

FENCING TIMES

UK & Ireland

2024, Issue 14

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A close-up portrait of a man with short, light brown hair, blue eyes, and a well-groomed beard. He is smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a grey crew-neck sweater over a dark collared shirt. The background shows a grey perforated metal fence, some green foliage on the left, and a clear blue sky with some trees in the distance.

Zaun launches Picture Perf

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Can installing fences make you rich?

If you ask a fencing installer why he got into the business, you'll get all sorts of different answers. Usually it will be something like, "I wanted to work outdoors," "I like working with heavy-duty tools," or "I really like building things that everyone's going to see for decades to come". And sometimes we hear, "I was too stupid to do anything else," and then we lose it immediately, because you really do need to be smart and skilled to install fences. Smarter than, for example, errr, umm... no, we're not sure either.

Anyway, it's not often that you hear an answer like: "Because I want to be rich." And if you did get that answer, you'd probably laugh at the installer, because no one in their right mind associates installing fences with getting rich.

Coincidentally, the other day we came across a little chart on the big wide internet, showing how rich you have to be to make it into the top 1 per cent of any given country's population. Then we thought: Could you actually get rich putting up fences, if you wanted to?

The chart doesn't list every European country, but in France, Germany and Great Britain the level is slightly above 3 million American dollars, so just for fun let's take 3 million euros and see how many metres you'd have to install for that.

To keep things simple, let's use the example of a self-employed installer who works for fencing installers as a subcontractor. Our installer has his own (paid-off) van and tools. He has no office, no secretary, and no additional expenses. He doesn't need to worry about advertising and sales; the installers he works for take care of that. They also transport the materials to the project for him.

Now, obviously it's slightly dependent on the type of fencing, how much of it you can install in a day, and therefore what a reasonable

installation price would be. In Germany or the UK, where the posts are set in concrete, you can't install as many metres as in the Netherlands, where most fencing is rammed into the ground. And if you live in Belgium or France and have to bury concrete slabs in the ground for almost every fence, it's going to take you even longer.

To consider all these differences would be taking things way too far, so let's just say that our installer only ever installs rigid mesh fencing – with all the posts set in concrete – and is paid 10 euros per metre for his work. So to earn 3 million euros, he would need to install 300,000 metres of fencing.

Is that even possible? Let's say that he started working at 20 and his back has had enough by the time he's 60: that gives him 40 years to get rich putting up fences. 300,000 metres divided by 40 years then divided by 220 working days per year equals 34 metres per day.

That would be doable, wouldn't it? 34 metres a day? Digging 14 holes, installing 14 posts, and hanging 13 wire panels between them, that's doable. Certainly with two men. On good days you might even manage to do more, but we're calculating on the cautious side and also taking into account the days where you have to work on a slope or lug equipment for long distances, and days when the ground is full of stones.

It would mean that the customer is paying 20 euros per metre for labour. Add concrete, travel expenses, and a margin for the fencing contractor who sold the project, and you arrive at an installation price of somewhere between 25 and 30 euros per metre. That seems a bit on the expensive side to us, but we do know fencers whose customers pay them those sorts of prices.

Good, there we are then. It turns out it is possible to earn 3 million euros as a fencing installer. Or are we forgetting something?

Obviously our installer will need something to live on throughout those 40 years. We wanted to have that 3 million euros in the bank at the end of 40 years of hard work, so we can't use it for rent and groceries. The average fencing installer eats three Big Macs a day and drinks six cans of Red Bull; those alone cost him 27 euros a day.

That said, an installer who spends all day putting up fences isn't spending much money apart from that. Let's say he has a monthly salary of 3,000 euros gross; that's enough to rent a little flat, pay his bills, and if our installer doesn't eat too many Big Macs he'll still have money left over for a Brazzers subscription to him get through the hours when he can't put up fences.

At 12 months times 40 years, we will need an extra 1.44 million euros for putting those 300,000 metres into the ground. That's 4 euros and 80 cents per metre. Times that by two installers and it really drives up the labour costs – we're now at almost 30 euros per metre rather than 20.



THE 1% CLUB

Individual net wealth needed to join the top 1% in selected countries and territories, Q4 2023

COUNTRY	WEALTH NEEDED (US \$)
Monaco 🇲🇴	12,883,000
Luxembourg 🇱🇺	10,832,000
Switzerland 🇨🇭	8,509,000
United States 🇺🇸	5,813,000
Singapore 🇸🇬	5,227,000
Sweden 🇸🇪	4,761,000
Australia 🇦🇺	4,673,000
Germany 🇩🇪	3,430,000
France 🇫🇷	3,273,000
United Kingdom 🇬🇧	3,070,000
Italy 🇮🇹	2,548,000
Spain 🇪🇸	2,468,000
Japan 🇯🇵	1,971,000

Source: Knight Frank Research

TAXES PER COUNTRY

COUNTRY	CORPORATE TAX	INCOME TAX	NEEDED FOR € 3 MILLION NET
Austria 🇦🇹	25%	55%	€ 8.89 million
Belgium 🇧🇪	25%	50%	€ 8 million
France 🇫🇷	30%	49%	€ 8.4 million
Germany 🇩🇪	30%	48%	€ 8.16 million
Great Britain 🇬🇧	19%	47%	€ 6.99 million
Ireland 🇮🇪	25%	40%	€ 6.67 million
Luxembourg 🇱🇺	25%	45%	€ 7.27 million
Netherlands 🇳🇱	25%	50%	€ 8 million
Switzerland 🇨🇭	17%	34%	€ 5.44 million

And there was just one more little thing we'd forgotten: our installer can't do all of those 300,000 metres on a Saturday and get the client to pay in cash (although we know of a fencing installer who tried that, and got away with it too); the tax man wants a cut as well. Or make that a thick slice, because even if we only count corporate and income tax (for the sake of convenience), in most countries that will mean you need to bring in (more than) twice as much. That's what 'we' all agreed on.

So where do we end up? If you're able to install 34 metres in a day and want to make enough money from fencing to put you in the richest 1 per cent in your country, you need to be able to sell your skills for more than 25 euros per metre. Seeing



as we know few companies that pay that type of money to subcontractors, we are forced to conclude that as a fencing installer, you're never going to find yourself among the richest 1 per cent in the country. So it's a good thing you didn't become a fencing professional because you wanted to get rich; it would only have ended in disappointment.

While we had the calculator out, we made some reverse calculations. If you can sell your skills as a subcontractor for 10 euros per metre, while you need 4 euros and 80 cents of that to live on, you would need to install 66 metres a day for 40 years to end up with 3 million in the bank. That's almost as big a challenge as selling your labour for 25 euros a metre. But if we make that same calculation at 7.50 a metre, the number of metres you would have to make in a day suddenly shoots up to 126. Twice as many,

while the price is only 25 per cent less. But it would get you straight into the Guinness Book of Records as the installer who got the most metres in the ground, because after 40 years of that you will have installed 1.1 million metres of fencing.

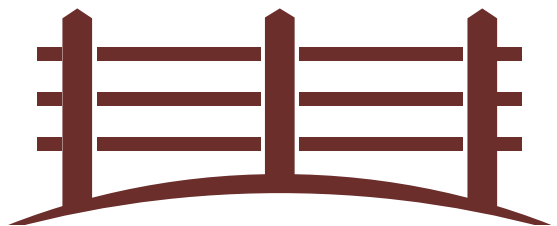
How can such a small difference in the price per metre have such an enormous effect on the number of metres you'd need to install to live it up a bit? In this example, the high number of workdays (40 years times 220 working days per year = 8800) means a large multiplier.

It demonstrates that, in metre price negotiations, it pays to fight for every penny – and to always try to squeeze in that extra metre at the end of the day.

Because if you get an additional euro for every metre you install, then at 34 metres a day you'll have almost 300,000 additional euros in

the bank at the end of 40 years. If you install 40 metres a day, that amount will be 350,000 euros. So even though installing fences might not allow you to join the richest 1 per cent of your country, you certainly don't have to be a pauper. How many metres have you installed in your life so far? ■





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Betafence extends its guarantee

Belgian company Betafence is extending the guarantees it offers. Various products now have a longer warranty period, or are suitable for installation closer to the sea than they were previously. Some products feature an adapted surface treatment, while Betafence has extended the warranty period of others based on past experience.

“For example, last summer we made changes to the powder coating on the Nylofor 3D mesh panels,” product manager Kris Van Waes says. *“Now the pre-galvanised wires are given an epoxy coating first. After that they go through the spray cabin and the oven again to be coated with polyester powder. The name we’ve given to the panels with that double coating is Nylofor 3D Plus. We already had a 10-year warranty on the standard 3D panels, when installed at least 3 kilometres from the coast. The 3D Plus panels come with a 5-year warranty in the zone that’s 1 to 3 kilometres from the coast.”*

Since then, Betafence has been looking to see where it can extend the warranty period even further. *“As part of that, we’ve made changes to the terms of the guarantee on for example the Bekafix posts,”* Van Waes goes on. *“They now have a five-year warranty in the zone 1 to 3 kilometres from the coast as well – although we haven’t made changes to the coating. The quality of the existing zinc and coating is so good – even years after installation – that we’re very confident about extending the guarantee. Other products will be added one by one.”*

Betafence believes it’s important to provide a good guarantee. *“For years that’s been one of the things that makes us stand out,”* Van Waes says. *“It’s one of our strongest selling points; it makes it clear that we stand for quality. We take it very seriously, too: there are plenty of companies that provide a lengthy guarantee, but if you try to make a claim it ends up being rejected, under the guise of ‘you should have cleaned the fence twice a year’ or something along those lines. That’s not how we operate. We don’t receive that many claims anyway – there’s a reason why we’re known for our quality. But if there is an issue, we make a genuine effort to arrive at a good resolution with the customer.”* ■



Farfisa launches new version of Mycom GSM system

Italian intercom manufacturer Farfisa, from Osimo near Ancona, launches a new version of its GSM System. The new Mycom is compatible with the Alba range. It enables owners to speak to visitors and grant them access wireless, via a phone call.

The Mycom system consists of a doorbell with speaker. There's a slot for a 4G SIM card, the complete system works just with this module and a power supply, without any further cables. When a visitor rings the doorbell, the module calls four different phone numbers one by one until it gets an answer. The person who answers the call is able to talk to the visitor and let them in. When the outdoor unit also has a Farfisa keypad module, it can be used the other way round as well: gate users who have an access code can call the module's SIM card and key in the code, enabling them to open the gate without needing to get out of the car.

The Mycom also features an office function that buzzes the gate open as soon as someone picks up, and an alarm function that sends a text message as soon as someone operates one of the gate's other Alba modules. The new GSM System is meant for applications like villas with a long distance between the entry door panel and the building, B&B's where the host can open the door without the need to be present, parkings and so on.

The new Mycom was released in April. ■





Zaun Limited launches Picture Perf



Zaun Limited, a British fencing manufacturer from Wolverhampton near Birmingham, is launching a new type of fencing. Picture Perf features an infill made from perforated stainless steel or aluminium sheeting – with the perforations forming a specific image.

“We’ve had customers raise questions about the safety of sheet infill with designs lasered out,” sales and marketing director Stewart Plant explains. “The cutting process can leave sharp edges, which pose a risk of injury to passers-by – particularly children, who are unaware of the danger – so we started looking for a process that could add designs to sheet infill without that sort of risk.”

PICTURE PERF

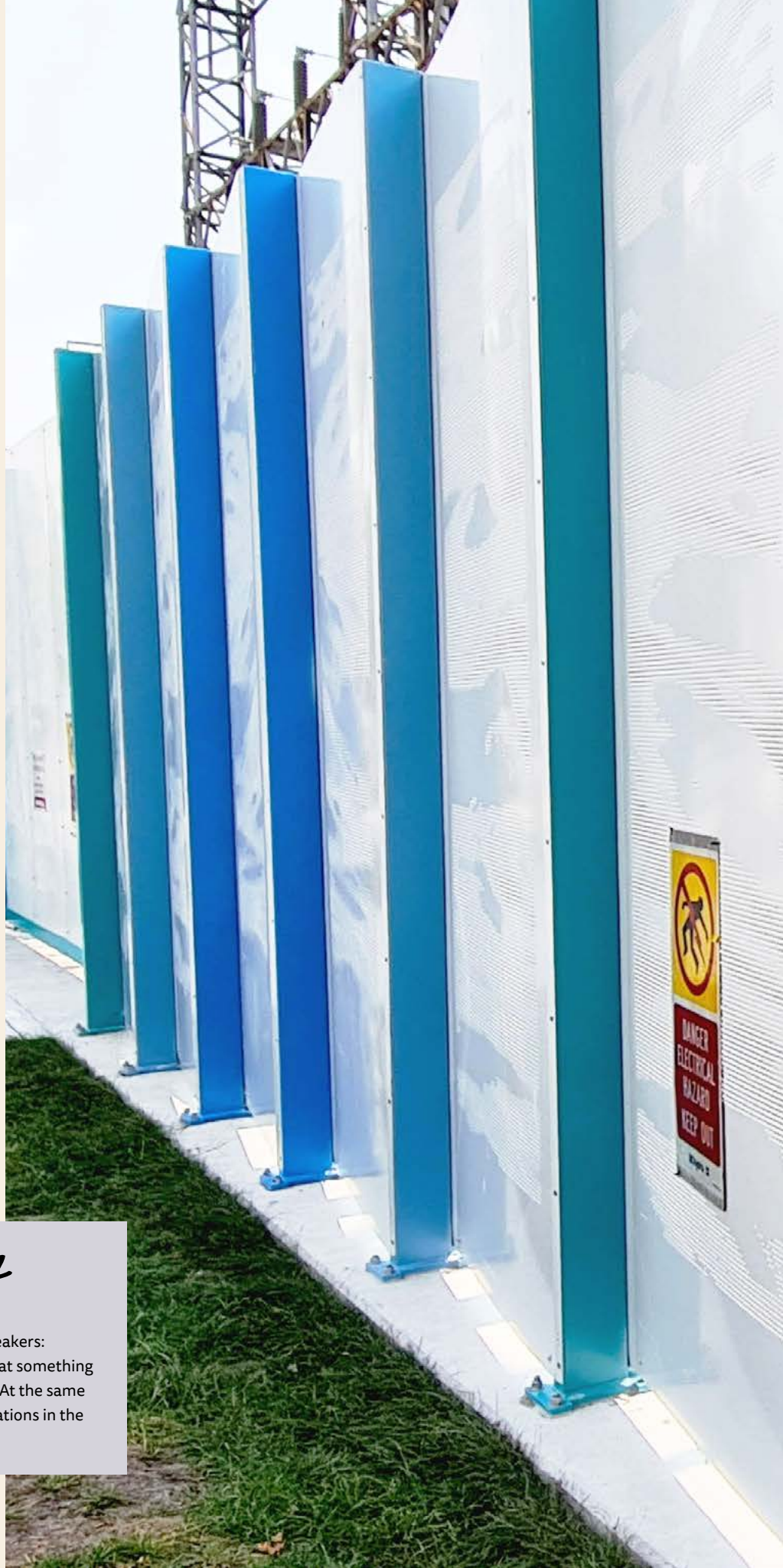
Zaun has collaborated with Irish metalworker Graepels to make the new Picture Perf fencing. "They perforate the sheeting in a way that keeps the surface smooth and free of sharp edges," Plant says. "By varying the diameter, spacing and shape of the holes, we can essentially print very detailed pictures onto the metal. This makes the fence much more attractive, while also ensuring maximum safety for everyone in the area. Architects can use Picture Perf to customise the fence to match the style of any building, and can integrate the fence into any surroundings, by creating intricate geometric patterns or adding photorealistic images. In terms of design, it exceeds every expectation. The fence is no longer installed as a functional necessity, but as a visually striking design element."

STRONG

As well as looking great, Picture Perf is very strong, Zaun reports. "The perforation process removes only minimal material from the metal sheeting," Plant says, "fully maintaining the structural integrity of the fence. This is in stark contrast to laser-cut graphics – these weaken the sheeting, because large sections of metal are taken out during the cutting process. It means that Picture Perf fencing provides superior resistance to impact, vandalism, and harsh weather conditions. It's worth noting that the biggest holes are only 8 millimetres in diameter, so they give no additional grip whatsoever to someone who might want to climb over. Picture Perf can also be used in locations where the fence needs to provide protection from break-ins."

Picture Perfect

For our readers who are not native English speakers: 'Picture perfect' is an expression to indicate that something is absolutely flawless ('as pretty as a picture'). At the same time, 'perf' here obviously refers to the perforations in the sheeting.





Stewart
Plant



APPLICATIONS

"Because we can perforate every sheet and can add any image at all to the sheeting, the new Picture Perf is suited to all applications," Plant says. "We can add characters to the fence around schools and playgrounds, public buildings can be made more appealing with attractive images, and around businesses and other commercial sites we can display logos, products and applications on the fence. Zoos can fence a portion of each animal enclosure with Picture Perf, with images of the animals that live in the enclosure. The possibilities are endless. Picture Perf can even be used around hospitals and psychiatric treatment centres since patients can't injure themselves on the perforations and the fencing is almost impossible to climb."

SYSTEM

Zaun uses aluminium or stainless steel sheeting for the infill of the new Picture Perf fencing. *"Galvanised steel sheeting could corrode around the edges of the cutouts," Plant says. "If we used untreated steel and galvanised it afterwards, the little holes would just fill up with zinc. Aluminium and stainless steel can be used without any further treatment."* The sheets have a maximum width of 1.5 metres and are screwed onto posts made of rectangular hollow sections. Sections measuring 120 by 60 millimetres are used for fencing heights of up to 2.4 metres; for heights of 3 or 4 metres, Zaun uses sections measuring 180 by 80 millimetres. ■



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Fence decorations

We've been in the fencing business for quite some time now, but we still see things that surprise us. For example, the other day we were on Amazon searching for something completely unrelated when, totally by chance, we came across a plastic chicken intended for use as a fence decoration. Intrigued, we searched for 'fence decorations' and what did we discover? It turns out that all sorts of different online retailers offer a wide range of the most impractical and nonsensical rubbish, intended for use as fence decorations. We've yet to come across them in the showroom of any real-life fencing company whatsoever, but apparently there are customers out there who purchase this sort of high-quality product. Here's a brief summary of the accessories we found, for the aid of those who might wish to tap into this market and stock fence decorations in addition to fences and gates.



ORNAMENTAL CHICKEN
 This chicken is manufactured from synthetic resin. According to the seller, it's waterproof and durable, not especially fragile, and realistically modelled. This very special chicken is yours for 7 euros and 33 cents on Amazon.



CHEEKY FROG
 This frog is hand-made from tin. He's holding up an umbrella to protect him from the rain - but whether it also protects him from rust, the advert doesn't say. You can find him on Amazon for 12 euros and 90 cents.



METAL BEES

These brightly-coloured bees come in a set of four different-sized bees, helping customers add character and colour to the garden. The seller says they're made of high-quality steel with a special anti-rust coating. The price for all four is 16 euros 49 cents on Amazon.

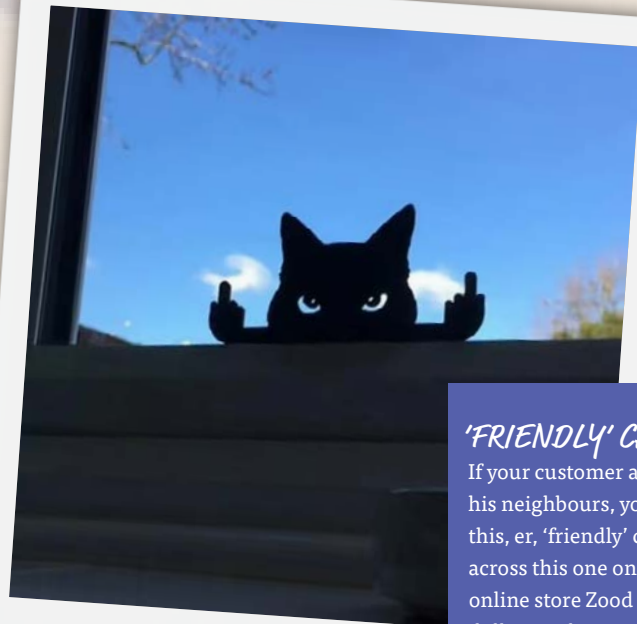


NOSY NEIGHBOUR

The Nosy Neighbour is a fun idea for anyone who wants to harass their neighbours. He's made from painted wood. The Nosy Neighbour is sold out on Amazon, but you can place a bid on him on eBay.

GRUMPY NEIGHBOUR

In New Zealand the neighbour looks somewhat less friendly. You can order him on Fruugo for 30 New Zealand dollars and 95 cents. We haven't checked whether shipping fees to Europe are included.



'FRIENDLY' CAT

If your customer absolutely loathes his neighbours, you can sell him this, er, 'friendly' cat. We came across this one on the Lebanese online store Zood for 5 American dollars and 75 cents.

Fencing calendar

This overview lists all trade shows and events that we think might be of interest to fencing professionals, which is why we have included events that only partially overlap with our industry (such as construction, security and infrastructure trade shows). NB: not all events are free of charge, and events may be cancelled, moved or rescheduled at the last minute. Check all information on the relevant event's website before making travel arrangements.

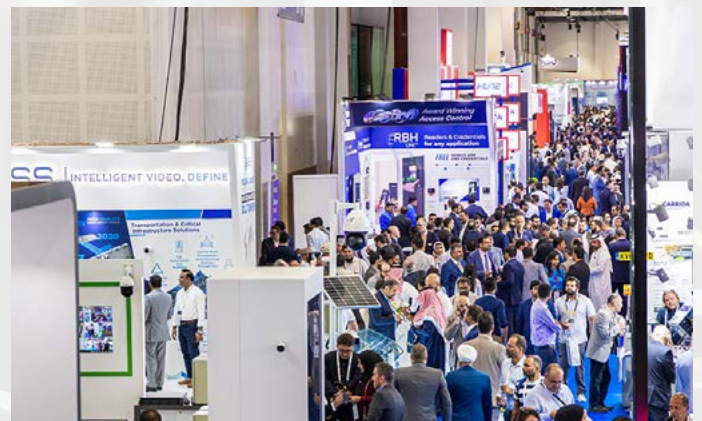


**SAVE
the
DATE**

Event	Begins	Ends	Location	Category
Fence Installation Championships	7 September	8 September	Wenschdorf bei Miltenberg	Fencing
The Fence Show	11 September	13 September	Las Vegas, South Point Hotel & Casino	Fencing
Galabau	11 September	14 September	Nuremberg Exhibition Centre	Landscaping
Security Essen	17 September	20 September	Essen Exhibition Centre	Security
International Security Expo	24 September	25 September	Olympia London	Security
Batimat	30 September	3 October	Paris Expo Porte de Versailles	Building & Construction
Saie	9 October	12 October	Bologna Exhibition Centre	Building & Construction
AFI Fencing Awards	17 October		Newcastle upon Tyne, St James' Park	Fencing
MZT General Assembly & Convention	17 October	19 October	Bamberg	Fencing
Bau	13 January	17 January	Munich Exhibition Centre	Building & Construction

Perimeter Protection	14 January	16 January	Nuremberg Exhibition Centre	Fencing
Intersec	14 January	16 January	Dubai World Trade Centre	Security
Night of the Fencing Installer	15 January		Nuremberg	Fencing
Budma	12 February	15 February	MTP Poznań Expo	Building & Construction
Fencetech	24 February	28 February	Salt Lake City, Salt Palace Convention Center	Fencing

If you're aware of an event that isn't listed here, or if you are organising an event that will be open to all fencing professionals, please be sure to let us know by emailing team@fencingtimes.com



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Installer steals website from another installer

This spring, the website of UK fencing company ABC Fencing from Colney Heath, just outside London, was stolen. Obviously that doesn't mean that someone put the website under their arm and walked off – rather, all of the site's data was copied and then used to create a new website.

The case came to light when the UK's Association of Fencing Industries (AFI) received two phone calls in quick succession – one from a customer and one from a supplier – asking whether the company with the copied website was in fact a legitimate member of the Association. It turned out that in addition to stealing images and text, the thieves had also copied the logos of the associations and organisations that the victim of the theft belongs to.

"When the AFI called me to ask whether I was also the owner of Metro Lane Fencing in central London, I couldn't believe it," says ABC Fencing's director and owner Alan Cunningham. "The website was almost identical to mine, right down to all the details like the AFI logo."

"We're receiving more and more calls from customers, main contractors, utility companies and suppliers, asking whether fencing installers that use the AFI logo really are members," says AFI managing director Pete Clark. "More than, say, a year ago. In our view, this development shows that customers across the board are more aware that they want their fence to be installed correctly, by a reliable fencing contractor with an industry association to fall back on in the event that something goes wrong."

AFI chairman Chris Hackett adds: *"We're generating the recognition the fencing industry needs. The invisible lobbying work carried out has resulted in, for example, fencing remaining exempt from the CITB levy"* that's mandatory throughout the rest of the construction industry, more fencing subsidy schemes from the Department for the Environment, having expert witnesses available now, the winning of lawsuits against bad contractors, members being defended in complaints from customers who refuse to accept good work that's been delivered, and the fact that the apprenticeship subsidy was increased again for 2024. In addition, the AFI puts the industry in the spotlight with the UK Fencing Awards and Best Practice Days, and the fact that we're getting more and more calls from end users shows that all our hard work is paying off: our organisation's profile is rising steadily, as we become known to an ever-widening audience and for all sorts of different types of fencing."

1) CITB stands for Construction Industry Training Board and, as the name suggests, is the training board for the UK construction industry.

The AFI is now actively investigating the websites of former members. Those that are found to still be using the Association's logo or name are being warned to remove these to avoid misleading end users. Conversely, Association members are urged to put the AFI logo on their sites if they have not already done so. As Clark puts it, *"It shows that you're a professional organisation that shares our values of moving the industry forward and promoting health and safety at work – and that you're working with us to ensure that fencing installation is recognised as being the highly-skilled profession that it is."* ■



Fence workers do not like barbecuing

In two previous editions, we asked you to help us get photographs of fence workers – in other words, of you yourselves – reading this great magazine. Because right now, every time we want to advertise our magazine, we have to take a boring stock photo and photoshop a cover of this magazine onto it, and that looks rather dull.

So far, we received all of three photographs. So it is immediately obvious who our biggest fans are. Well, we know it has been lousy weather these past few weeks. And just when the sun was shining, and your hair was looking good, and your work clothes were washed clean, you did not have a magazine with you. We totally get that, of course. We do not blame anyone. But we cannot organise a competition with three photographs.

But we are persistent. We keep asking. If you happen to know a nice place to read this magazine, have someone take a picture of it.



In Eric's case, the whole team is fan of the Fencing Times. He has to sit on the other side of the fence to be able to read undisturbed. Well done, Eric!

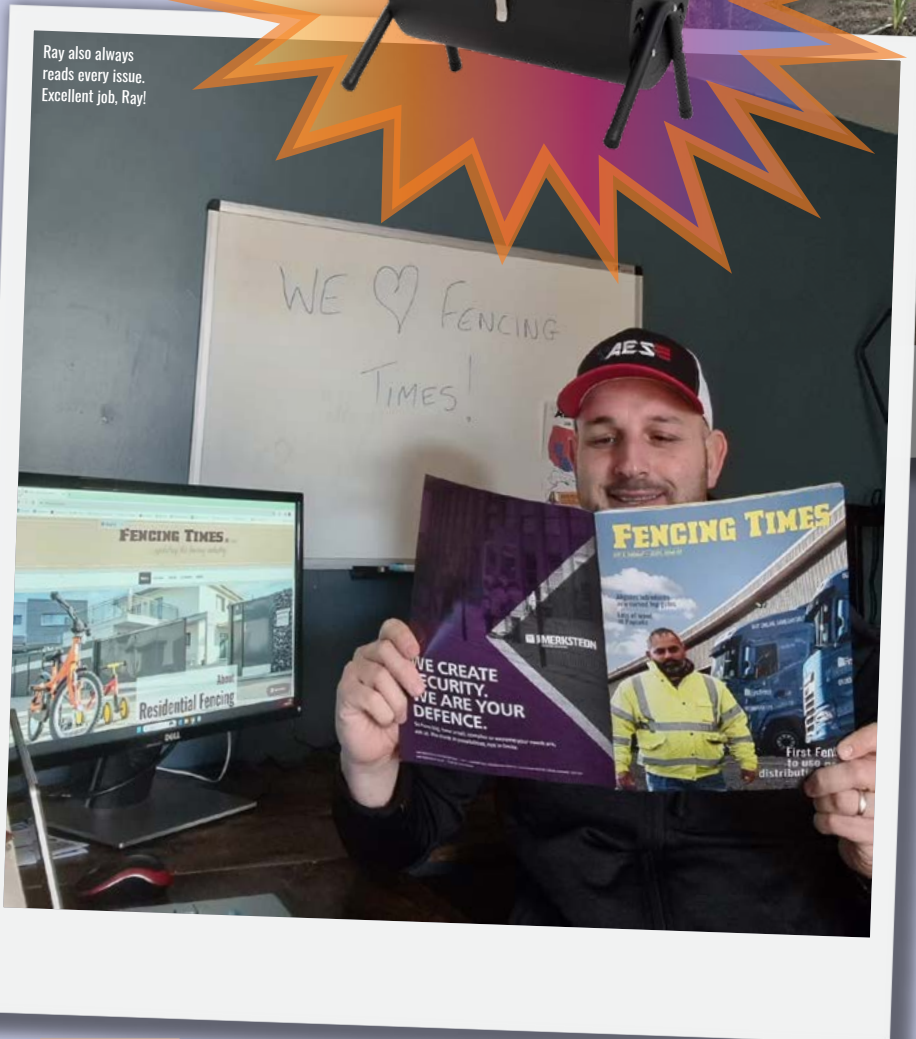


At your desk, in the warehouse among the nuts and bolts, outside on the forklift, stretched out on some rolls of wire netting, sprawled out against a fence or in the back of a pickup truck, the more creative the better. Outside the workplace is also fine of course: on a French campsite or an Austrian ski slope, in a Hawaiian hammock or on the terrace of your water villa in the Maldives, we accept everything.

Take a fun photo and win a barbecue!



Ray also always reads every issue. Excellent job, Ray!



Tim reads while driving posts. Excellent job Tim, you have your priorities in the right order.

Join us! Send your photo to:
photo@fencingtimes.com

Calculate and get rich

In a column in the front of this issue, we wrote that an extra euro or two in your calculation can sometimes mean the difference between rich and poor. Being curious types, we started asking around a bit on Facebook about how people in the industry make their calculations. And what did we find? A lot of installers don't do calculations at all. That is, they do calculate the amount of materials they'll need, but then they slap a percentage on top of that that's more or less based on gut feeling... and is sometimes completely arbitrary. The same goes for the installation charge.

We have to say that we don't have anything against gut feelings. Your gut feeling is your subconscious whispering to you, and the subconscious part of your brain is the part

that stores all your past experiences. So your gut feeling ensures that you'll always earn enough to survive, even if it's sometimes only barely.

But your gut feeling doesn't take your goals into account. If they're more ambitious than what you've achieved to date, your gut feeling has no experience of them. And if you've never gone through a serious crisis or a truly major setback, your gut feeling doesn't plan for that either. In other words: if you rely purely on your gut feeling, your margins are always going to be too tight.

So let's take a closer look at calculating. Coincidentally, earlier this year we attended a meeting of the UK trade association AFI in Plumpton in the south of England, where CEO

Pete Clark gave an interesting presentation on the various items that should be included in a good estimate of costs.

We've created a sample calculation based on the items from the example he gave, purely as an example of how to do it – and why. It really is just an example, with the amounts chosen completely at random – obviously you'll need to adapt these to your own business.

For our example, we have used a completely fictitious company with a single owner who is also responsible for sales. This owner employs one office manager, one planner who is also responsible for purchasing, and four installers. The owner wants to take on a job involving 100 metres of fencing. What should his calculation include?





FIXED COSTS

In order to draw up an accurate calculation, you need to have a good overview of your fixed and variable costs. Fixed costs are those expenses that don't change; expenses that remain the same whether you sell a lot or just a little, and whether you install a lot or just a little. Your rent or mortgage repayment, your staff, insurance costs, the accountant. The easiest way to make a list of your fixed costs is to go through last year's bank statements. You'll see that the list is longer than you thought.

COST ITEM	€ PER YEAR
-----------	------------

PREMISES

- Rent	24,000.00
- Utilities	4,800.00
- Insurance	500.00
- Council tax	2,000.00
- Waste collection	2,000.00

STAFF

- Salaries	175,200.00
- Social security contributions	40,800.00
- Pension schemes	9,000.00

VEHICLES

- Leasing	19,200.00
- Fuel	7,200.00
- Insurance	4,000.00
- Repairs & Maintenance	6,000.00
- Forklift depreciation	3,000.00

INSTALLATION

- Earth auger depreciation	500.00
- Compressor depreciation	400.00
- Workwear and shoes	1,000.00

OFFICE

- Software	1,800.00
- Computer depreciation	1,500.00
- Call charges	3,000.00
- Mobile phone depreciation	1,500.00

FINANCE

- Interest on loans	1,500.00
- General insurance	1,200.00
- Banking fees	720.00

SALES & MARKETING

- Website	1,000.00
- Sponsoring	3,000.00
- Advertisements	3,000.00

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

- Accountant	3,500.00
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MEMBERSHIPS

- Business owners' association	800.00
- Trade association	1,500.00

DEVELOPMENT

- Courses and seminars	2,000.00
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TEAM BUILDING

- Go-karting	2,000.00
- Summer BBQ	1,000.00

CONTINGENCIES

Fencing Times VIP subscription	150.00
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TOTAL: 340,000.00

Depreciation

The monthly recurring costs, for example rent and phone bills, are easy. Costs for things you only need once every few years are a bit harder; you need to include depreciation in your calculations. Depreciation is more important than you might think; it ensures that you have money ready for a new forklift in the event that yours gives up the ghost.

But how long is your current forklift going to last? Perhaps after three years you're going to need 12,000 euros for a new(er) one; perhaps it won't be for another six years. In the first case you'd need to allow for 4,000 euros in depreciation every year, while in the second case you'd only need 2,000 euros. Here, again, the motto is: keep your estimates on the safe side. The faster you write things off, the better. But don't go over the top, as that will drive up the price.

Stock

If you always have 2 truckloads of materials in stock, that's costing you money. You're keeping 50,000 euros tied up in inventory. If you'd been able to invest those funds, they could have earned you money. If you had to borrow 50,000 euros, you'd have to pay interest on it and that interest would need to go in the calculation.

24

5690
+ 236

5926
- 129

5797

WED THU FRI SAT
3 4 5 6
10 11 12 13
17 18 19 20

Now that we know the fixed costs we're incurring each year, we need to find a way to include them in the calculation for a project. The easiest way to do this is by dividing the cost items by the number of installation days per year and by the number of teams you have.

There are 260 working days in a year. Obviously holiday days are the first thing to subtract from that. On top of that, the average employee misses 6 or so days a year due to illness. And then, of course, there are the days when it's too rainy or cold to install fencing. In

the end you're left with between 200 and 220 installation days per year. We'll use 200 days for this calculation; it's on the safe side and is also an easy number to work with.

And voilà: 340,000 euros in fixed costs, divided by 200 days, divided by 2 teams, gives a fixed cost of 850 euros per installation team per day. That's the amount that each team costs, every day.

14,000
+ 1,440

15,440
11,770

COUNTRY	TOTAL DAYS OFF	PUBLIC HOLIDAYS	STATUTORY HOLIDAYS
Finland 🇫🇮	39	15	24
France 🇫🇷	36	11	25
Sweden 🇸🇪	36	11	25
Denmark 🇩🇰	36	11	25
Spain 🇪🇸	36	14	22
Great-Brittain 🇬🇧	36	8	28
Luxembourg 🇱🇺	35	10	25
Greece 🇬🇷	32	12	20
Italy 🇮🇹	31	11	20
Portugal 🇵🇹	30	10	20
Belgium 🇧🇪	30	10	20
Germany 🇩🇪	29	9	20
Ireland 🇮🇪	29	9	20
The Netherlands 🇳🇱	28	8	20

Holidays

Every country sets a different number of holiday days for employees. The Finns have the most in Europe, while the Dutch have the least.

TUE WED THU FRI

Total: 33

VARIABLE COSTS

Once you've calculated the fixed costs, you've got the hardest part out of the way. The variable costs are those costs that are different for each job. In this example we planned to install 100 metres of fencing. The fence consists of posts and panels, with the panels being 2.5 metres long. Each post will have its own concrete foundation. The ground is normal and will be easy to dig out. The

fenceline can easily be accessed with the van. You know that your team can install 40 metres of this type of fencing per day. This gives you the following calculation:

COST ITEM	NUMBER	PRICE (€)	LINE TOTAL (€)
MATERIALS			
- panels	40.00 units	80.00	3,200.00
- posts	41.00 units	35.00	1,435.00
- fixings	123.00 units	3.60	442.80
INSTALLATION			
- man-hours	2.50 team days	850.00	2,125.00
- concrete	2.00 m ³	125.00	250.00
- diesel	5.00 litres	1.70	8.50
- grinding disc	1.00 units	50.00	50.00
CONTINGENCIES			
			300.00
		TOTAL:	7,811.30

Contingencies

If you're smart, you'll include a line item for contingencies in every calculation. Something unexpected comes up on every job. Perhaps the project site turns out not to be as easily accessible as thought, and your installers have to slip 50 euros to a forklift driver from a company up the road in exchange for his help with unloading the materials. Or the gate manufacturer accidentally supplies green mortice plates instead of black ones, and you decide to just repaint them yourself so you can move on to the next job.

On a big job, make the contingency cost item a little larger, on a small job a little smaller. It doesn't matter if it's a bit on the high side. In this example you quite possibly won't need anything close to the full 300 euros, but the leftover amount can be popped into your piggy bank ready for that one time you accidentally cut a fibre-optic cable in two and get landed with an 8,000 euro repair bill.

If you want the complete picture, write down every single cost, no matter how small. On every job you use a couple of litres of diesel for the aggregate, and a few bits from the cordless drill get lost in the grass. They're small costs that you hardly notice at the time... but if you don't write them down here, then at the end of the year they'll be deducted from your profit.

PROFIT

And that immediately brings us to the next important item in the calculation, so important that it should actually be at the top: profit. After all, this is where you figure out just what you're doing it all for. This is where you determine whether the new car you buy in three years' time is going to be a Porsche or a Golf. Whether you'll be able to buy a holiday home on the French Riviera ten years from now, or whether it will be a caravan on the Welsh coast.

In his presentation, Pete Clark said, "*Profit is not a dirty word*," and we can only agree with him. In leftist circles in particular, people still sometimes judge you for making a profit. Those who want to make a profit are seen as greedy and anti-social, or even as gifters. This leads a lot of business owners to have the tendency to keep their profits (too) small. They feel too embarrassed to add a hefty percentage.

But they make things very difficult for themselves. Every business needs to turn a profit. It helps you to grow, and ensures that you have money to invest. A business that makes a profit is (more) saleable, should you ever wanted to dispose of it. Profits mean that the bank considers you creditworthy, should you ever need money.

And most importantly (this one is also from Pete): profit helps you to sleep at night. You don't need to be afraid of setbacks (or in any case you can be much less afraid of them), because you know you can always earn the money back.

But what is a healthy profit? Opinions on this issue are very much divided. The definition of a healthy profit greatly depends on the industry, the size and the structure of your business. One thing that most business advisers do agree on is that once it drops below 10 percent, the

situation becomes critical. If you're not making at least 10 percent profit then while you might survive, you won't have a healthy business. That only applies at around 15 to 20 percent and up. And please note: 20 percent profit here means that you retain 20 percent of your turnover. That means that you'll need to add a 25 percent margin to start with.

Obviously this is just a guideline – you can always make it higher. Apple turned a profit of 114 billion dollars last year on takings of 383 billion dollars. That's 30 percent. That means they added 42 percent to the cost price of your iPhone.

The table below demonstrates the differences between low profit and high profit.



TOTAL COST:**€ 7,811.30****ADDED MARGIN**

11.00	%	859.24	€
15.00	%	1,171.70	€
25.00	%	1,952.83	€
42.00	%	3,280.75	€

PRICE PAID BY THE CUSTOMER:

€ 8,670.54
€ 8,983.00
€ 9,764.13
€ 11,092.05

Tax

For the sake of completeness: this amount is your operating profit, from which tax is still to be deducted. Depending on the country you live in, this begins with 20 to 30 percent in corporate tax. You can then invest the remaining funds in a new forklift or pay them out to yourself. If you pay them out, dividend tax or income tax will be deducted depending on the structure of your company. It means that for every euro you want to put into your piggy bank for that holiday to the Maldives, you'll need to add two euros to the sale price.

IMPOSSIBLE

If you start doing calculations like this, with a decent number of inbuilt contingency items and a healthy profit margin, chances are that your prices will increase (considerably). "That's all well and good," you'll be thinking, "but then I won't sell anything. I'll be far too expensive! You editors are crazy." You might be right about the last part; we are indeed slightly unhinged. But we're not just jotting down whatever comes into our heads.

To start with, a lot of customers have absolutely no idea what a fence actually costs. The main person who needs to get used to the new price is you. It doesn't matter whether your fencing price is 89 or 97 euros per metre; the customer is going to be shocked anyway, because he was expecting it to be 50. He's also had quotes of 72 euros per metre. Blah, blah, blah. All the arguments you used to convince customers to buy at your previous price of 89 euros will remain the same... and he'll often end up placing the order anyway. The only difference is that at 97 euros you have an extra 8 euros in your pocket and you're building a healthy business.

Secondly, the higher price in your calculation doesn't have to be set in stone. You can still offer a lower price if you particularly want a job. But the big difference is that you now have a good overview of what's going on. You can change all sorts of details in the spreadsheet and see immediately what that will mean for your bottom line, or what you'll need to do to achieve your financial goals.

You can give your installers a kick up the bum and get them to install 50 metres in a day instead of 40. Then you'll only have to put two team days into the calculation instead of two and a half, and the price for the customer will drop by 500 euros while the profit stays (almost) the same. Obviously you can't do that on every job (unless you want your installers to run away swiftly without looking back) but it's okay to ask them to go the extra mile now and again. Working for a healthy business is a better thing for them as well.

You can also divide your fixed costs by 220 working days instead of 200. You'll have to hope it doesn't rain too much in the coming year, and you might need to work the odd Saturday to make up for a lost day, but it will take 240 euros off the price. We've added a new column to the fixed costs table below, giving the price per team day for each cost item.

COST ITEM	€ PER YEAR	€ PER TEAM DAY
PREMISES		
- Rent	24,000.00	60.00
- Utilities	4,800.00	12.00
- Insurance	500.00	1.25
- Council tax	2,000.00	5.00
- Waste collection	2,000.00	5.00
STAFF		
- Salaries	175,200.00	438.00
- Social security contributions	40,800.00	102.00
- Pension schemes	9,000.00	22.50
VEHICLES		
- Leasing	19,200.00	48.00
- Fuel	7,200.00	18.00
- Insurance	4,000.00	10.00
- Repairs & Maintenance	6,000.00	15.00
- Forklift depreciation	3,000.00	7.50
INSTALLATION		
- Earth auger depreciation	500.00	1.25
- Compressor depreciation	400.00	1.00
- Workwear and shoes	1,000.00	2.50
OFFICE		
- Software	1,800.00	4.50
- Computer depreciation	1,500.00	3.75
- Call charges	3,000.00	7.50
- Mobile phone depreciation	1,500.00	3.75
FINANCE		
- Interest on loans	1,500.00	3.75
- General insurance	1,200.00	3.00
- Banking fees	720.00	1.80
- Holding stock	3,000.00	7.50
SALES & MARKETING		
- Website	1,000.00	2.50
- Sponsoring	3,000.00	7.50
- Advertisements	3,000.00	7.50
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		
- Accountant	3,500.00	8.75
MEMBERSHIPS		
- Business owners' association	800.00	2.00
- Trade association	1,500.00	3.75
DEVELOPMENT		
- Courses and seminars	2,000.00	5.00
TEAMBUILDING		
- Go-karting	2,000.00	5.00
- Summer BBQ	1,000.00	2.50
CONTINGENCIES	8,230.00	20.58
- Subscription to Fencing Times	150.00	0.38
TOTAL:	340,000.00	850.00



Does the price still need to come down quite a bit? Then you can delete the contingency item. That will immediately shave 20 euros from the daily rate. But if you do that, be aware that you'll be able to absorb fewer setbacks this year than you might have liked. If that's still not enough, you could also scrap teambuilding. That will save another 7.50. Just have a barbecue a week later.

Every price cut is going to cost you something. If you scrap the forklift depreciation on this job, then you'll have to push back buying a newer one – even if it isn't scheduled until 2026 – by 2.5 days. If the mechanic who's just been round for routine maintenance says you've got a great forklift that can keep going for years, then you could go ahead. If he looks doubtful, then better not.

STEERING

Our point is: once you have a clear picture of your costs, then you know what you're doing and can steer your business and make decisions in a much more targeted way. That job you took on last week for an absolute rock-bottom price, because you didn't want your competitor to install a fence at that location with huge nameplates on it? That job that your gut feeling said you should probably charge more for? Now you know how much it cost you. And you don't need to feel sick about it, because now you can put those expenses into the fixed costs spreadsheet under the heading of 'marketing' and recoup them in other projects.



And finally, if you find that you simply can't sell at the healthy prices from the calculation on an ongoing basis, then you'll know you need to improve in other areas. For example by improving your sales skills (the course costs for this fit nicely into the 'Development' category of the spreadsheet).

Or, of course, you could slash back your costs. That's always a good idea; you should do it once a year in any case. With the clear overview you've created, you now know exactly what you're spending and where. You probably got quite a fright (or two) while making the list

when you saw just how high a particular cost item actually was. You can also see at a glance where you'll achieve the fastest results when you start cutting back. In this example, it would be better to look for a cheaper accountant than a cheaper bank.

Some people are handy with an Excel spreadsheet, while others prefer to do their sums on the back of a beer mat. It doesn't really matter how you do it. It doesn't need to be a work of art, either; it's something you do for yourself, not for the Supervisory Board. The point is that you do it (or have it done). Drawing

up a full list of all your costs and making a good estimate for each project and for each type of fencing gives you a broad overview and a whole range of options; we've never met anyone who regretted doing it. ■

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SAVE
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LINE UP

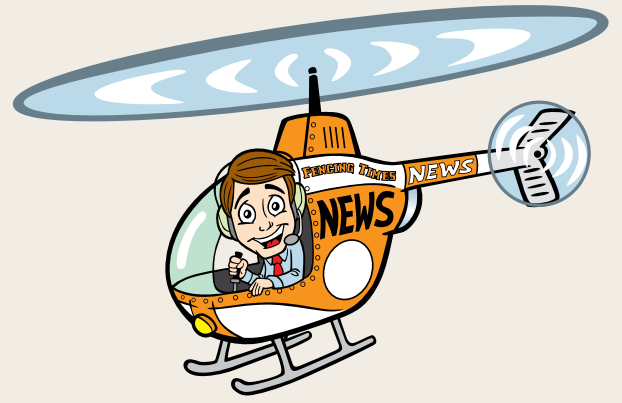
SATURDAY

- Training
- Qualifying
- Fencing Party

SUNDAY

- Championship
- Entertainment for young and old

FENCES IN THE NEWS



22 MAY 2024

Sunak protects mansion in North Yorkshire with wooden fence



Uninvited guests created nuisance for British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak last summer. Burglars from Greenpeace climbed onto the roof of his North Yorkshire mansion and hung the house full of black cloths to protest against oil drilling. Sunak then applied for a permit to put a fence around his garden, but

this proved to rub a neighbour the wrong way. The latter feared the fence would ruin the view and made an elaborate plea to stop the building of a fence in a landscape that has been open for hundreds of years. "Sunak lives in London, his children are at school in London, and he has already indicated his intention to move to America after his time

in office. Those few times he uses this house, I am sure the police can protect him better," she said. "Moreover, he would do better to ensure stricter legislation that prevents these climate protesters from disrupting everyone's lives." The latter would actually be more useful than the fence Sunak had built: a wooden lean-to fence 1.20 metres high

with three crossbars. According to the permit application, a simple visual and modest barrier to discourage intrusion into the residential area - in our opinion, a money-wasting and pointless measure that future Greenpeace intruders won't care one bit about. Nevertheless, we think Sunak is a great guy: thanks for the fencing, Rishi! ■

Baseball player plays baseball in own yard and you will never guess what his neighbours think of it



In Chandler, a suburb of Phoenix in Arizona, lives former professional baseball player James Jerry Hardy, JJ to friends. At 41, Hardy is too young to put out to pasture and, since he no longer plays in Major League Baseball (MLB), must somehow manage to pass the time. So he already had a swimming pool, a tennis court and a golf green created in the garden of his villa, but a baseball player obviously

gets only moderate pleasure out of tennis, golf, and swimming. So what did our JJ do? He had a baseball field built in his own garden this spring. Complete with a 6-metre high ball stop fence to stop the flying baseballs. The neighbours do not like it at all. Of course not the view of the high fence anyway, but they are also afraid that the ball stop fence will be followed by light poles and that the neighbourhood

will be treated to regular and noisy baseball games. We can somewhat understand that about those light poles: we once visited Phoenix, Arizona ourselves and from April to November, everyone there runs from air-conditioner to air-conditioner during the day because it is too hot outside to do just about anything, let alone sports. So if JJ wants to actually use his ballpark, it will be mostly in the late evening and early

morning. But on the other hand: the plots of land in the residential area where JJ lives are large, and the neighbours can look in many directions without seeing the fence. Moreover, the field is not at all ready yet and nobody knows yet how often it will be used for play. Maybe JJ only wants to play baseball there occasionally on Sunday afternoons with some friends and family. For now, we are team JJ. ■

Farmhand injured by airborne fence post

In New Zealand, the press release does not say exactly where, a farmhand was injured when his head was hit by a fence post. He was working with a colleague to upgrade an existing agricultural fence

with five barbed wires to 10 barbed wires. While tensioning one of the extra barbed wires, a tension post broke off a little below ground and was catapulted straight into the farmhand's face. The farmhand subsequently had to go to the

hospital for 'urgent medical attention'. Safer Farms, an association dedicated to work safety in the agricultural industry, has now issued a so-called Safety Alert, warning other farmers who are members of the association to

always check how much force a tensioning post can take and where its weaknesses are before you start pulling wires under tension. We have another tip for farmers setting fences themselves: next time, just have a fencing worker come. ■



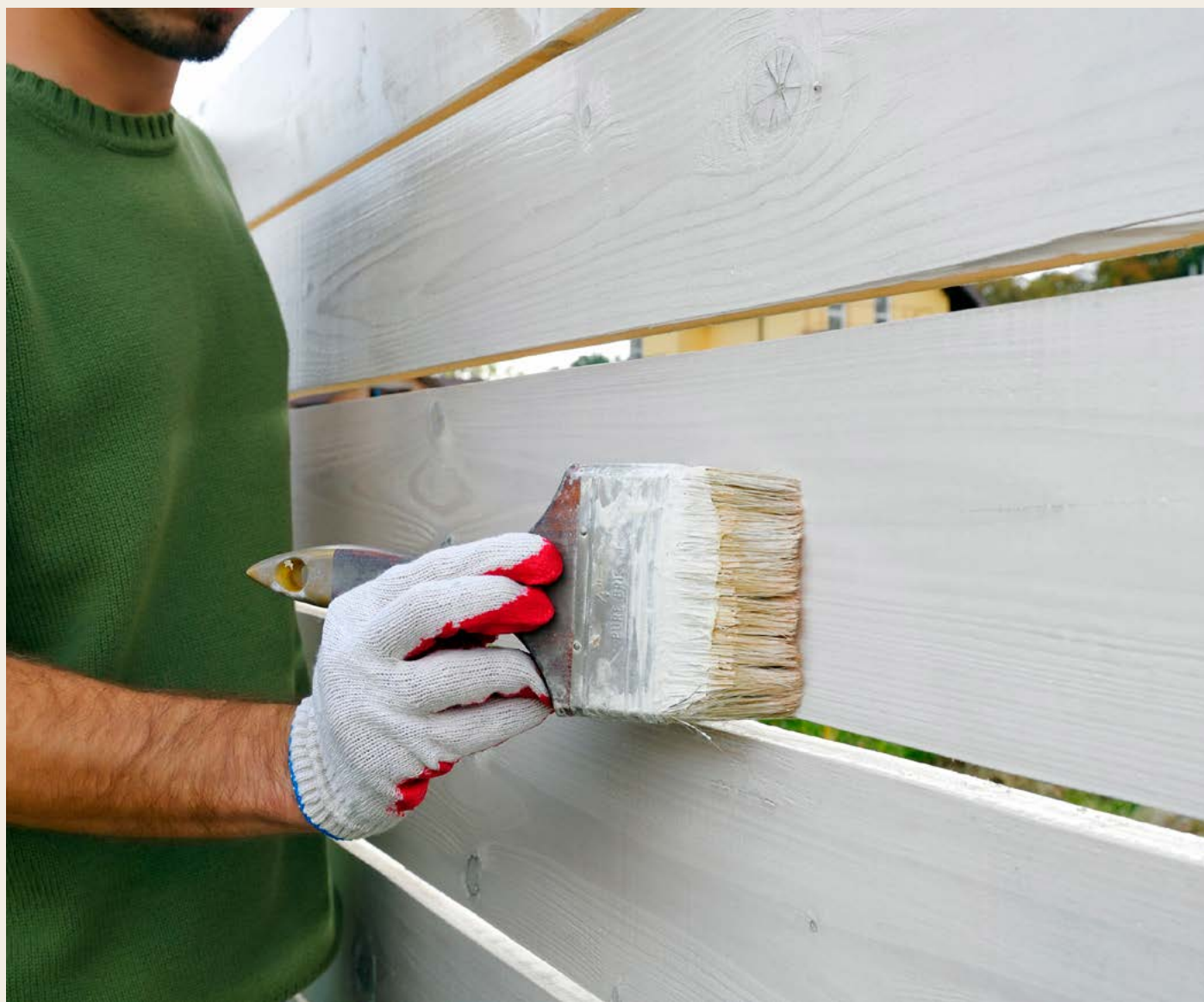
Neighbours steal pretty side of fence

The smartest neighbours in the world: they live somewhere in England. The story that follows dates back to 2022, but we had briefly missed it then and it is too good to pass up. An Englishman, who complained anonymously on internet forum Reddit, had his garden renovated for 9,000 British pounds. Part of the work involved refurbishing the wooden fence around that garden. Green mold deposits were

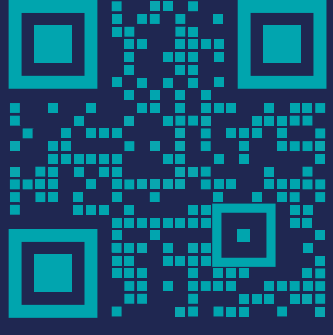
removed, sanding and brushing was done and then the whole fence was painted in two coats. There was just one small matter: the fence did not belong to him, but to the back neighbours. And what then happened you will never guess: three days later, he came home from shopping to find that the back neighbours had simply turned around all 19 fence sections. Once again, he was looking at an ugly fence full of green mold

deposits. The neighbours now had the pretty side. It is a story so absurd, we could not have made it up ourselves, but it gets even better: the first neighbour came to Reddit, to express his frustration and hoped for a bit of acclaim but was just barely not laughed at. Other Reddit users called the back neighbour genius, the situation hilarious and then explained to the man that legally he has no leg to stand on, since it was the neighbour's

fence. He then showed great sportsmanship and took a case of beer to the back neighbour to apologise for working on their fence without asking. The neighbour grumbled some more – because it turned out that he had turned around the fence panels precisely out of frustration about this – but eventually showed sportsmanship and allowed the panels to be turned around again. He even helped. All is well that ends well. ■



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