

Liverpool City Council
Trading Standards System

CMU V8.0.x.0

Complaint reference number: 165963
LA reference number : NWCC00658585T2

DATES

DATE RECEIVED: 29/09/2009
DATE OF FIRST RESPONSE: 30/09/2009
DATE CLOSED: 18/01/2010
TARGET RESPONSE DATE: 06/10/2009

FULL DETAILS OF COMPLAINANT

Mr R Ager

FLAT 8 39
Ivanhoe Road
Aigburth, Liverpool
POSTCODE: L17 8XF
TELNO: [REDACTED]
HOW RECEIVED: CDR - TS Referral From CD

NAME OF PERSON COMPLAINED AGAINST

Skillstrain

ADDRESS COMPLAINED AGAINST

80-88 Collingdon Street
Luton
LU1 1RX

WARD:

UD More

CAP NUMBER: 00 - No CAP
NO OF CONTACTS: 4 - 4 Contacts
COUNTRY PURCHAS: GB - United Kingdom
PURCHASE DATE: 28/09/2009

FINANCIAL DETAILS

CASH AMOUNT INVOLVED: 3,000.00
AMOUNT OF CIVIL REDRESS: 3,000.00
AMOUNT CHARGED: 0.00
PAYMENT RECEIVED: No

DETAILS OF COMPLAINT

IT course - mis rep. || BBC watchdog claimed microsoft and cisco where

COMPLAINT CATEGORY: A16 - Fair Trading
OFT (GOODS): CZ02 - Correspondence/distance learning courses
OFT (TRADING PRACTICE): 12A - Unfair Businesscommercial practice
PURCHASE MEDIUM: 017 - Doorstep invited
COUNTRY OF TRADE: GB - UNITED KINGDOM

Case Classification: Referral - Customer Requiring Support on Non Criminal matters

IT course - mis rep.

BBC watchdog claimed Microsoft and cisco where false endorsement.
C contacted Microsoft who clarified they had nothing to do with T.
C has sent T a number of letters - T refused to help.

C is not happy with the quality of the course, badly written out of date and qualification is not recognised.
C wants refund as c feels mis rep.

Contact: 2009-09-28T16:25:43 Adviser: [REDACTED]

REFER TO TS COMMITMENT TO CONTACT - C has done all C can do and wants advice.

Preferred Contact Method: Day

Other Partners Informed: [REDACTED] - Notification - FYI Trader is located in TS Area

30/ 9/2009 14:00 [REDACTED]

Tel C - C will provide copies of letters from him to T and their correspondence in reply.

C will also send copy of contract and of T's misrep C sys that has stopped paying the finance to finance co as he discovered that they are owned by skillstrain.

Adv C of consequences in defaulting on payments - C says no intention of starting payment again as believes it is a scam.

Adv C that I will also req auth mandate to be completed and returned.

6/10/2009 11:08 [REDACTED]

docs recvd and attached to file

21/10/2009 16:04 [REDACTED]

letter drafted

23/10/2009 9:01 [REDACTED]

letter posted and file forwarded to ENF for their consideration

26/10/2009 9:00 RIA received

27/10/2009 9:47 RIA Checked BBC website - found article on

"Inside Out" site - Scheidegger

IT training is big business.

Words like "multi skilling" and "upskilling" are part of every day language, so it's no surprise IT course providers are raking in millions from hopefuls looking to get ahead.

Metropolitan International Schools Ltd trade as Skillstrain and Scheidegger.

They claim to be Europe's number one for computer training, having been in business since 1947.

And their most recent accounts show a turnover in excess of £18 million.

Impressive numbers, but not so impressive are the numerous complaints received by the BBC about the Skillstrain "course advisors" responsible for student enrolment.

Posing as a would-be web designer Inside Out reporter Nick Lawrence contacted Skillstrain.

A couple of days later "course advisor" Dave turned up.

Dave not only promised a job in web design at the end of the course, he also told Nick the course certification he was selling for £2,500 was required by a lot of companies.

~~He also claimed Skillstrain worked in association with Manpower and they were advised by Elan IT on the content of their courses.~~

No relationship

Manpower told us whilst there used to be a relationship between the two organisations.

As far as they were concerned, their association was at an end and they had been in contact with Skillstrain over the past 18 months requesting them to stop using the Manpower name.

Elan IT told us they have never advised Skillstrain on the content of their courses, and the certification Nick was being offered was certainly not a requirement in the UK and was, in fact, largely unheard of.

Nick handed over footage of his meeting with "Dave" to Colin Steed, Chief Executive of the Institute of IT Training who give accreditation to Skillstrain.

Colin told us the "course advisor's" behaviour was unacceptable and has said that he would investigate.

Skillstrain told us they were not at fault because they had contracted out their student enrolment to a company called Multimedia Computer Training, and also said:

"Since 1947 (59 years) Scheidegger has trained, under its various brands, over 5 million people in 12 European countries.

"We invite feedback from students and take any complaints we receive very seriously...

"It is not our policy to guarantee jobs at the end of our courses...If it turns out Multimedia Computer Training Ltd and or its advisor have broken this policy, we will take this very seriously and take further action against them... As far as we are concerned, we have a current agreement with Manpower."

Multimedia Computer Training Ltd say that they don't believe such false representations were made - if they were, then disciplinary procedures will be taken against the salesperson.

Numerous complaint forums re Skillstrain found, eg -
<http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk/forums/index.cfm?action=showthread&threadid=303672&forumid=2&sr=161>
<http://www.certforums.co.uk/forums/thread7453.html>
<http://www.consumeractiongroup.co.uk/forum/campaign/132516-skillstrain-scheidegger-time-you.html>
http://www.ciao.co.uk/Scheidegger__Review_5673266
<http://www.consumeractiongroup.co.uk/forum/students/136564-skills-train-help-4.html>

29/10/2009 9:33 [REDACTED] additional docs recvd from C and attached to file - Passed to RIA for info.

29/10/2009 9:34 [REDACTED]
~~Tel C after receipt of message to do so - Message left on mobile a/phone asking that C contact me on [REDACTED].~~

29/10/2009 9:36 [REDACTED]
C also stated in message that he has discovered that E-Skills endorsement is also incorrect

3/11/2009 10:33 [REDACTED]
further docs recvd from C and attached to file.

5/11/2009 10:12 [REDACTED]
T [REDACTED] contacted office to say that they will be taking up the misrep with their marketing dept as it appears that some logo's should not have been used on the promotional material and that they can only apologise for that discrepancy. Adv that C has reasonable grounds to terminate contract as clear that misrep.
T says that will be writing to C offering full refund and cancellation of contract.
Adv C that while this may resolve civil claim the matter of the logo's being used by T on their paperwork will be investigated separately.
T says that all paperwork being used now is up to date and correct.

5/11/2009 10:30 [REDACTED]
tel C to adv of T's response - C will keep me adv - C says that T tried to have C sign a document stating that he will not pass info to other people as part of refund process - Adv C that does not have to sign doc but will delay refund process which may have to be pursued in cc.

17/11/2009 9:35 [REDACTED]
C tel office to say offered full refund but conditional on C signing to say will not share info with anyone else. C wants to pursue in cc as refuses to accept refund on that basis.
Adv cc details and possible problems - C going to take chances and sue and will keep us adv.

14/12/2009 14:25 [REDACTED]
C tel office to advise me that recvd full refund with no gagging order and full admittance of liability by T.
C also asked where we are up to with our investigation and would like to know outcome - Adv will put req on file.

23/12/2009 10:17 [REDACTED]

C tel office to say that he put lengthy blog on line and recvd letter from T's solicitor saying that statement is defamation and should be removed.

C put in blog that liverpool TS taking criminal action against T – Adv that we recvd complaint which is being looked at but does not go hand in hand that T will face prosecution.

Adv C to be careful as to what he posts regarding T as will have to be factually correct.

C has altered statement since and says that additional info been obtained and that BBC did report on T back in 2006 regarding false endorsements - C has further info if reqd Adv will pass details to IA.

11/ 1/2010 10:00 RIA received main file from [REDACTED] and commenced review of main facts -

> C signed up to Skillstrain Web Design Manager course in August 2007.

> complaint re course too hard - misleading initial aptitude test.

> told verbally by sales rep that course was endorsed by major IT companies - Microsoft, etc

> various logos of other bodies or companies reproduced in Information Pack

Skillstrain Study Guide (page 16) includes "validated to conduct City & Guilds and Microsoft examinations" and "courses accredited by Association of Computer Professionals; CompTIA; International Association of Bookkeepers; OCR (Oxford, Cambridge & RSA); The Open College Network; The Internet Certification Institute International; CIW; CISCO"

Skillstrain Computer Training News 2007 includes logos such as BSI, Cisco Systems, Microsoft Office Specialist, City & Guilds Approved College, etc

> Dec 2008 letter from Prosoft/CIW to confirm Skillstrain approved by them

> Sept 2009 email from Microsoft - Skillstrain not approved and accredited by Microsoft or by Cisco Systems

> Sept 2009 email from Home Learning College / The British Learning Association - Skillstrain not approved and endorsed by them

> Sept 2009 letter from e-skills UK - Skillstrain not members of e-skills uk and not permitted to use the logo

> Oct 2009 - C says he had telephone confirmation from City & Guilds that they've never endorsed Skillstrain

> C has blog about Skillstrain on his website
<http://www.collativelearning.com/>

12/ 1/2010 9:39 RIA Further research of matter, including C's website report -

<http://www.collativelearning.com/SKILLSTRAIN%20SCAM%20&%20REFUND.html>

Below referral recvd:

Case Classification: Referral - Further Advice Required EXISTING TSS
CASE Contact: 2012-10-19T12:34:07 Adviser ID: [REDACTED]:C
looking for DPA request on a case 3 years old . C does not have
referenc number ADVICE: ACTION: Contact: 2012-10-19T15:35:19 Adviser ID:
[REDACTED]:3 years ago, C sought advice from Liverpool TSS
[REDACTED]. C needs to speak to officer and needs copies
of any casenotes that were made.3 years ago, C was living at: Flat 8,
39 Ivanhoe Road, Liverpool, L178UX.ADVISE:Explaine d request will be
passed to TSS, 5 WD committment.ACTION: ReferralPreferred Contact
Method: Day

22/10/2012 16:46 [REDACTED]

Tel C to discuss request and adv that formal application for info under DPA is
required. C will email this request directly to me.

C says that collating info from all sources regarding matter as T are suing him for
defamation.

Will await request to come through and then arrange what info is available to C.

23/10/2012 16:28 [REDACTED]

email recvd from C req info under FOI - Tel C and adv that info request should be
under DPA and that he should amend his original email requesting info under DPA. C
will do this.

24/10/2012 14:38 [REDACTED]

Discussed application for info with Fatima from our Information Office and will meet
with her again next Mon to discuss what we can provide to C under DPA.

1/11/2012 11:50 [REDACTED]

All paper docs relating to C's complaint appear to have been disposed of by RIA prior
to him retiring from the service. Consequently, only info we now hold is electronically
on flare - Fatima (Information Officer) notified of same via email - attached to file.

5/11/2012 9:32 [REDACTED]

Fatima has supplied an enquiry number for the DPA request (SAR224578).