



COMPUTERACTIVE “FAIR AND SQUARE” CAMPAIGN FIGHTS FOR ONLINE SHOPPERS’ RIGHTS

- Computeractive exposes online retailers breaking the law -

Last year *Computeractive* revealed how Broadband speeds radically differed from those consumers believed they were receiving. Now *Computeractive* has turned its attention to the rights of online shoppers. Research of over 3,500 consumers shows that many online retailers are breaking the law and treating customers unfairly:

- 55% of consumers have been incorrectly told that they need to return faulty goods to the manufacturer
- One in six of those polled have been charged an entirely fraudulent restocking/administration fee
- 54% of those polled said they do not understand their rights when shopping online

“What this research reveals unequivocally is that UK shoppers need to be better informed of their online consumer rights” said Paul Allen, editor of *Computeractive*. “There are specific rules to protect online shoppers that some retailers abuse”.

The Fair and Square campaign aims to educate shoppers about their online rights and to bring the minority of businesses that flout existing consumer protection laws to the attention of Government. It also challenges online retailers to sign up to a Consumer Confidence Charter to ensure shoppers are able to identify reputable sites to avoid getting ripped off.

The Charter lays out three promises that every online retailer should make to the British public. These promises simply ask retailers to guarantee that they will comply with existing laws and to provide clear channels of communication should problems occur.

Paul Allen, editor of *Computeractive* said “The sorts of practices uncovered by our research are entirely unacceptable. Responsible retailers should be eager to sign up to our Consumer Confidence Charter, and we hope this will become a de facto UK standard upon which web shoppers will be able to base their purchasing decisions.”

Online shopping offers excellent value and convenience to British consumers, but *Computeractive’s* research revealed that online stores do not always abide by consumer protection laws. The problem is not limited to small businesses selling online: *Computeractive* was advised that one of the terms on Apple’s UK online store was “contrary to the Distance Selling Regulations”.

The Fair and Square campaign addresses the issues raised by *Computeractive’s* research, resulting in three key aims:

- 1) To encourage online retailers to sign up to the Consumer Confidence Charter: those companies that meet the stringent criteria are able to display the Fair and Square logo on their websites.
- 2) To educate consumers on their rights when shopping online.
- 3) To enable consumers to express their views to Government if they have experienced companies breaking the law online. Visitors to the campaign website can send an email expressing their concerns directly to the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Consumer Affairs.

The Fair and Square campaign is launched in issue 267 of *Computeractive* which goes on sale on May 15th. The Fair and Square website offers a concise downloadable guide to shopping online as well links to more information on consumer law. It can be found at www.computeractive.co.uk/fair.

Notes to editors:

- Paul Allen, editor of *Computeractive* and Tom Royal, *Computeractive*'s deputy editor, are both available for comment and interview
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Tel: 0207-316 9000 Tel: 0207-316 9000
- Additional information about The Fair and Square campaign can be found at www.computeractive.co.uk/fair
- Further resources for media, such as campaign logos, can be obtained by contacting Louise Newland, Marketing Manager of *Computeractive*
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Tel: 0207-316 9000
- Full details on how to get involved in the Fair & Square campaign can be found in issue 267 of *Computeractive*, on sale on Thursday 15th May.

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About *Computeractive*

- *Computeractive* is a fortnightly title, with a circulation of 200,307. The cover price is £1.59 and the magazine is available throughout the UK or by subscription.
- *Computeractive* is published by Incisive Media. More information is available at www.computeractive.co.uk

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