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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...AN OPERATIONS MANAGER



by PCA writer

August 2024 saw the continuation of PCA team members joining with pub company representatives to experience a typical day in various roles within the industry. It is important for the PCA team to learn about the relationships between the regulated pub companies and tied pub tenants and how tied tenants are supported in relation to the Pubs Code. Experiencing a 'day in the life' is one way in which we seek to understand how various roles interact with tenants.

Business Development Managers (BDMs) (sometimes called Operations Managers), and anyone else interacting with the tenant on behalf of the pub company in relation to rent, repairs or business planning discussions, carry out vital functions that are regulated under Pubs Code Regulation 41.

The pub company is required to provide tied pub tenants with information about the BDM role and the support and advice they will provide the tenant, and the pub company must also ensure that each BDM is provided with appropriate training in relation to the Pubs Code every 12 months.

Pub companies must ensure their BDMs deal with tied tenants in a fair and lawful manner.

As part of my visit, I met up with Byron Thomas who has been an Operations Manager with Marston's for the past 8 years. Byron has responsibility for 25 pubs, which are on a mix of agreement types including managed, franchise, tenancy and lease.

Byron escorted me on what he described as one of his 'non-planned' days, where he drops in on tenants unannounced, as opposed to pre-booked business meetings. He explained this gives him the chance to see how pubs operate naturally on a daily basis. Other visits carried out by Byron are planned with the tenant to ensure they are onsite and discussions are able to take place.



Biggin Hall, Coventry

Our first visit of the day took us to Biggin Hall in Coventry. Built in 1923, this is a large sports bar, well known locally for showing a variety of sports on TV and for having a pool table and dart board, as well as a dedicated room and dance floor space upstairs.

When discussing his approach towards supporting tenants, Byron stated that in his view having a good working relationship was key for any Pub-owning Business (POB) representative. He made a point of encouraging tenants to keep up with what they were already doing well, such as maintaining food hygiene and safety standards and to stay on top of basic repairs, as he felt this was the foundation for running a good pub. Once the basics were in place he then felt he could be useful in assisting the tenant to grow their business and expand further.

As this wasn't a planned visit we were unable to meet with the tenants who run the pub, but we met with the wider team members who work hard to make Biggin Hall the welcoming venue that it is.

From Biggin Hall, we then travelled out of Coventry and across the border into Warwick, where we stopped off at The Falcon at Hatton. The Falcon is a food-based pub, which offers authentic Indian cuisine, alongside more traditional pub classics. The Falcon also provides accommodation.

The tenants of The Falcon were not at the pub when we arrived, but Byron and I sat down to discuss more about his role. We spoke about the duty on the BDM to issue tenants with notes following any discussions held.

The Code states in Reg 41 (4) that these should be provided within 14 days and the pub company must ask the tenant to respond to them if they disagree with any aspect of the record with 7 days from the day they are received. Tenants are also able to ask their BDM for notes of any previous discussions.



The Falcon, Hatton

Byron told me that Marston's had recently introduced a new IT system, which includes the ability to send BDM notes to tenants quickly and efficiently, as among other things it auto populates the tenant's email address, ensuring that the notes are sent to the correct recipient. I saw the system at work on Byron's laptop and it appeared relatively straightforward in nature,

Byron commented that although the system was effective, it wasn't foolproof and required BDMs or others working with the tenant to remember to ensure the notes were sent after being written up. He added that he was part of the training pool for BDMs where he trained others in the role and he shared that he always encouraged colleagues to carry out the good practice of writing up and sending the notes whilst still with the tenants rather than waiting until later.

Our final pub of the day was The Unicorn in Warwick. This is a family friendly pub serving the local residential area and providing a traditional menu.



The Unicorn, Warwick

It was during this visit that the topic of repairs and dilapidations was raised, and Byron informed me that Marston's had recently changed the process for tenants reporting issues. Previously, all calls went through to a call centre where a call centre operative entered the details. This is now automated with the tenant choosing the option they require, although there is still the option to speak to the person for more complex issues.

Understanding tenant satisfaction with the handling of repairs and dilapidations, is an important part of the PCA's Annual Tied Tenant Survey. The PCA looks carefully for any changes in satisfaction levels reported. The [2024 Survey Results](#) can be found on the PCA's website.

I would like to thank Byron for his insight and assistance throughout the day and for sharing his knowledge with me. I also offer my thanks to Marston's Code Compliance Officer, Claire Coley, for arranging my visit. It is useful to understand in practice the work of the BDM, a role regulated under the Code, in supporting tenants to run as successful businesses at the heart of their community. They are a vital asset and much more than just somewhere to go for a drink.

You can find out more about the [Pubs Code](#) on our website.