

Transcript for Vacuum servicing

Presenter – Matt Allwright

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Peter Andre doesn't need a personal trainer. Vladimir Putin doesn't need a self-esteem coach. And you don't need someone to replace the filters on your Dyson vacuum cleaner at great expense.

MATT (TO CAMERA)

No – due to legendary design of the Dyson, it just doesn't need doing.
I'll show you what you do myself.

This is the filter of the Dyson – easily removed as you can see.

And then...

There we go couldn't be easier

And yet, we are hearing of a company that is charging customers to replace this filter and other instances of vacuum-related deception, which would lead those customers to feel like suckers, if that wasn't a very obvious joke under the circumstances.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

That company is UK Vac Services Ltd, of Fleet in Hampshire – not to be confused with any other company of a similar name.

It's run by Mark Henderson, and Patrick Stockman....

The company cold-calls - offering to give your vacuum a routine check-up and service in the comfort of your home..

At a cost of just £15 pounds, Lynn Brooks thought why not?... Until that is, the chap who called himself an "engineer" also started trying to sell her new parts.

LYNN BROOKS: He took off the casing that contains the side filter and showed me that it was dusty and said to me that needed replacing. I did know that all you need to do was wash it, and at that point I felt that I was being conned.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

The chap wanted to charge twenty six pounds for this filter... but as Lynn knew they last the lifetime of the vacuum, she refused. At which point she says he got in a huff, and wanted to get out the door as quickly as possible.

LYNN BROOKS: He gave me a worksheet of all the checks he was supposed to have done, and I said I'm not going to sign that, because he hadn't done any of those things

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Lynn sent him packing – and got her 15 quid for the service refunded. Well done Lynn... So what's the fuss I hear you ask?

Well.... This is not the first time we've got a whiff of something iffy about a vacuum repair business involving Mark Henderson. 3 years ago he was running Vac Service UK Ltd – and we'd heard complaints about his "engineers" selling unnecessary parts. So to put it to the test, we did what we do best. Invited one of them round to service our perfectly healthy Dyson in front of a cornucopia of concealed cameras....

"ENGINEER": I recommend you change that. Cos that should be blue...

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Yes, that's him selling us a new filter we didn't need... And then there was the brush..

"ENGINEER": The new brush is £30. I can order you a new one.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Yeah we didn't need that either.. in the end we paid £50 for unnecessary parts – which never even arrived.

At the time, Mark Henderson told us this was "not representative of the Company's usual high standards" and that "The Company will not tolerate any member of staff deliberately misinforming customers"..

So why then are we hearing exactly the same accusations about his new company, UK Vac Services Ltd?

Has Mark Henderson been spinning us a yarn? Only one way to find out...

We've got ourselves a house. We've got ourselves a vacuum. We've got a silver fox actor Rob. There is also one of these kicking about... A vacuum specialist to check that our Dyson is in good working order and doesn't need any new parts.

Dave Andrews is his name, although they call him The Solihull Cyclone cos he works quickly and efficiently. And he lives south east of Birmingham...

DAVE ANDREWS: This is a Dyson DC07 circa late nineties, early two thousand. Works perfectly OK

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Thanks Dave... Time to give UK Vac services a call... Except when we dial their number there's a bit of a surprise in store

SOUND OF VOICE ON PHONE: Welcome to Appliance Service Direct.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Bazinga! An apparently different company but with the same number, same address and still servicing vacuums. As our enquiries soon show that Mark Henderson is still the

boss... we still book them in asking for a basic £25 service. Here they are..... 2 of them. I must warn you that what follows is not the real sound of our door bell.

(SOUND OF GREETING)

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Before they get down to work the “engineer” explains the cost of the service.

“ENGINEER”: Your advice of course is £24.99. If there is any addition it’ll be parts, ‘cos they’re the only thing we don’t cover. But we’ll let you if anything needs replacing

ROB: OK

“ENGINEER”: And we’ll make sure we’ll go through that with you first.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

So the service is gonna cost 25 quid with the cost of any replacement parts on top. That’s alright though because our vacuum doesn’t need any, as these boys should work out as soon as they open it up.

Music!

MUSIC INTERLUDE

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

With the service underway, our stooge Rob tries to work out why two of them have come along for a simple £25 service

ROB: You two guys always work together?

*“ENGINEER”: No, **** is going to be going out on his own from Monday. He’s had three weeks training*

ROB: So who’s the boss?

“ENGINEER”: I’m sort of the ...Not the boss boss, I’m the senior engineer.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

The senior engineer hey?

It’s a massive stroke of luck, the best possible way of seeing how Mark Henderson’s engineers operate. ‘Cos we’re about to see one of the guys who trains them in action.

MATT (TO CAMERA)

So if Mark Henderson is a man of his word, there should be no funny business with this whatsoever.

It should be a master-class in vacuum cleaner servicing...

PART 2:

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

No sooner is our vacuum dismantled, than conversation turns to the condition of the parts...

“ENGINEER”: I’ll just show you this, I’m assuming this has never been changed. It’s actually welded itself on. These ones they recommend replacing them.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Who? Dyson? No they don’t... they say these post-filters last the lifetime of the vacuum. But we’re being sold a new one for 15 quid. Then there’s the pre-filter.

“ENGINEER”: That’s a washable filter. You can see it’s completely caked. Even if you wash it, it’s quite worn out now.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

But our expert has checked that filter... it’s not worn out.

“ENGINEER”: These one are nineteen Ninety nine. But you can re-use them again and again.

MATT (TO CAMERA)

Yes you can use it again and again. That’s because it’s washable... Just like the one that’s already our machine

“ENGINEER”: The roller bar starts to wear out. Because of the age of the roller bar as well the brushes are all split.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

And it’s not just a filter he says we need – now he’s telling us our brush is bust too...

“ENGINEER”: When you go to pick up does it take you a does it take you a while to get the stuff up?

ROB: Yeah

“ENGINEER”: Yeah, because the brushes are worn down as well. With the new ones, there’re a lot thicker and longer. These ones are twenty-four ninety-nine. But, they will last you another ten years.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

And he’s not finished yet. He tells us that the clutch, which controls the movement of the roller bar, has a stretched belt and so needs replacing too...

“ENGINEER”: And these ones are twenty-nine ninety-nine

ROB: I definitely need them?

“ENGINEER”: Yeah I wouldn’t just say it

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Nah – of course you wouldn’t...

And by the time he’s done, we’ve racked up a bill of nearly 138 pounds.

“ENGINEER”: Just need to get the £137.94. And then we’re all good

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

And remember – this is the man they call their senior engineer, training a new recruit how to do the job.

Time to roll out the red carpet for our guy Dave Andrews...

MATT: Ok Dave, what have they done to our vacuum cleaner?

DAVE ANDREWS: Well they basically changed a number of components when they didn’t need to

MATT: Take me through them one at a time

DAVE: OK

MATT: I’m going to get comfortable

DAVE: The first one was the washable filter, which they should have washed, but what they decided to do was replace it with a Chinese copy. And charge us more than the genuine price

MATT: OK, what’s next?

DAVE: Now this filter was changed. This is purely just an air filter; it has no impact on suction at all. Dyson class this filter as a life time filter.

MATT: And it didn’t need doing anyway?

DAVE: It didn’t need changing

MATT: Any more?

DAVE: There’s loads more

MATT: Go on then

DAVE: This is what we call the brush bar. All that was wrong with this particular piece of equipment – there was threads wrapped round it. All that needed doing is picking out. It didn’t need changing Matt at all.

MATT: Right.. so we've once again ended up with non-Dyson parts, that we paid over the odds for

DAVE: More than the genuine price

MATT: Is that it? Is that everything?

DAVE: Well the other part they changed, is the clutch. They changed the complete unit.

MATT: And they didn't need to change that either.

DAVE: It didn't need changing

MATT: Do you know what I think we should do?

DAVE: What's that Matt?

MATT: I think we should give it back to them and see if they now think there is anything that needs fixing.

DAVE: That's a good idea

MATT: Let's do it

DAVE: Let's do it

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Let's do it! Yes that right. We're calling Appliance Service Direct Ltd back to a different address, with a new dodgy actor so their engineer can give the same vacuum another seeing to.

MATT (TO CAMERA)

Our vacuum is getting serviced more often than.....no, I shouldn't go there

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

You know the routine by now. House rigged with hidden cameras - so our expert DAVE and I can see every move.

The man from Appliance Service direct is here. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Dan Hill.

(Sound of greeting)

It's a nice friendly start - Let's hope it doesn't all go downhill.

As our vacuum's literally just been serviced and had a whole raft of new parts fitted, there really is NO NEED for Dan to do anything to it all...

Yet the moment he switches it on... he says he thinks he's found a fault

DAN HILL: I think the belt might have snapped which drives it round

MATT: So hold on, how does he know the belt might have snapped at this very early stage

DAVE: He doesn't Matt, he hasn't stripped down yet

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

But that is exactly what he does next though.. so he'll soon discover that he was mistaken... as the parts are all working perfectly

Then of course he'll tell our stooge that everything's fine.... Right???

Including this brand new clutch....

DAVE: He's having another look at this clutch.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Yeah and there's nothing whatsoever wrong with it....

Yet....

DAVE: I think he's trying to stretch the belt, or break it

MATT: Why would he be doing that?

DAVE: So he can fit another one?

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Yep, he's damaged the brand new clutch while our man was out of the room. I wonder what he's going to say about that

DAN HILL: I found out what the problem is straight away... your clutch belt is quite stretched...

MATT: The reason the belt is stretched, is because he's stretched it Dave.

DAVE: Correct

DAN HILL: It's just down to wear and tear, it's nothing anyone's done to damage it or misuse it... I don't think it's been replaced since its manufacture - they do last quite a long time. It takes a long time to get that stretched

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Yeah.... about 30 seconds.. And true to form, next he turns his attention to the filters. You know, the ones his colleagues just fitted....

DAN HILL: I would recommend replacing it. It's the old-style filter. We don't supply these filters anymore. They're quite old now. The new-style filters are a lot better.

MATT: Even with my limited knowledge of Dysons replacing a brand new filter is a complete waste of time and money.

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

And, just to complete the set, he tries to flog us a replacement brush too...

DAN HILL: Basically all the brushes are starting to shorten but they're also frayed out. That's the main thing.

ACTOR: Yeah, ok

DAN HILL: So I mean it's not going to damage your machine like potentially the clutch and the filter can, but it just does affect the performance quite a bit.

MATT: The brush is absolutely brand new, the clutch is brand new and he's stretched it. The filter is brand new. It makes you think that it doesn't matter how the vacuum cleaner comes into them it's going to need things sorting out.

DAVE: That is correct.

MATT: With the bill to match

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

And - in total all this comes to 120 pounds.... And that means overall we've spent a whopping 255 quid to get our perfectly working vacuum... working perfectly.

PART 3:

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Appliance Service direct have had a perfectly good vacuum of ours to service. Twice The first time they replaced a range of parts, all of which were in working order...

"ENGINEER": These are £14.99. These one are £19.99. These are £24.99

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

And the second time, the chap who didn't know the vacuum had just been serviced by his colleagues, replaced them all again.

Including the clutch. Which, when he realised it was in perfect working order, he broke...

This naughty boy literally literally stretched out the job.

When we wrote to boss Mark Henderson, he told us they were both just Rogue members of staff. How loyal.. But this seems a very strange co-incidence... especially as one was a senior engineer entrusted with training new employees.

Which all makes us wonder if there is something about the way Mr Henderson's vacuum businesses are run that could be the cause - and have spoken to a former employee..

You might call him a Whistle sucker.

MATT: What was your experience like there?

FORMER EMPLOYEE: Second day out a colleague I was with showed me, what I would call, tricks of the trade. Ways to earn yourself extra money.

MATT: And what did they include?

FORMER EMPLOYEE: A perfectly fine part, ie the roller brush which flicks the dirt up from the carpet, if they weren't very worn and the customer wasn't present, the brushes on the rollers would be snipped to make them look worn, so you could suggest to the customer that needs to be replaced

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

So yet another report of one of Mark Henderson's vacuum technicians conning customers. What's behind this pattern of behaviour? This chap says it could be down to how he and his colleagues were paid.

*FORMER EMPLOYEE: It was a self-employed basis, so you had to use your own vehicle, your own fuel, you had to buy the tools, so you would barely break even from your cost for the day, unless you could sell them parts, because parts is where the money is.
I had to call it a day because. If it's not broken, Don't replace it.*

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

When we wrote to Mark Henderson and Appliance Service Direct Ltd, we didn't get all our questions answered...

The company did ask to see our footage though... So with that in mind, I'm heading to their HQ.

I'm hoping that Mr Henderson himself will be there - if he is, there's something I really want to ask him.

MATT (TO CAMERA)

How can you run a business based on a job that in most cases don't need to be done. And according to former employees cannot be done at a profit without using tricks of the trade, which we've now seen on two occasions.

Time to go into stealth mode using my undercover hat. You see, you can't see me now can you?

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

The team spots Mark Henderson's shiny black range rover as it approaches the entrance, so as soon as he parks up I make my move....

MATT: Hiya mate, how you doing, Matt Alright, BBC Rogue traders. Can we have a chat please about business doing a job that doesn't really exist. Would that be alright if we could just have a second? I notice you're wearing the Appliance Service Direct fleece today. Which would indicate that you are very much a part of the business

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

You know Mark if you had a smaller car it would be easier to manoeuvre... Ah, he's gone. What is it about me?

MATT (TO CAMERA)

That is a really lovely range rover sport HSE. But it would appear that Mark Henderson doesn't really want to talk about the fact that his business is based on what we believe to be a job that doesn't really need doing. However, he has got an office there and there are people in there that probably need to know what's happening out on the road. So for that reason we decided to bring along a little bit of AV back up so they know exactly what's taking place. Bring it in

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Remember they said they wanted to see our footage? Well just this once, their wish is my command....

*MATT:
Ok play my video please*

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Now all the staff working inside Appliance Service Direct's office can see precisely what I'm talking about.

MATT: Here we have Dan Hill. Here we go, have a quick look around. What he's doing is stretching the belt so it appears that the clutch needs replacing bumping the price up way beyond what it would have been otherwise

MATT (VOICE-OVER)

Nobody comes out of the building to enjoy my cinema show.

But it's not a problem - to make sure they can get a good look from their top floor window, I raise the screen.

That's right, folks. It's an extender!

MATT (TO CAMERA)

They said they wanted to see our footage. I'll be honest, it's something we don't normally do, but on this occasion we are making an exception because it is such good footage