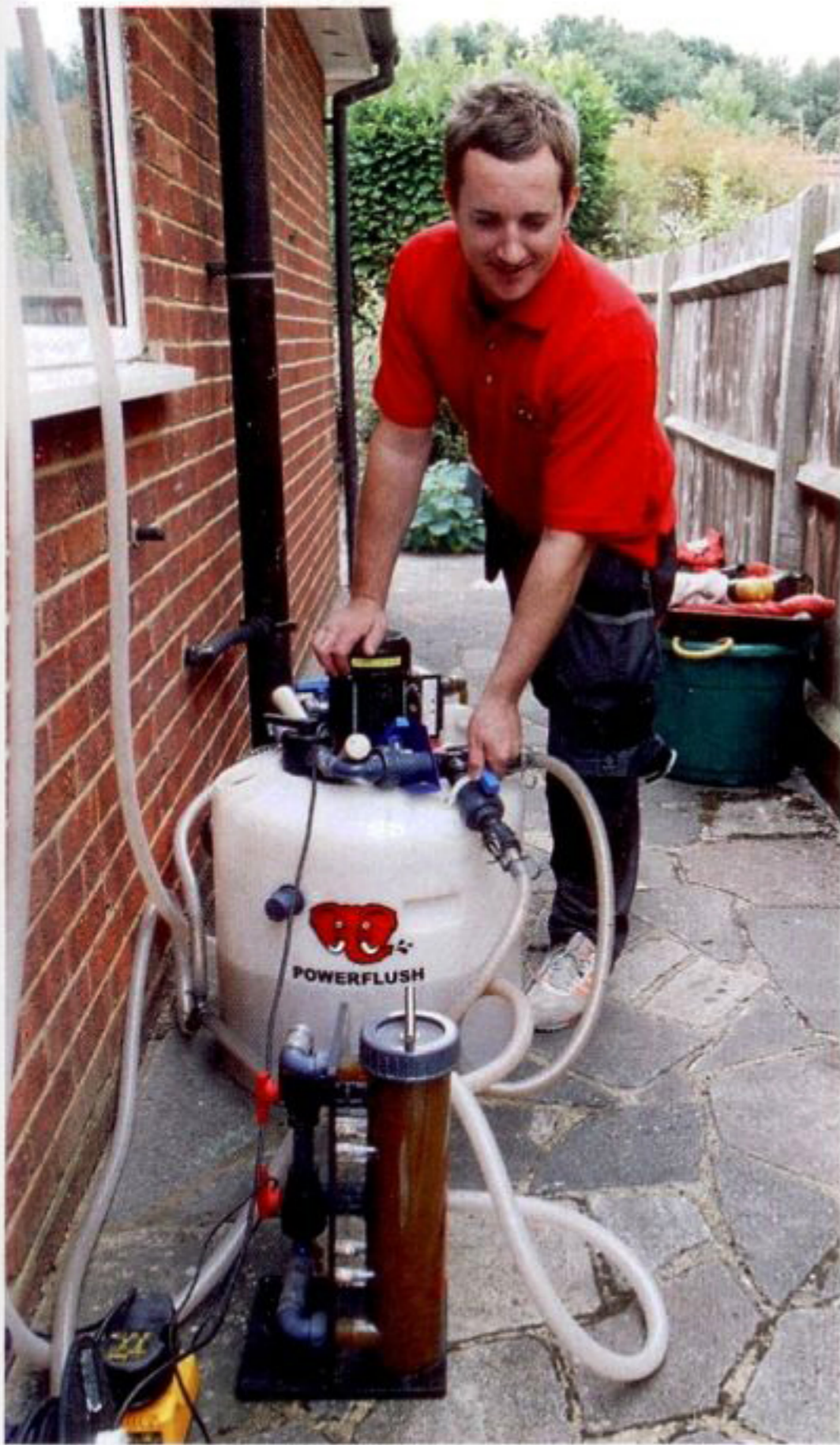


KEEPING IT CLEAN

What enables gas engineers to give a lower quotation to their customers, earn £50 for a referral – and means they don't have to do a job that many of them hate? Registered Gas Engineer goes out on the road with Powerflush to discover a company that knows where it's going.



For a company that started only a few years ago, the red elephant seems to pop up surprisingly regularly. As the company's own website states: "Many intelligent heating engineers are bored to tears by powerflushing but not us, we love it."

Its business comes from referrals by heating engineers as well as directly from customers. When Registered Gas Engineer spent the day with Shaun Aldridge, one of its franchisees, the householder had contacted the company directly.

The property, a three-bedroom bungalow in Surrey, was under a home service contract with a major energy supplier. Although the boiler did not need to be replaced, the owner had been strongly recommended to arrange to have the central system cleaned.

Shaun Aldridge at work in Surrey

Shaun was happy to talk through the processes involved in cleaning the system (see right), but added that Powerflush uses a non-acidic cleaner when pre-dosing the system prior to cleaning. This means that if the customer changes their mind, the cleaner dissolves away: acid cleansers are reserved for descaling combi boilers and heat exchangers, he said.

He was also keen to point out that heating up the radiators improves the performance of the cleaning chemicals. "For each 10°C rise in temperature, cleaning occurs twice as fast. Heat also shows up the cold spots where we need to concentrate our efforts" he said.

Water-side only

Registered Gas Engineer asked Shaun what operatives do if they come across a problem with the boiler itself – after all, operatives are not usually Gas Safe registered. "We only work on the water side," he said. "We go on recommendations from heating engineers, so we don't want to be a threat to their work."

"If we spot something that we think might need an engineer, the first call we'll make is to the person who recommended us. If the customer doesn't know anyone, we'll recommend a local registered engineer."

For jobs referred to Powerflush by a heating engineer, the engineer receives £50 on completion and the customers get 10 per cent off their bill. ■

www.pflush.com

WHY DO SYSTEMS GET DIRTY?

Central heating systems corrode internally when oxygen is in the system or the presence of different metals leads to corrosion, producing black iron oxide sludge deposits in radiators and other iron components. These particles stick to all surfaces, causing premature failure of pumps and valves, cold unbalanceable radiators, blocked boiler heat exchangers and hot water heating coils. Overall system efficiency is greatly reduced and fuel wasted.

HOW IT WORKS

Connect the Powerflush machine and magnet filter to the central heating system pipework by either removing the central heating pump or a radiator

Flush the whole system without removing any additional radiators

The water flows from the radiators through the magnet filter, collecting iron oxide sludge, before reaching the boiler to minimise debris entering boiler heat exchanger

Add rust remover chemical and turn on the boiler

Measure radiator surface temperatures using infrared thermometers to detect cold spots

Concentrate the flow through individual radiators and vibrate them to remove rust spots

One by one flush radiators, heating and hot water circuits and all pipework with clean water until water samples show clean and neutral readings

Add neutraliser to compensate for residual chemical cleaner, then add rust inhibitor and circulate through the system

Reinstate the central heating system, turn on the radiators and balance