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**Thomas Etheridge explains why installers are key to Schlüter-Systems’ success**



***Thomas Etheridge, Schlüter-Systems’ Sales and Contracts Manager***

[Schlüter-Systems](https://eu.schluter.com/en-GB/) is one of the leading names in the protection of tile and stone with more than 10,000 products all designed for maximum performance and longevity. Here we speak to Thomas Etheridge, who explains how crucial the installer is in the quest for tiling perfection.

**How important is the installer when it comes to selling Schlüter’s systems?**

The key to our success has always been the installer; be they independent or employed by merchants or bathroom showrooms. The way our products are installed is crucial to them performing as intended. Our approach is a holistic one in a room which, let’s face it, can be challenging when not designed and fitted correctly.

**Who are your trade customers?**

I am a tiler by trade and like to put myself in the position of the person I’m presenting our products to.  We have many “trade” customers who are all equally valuable and, within each sector, the explanation of our technology and experience as a team is crucial. We are not selling products; we are selling solutions. I take the approach that, if you demonstrate what the products can do, the installers will see the benefits themselves. The bathroom installer is key to us and, in turn, we are focusing on the builders’ and plumbing merchants, alongside bathroom showrooms, as they have hundreds of tradespeople visiting on a regular basis.  It is here that the extensive training programmes we run come into their own. Our training facility in Coalville is open to all; and we can do on-site training too.

**What would you say are your USPs?**

One of our main USPs is the vast range of products within our portfolio.  There are many companies that offer a handful of the types of products we do - but no one else really does it all. The biggest benefit is that all of our products are tried-and-tested, are designed to go together and are compatible with each other and, therefore, create a complete CE-marked system. Throughout the process of buying and installing our products, there is usually just one point of contact so that confidence in the system is ensured and the installer customer can enjoy peace of mind in their work at all times. There is always an expert on hand!

Our level of service is something we are very proud of. From our practical training days to ongoing support from our sales and technical teams, we’re there to help at every stage. Our training days consistently receive 100% positive feedback, with trainees happy to recommend the day to colleagues. We find that once an installer sees how easy our products are to install, they don’t look back.

Then the ongoing support starts with our area sales managers who build good working relationships with customers. Many of them have years of hands-on experience too, so can offer installation support. We invest time to make sure our internal teams have sound technical knowledge. Our sales department are the first point of call in the office, with the most complex of enquiries being passed on to the technical team.  Other resources that we offer for support include datasheets and technical documentation, our website has recently been redeveloped and has proven to be a useful resource for installers, and we’ve also had positive feedback from customers using the videos on our YouTube channel which enables them to see the products being installed.

**What are your aims for the next two years?**

We are looking to maintain our involvement in specifications to stay in the forefront of the architects’ minds for all things tile and stone; while we continue to build relationships with contractors and installers, and also dedicate time to extending our presence in the retail bathroom sector.

**What do you see as possible challenges this year?**

When I used Schlüter products as a tiler, there was a perception that the Schlüter products cost more than other brands.  Our success in the specification sector has led to us sometimes being viewed as being exclusively for high-end projects with large budgets.  This perception of our products being expensive is a challenge for us to overcome, so we ask customers to consider the value for money in terms of overall project budget, and the things we offer beyond our products such as our technical prowess.  For example, our underfloor heating (UFH) may cost slightly more than that offered by some other companies but, with traditional UFH, you would have needed to lay a latex or levelling compound over the top, so this adds to the cost.  This additional preparation obviously results in higher labour costs which also need to be factored into the overall project budget.  As our products are designed to be used together, there is a cost saving in labour costs.

In essence, with 60 years of experience in the industry, where we have seen all sorts of installations and provided answers to all, Schlüter really does provide the assurance for a truly waterproof, long-lasting, functional space.

For further information, call 01530 813396 or visit <https://www.schluter.co.uk/>

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