lots of jobs on, all equally important, knowing where to start can be stressful. Lauretta advises that you shouldn't start trying to find a solution when you're gripped by the fight-or-flight feeling. Take some deep breaths.

Put yourself back in control by making a list of tasks in order of priority and then do them in that order, remembering that you can only do one thing at a time. Just the act of ticking off a job can have a tremendous positive benefit for your state of mind.



Take a break

Independent tradespeople can often work in the day and do their admin in the evenings, which means that they have a constant feeling of never being able to catch up.

Make sure you book holiday in advance, throughout the year. This will give you times to look forward to and make sure you can re-charge your batteries with a well-earned break.

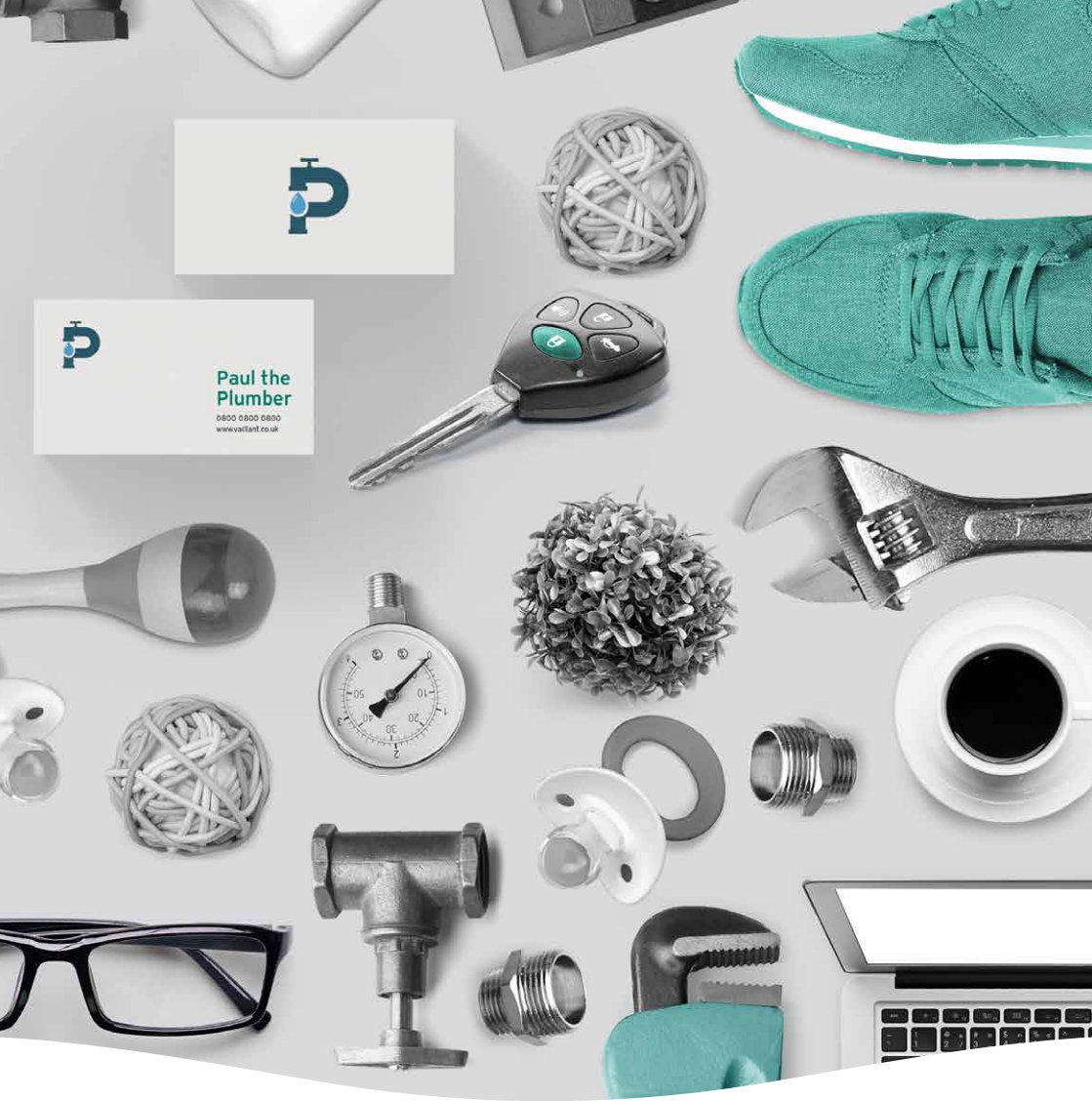
Ask for help

If you're feeling pressure at work, make sure you take the opportunity to discuss your feelings with family, friends or a colleague. Talking really does help to prevent unnecessary stress and anxiety from building up.



Top Tip

Put yourself back in control by making a list of tasks



Any views or opinions expressed in this Little Book of Business are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Vaillant. We do not guarantee its accuracy or completeness and it should not be relied on as such.

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