

Looking for fire safety companies with the right accreditation and insurance can be difficult, but a new organisation has come up with a searchable register that solves the problem – Igneo. Technology Correspondent **Andrew Chilvers** investigates

# A database for fire industry best practice

The genesis for Igneo came about in Mid-20 when a group of industry leaders and innovators sat down to discuss some of the tough issues in the fire industry. Topics included proving competency, barriers to innovation and Insurance premiums increasing for fire safety companies. Following this meeting, Arjun Kumar and Joshua Wheel pitched the idea of developing a platform as a solution to these issues, which would essentially provide one central place for end users to check fire company certifications, insurances, financials and services.

“We’ve got multiple third parties that can accredit companies, but not a single place to find out who has been accredited with what,” Arjun says. “As an end user, if I want to work with a certain company I have to look at their website [to check what certifications they have].”

To verify if they do have the right certifications Arjun would then have to visit the websites of each certification body, something most people do not have the time – or inclination – to carry out.

“We also noticed that a lot of companies say they have a certain membership or certification when they don’t,” he adds. “So we thought about creating a platform that can be completely transparent and show exactly what companies have in terms of their certifications and memberships.”

## Substantial Market

From that conversation the Igneo team set to work putting in the initial hours into what was to become

## Igneo Guiding Principles



### Transparency

Transparency informs everything we do.



### Collaboration

We collaborate with leading practitioners and experts from the financial markets, accreditations and standards boards.



### Science Alignment

Our analytics are aligned with the latest industry reports and regulatory frameworks

Igneo. As they did the initial research, the scale of the market – and the task to build the register – started to become clear.

The UK fire safety market is huge with revenues of £2.9 billion in 2019 in the UK, of which 66 per cent comprises installation, design and maintenance of products. In 2018/19, there were 576,040 fire-related accidents – a rise of two per cent year-on-year – and 318 deaths.

More than 5,000 companies are involved in the sector. Moreover, there are various compliance and third party certification bodies operating in the UK, including BAFE, LPCB and Warrington Fire. But there has never been an independent fire safety register – until now.

## Single Point of Reference

Igneo’s fully inclusive fire safety register aims to be a single point of reference for the fire industry. This includes designers, specifiers, installers and architects through to single building owners who want assurance they are making the right decision based on credible but publicly available data, brought together in one single platform.

It is something that was recently noted in The Hackitt Report, *Raising the Bar: an Independent Review of Building Regulations* and Fire Safety which suggested the necessity for a national register of fire safety companies.

The majority of companies in the fragmented fire safety market are included on Igneo – from sprinkler installation to fire extinguisher maintenance. Igneo provides users with key dashboard insights into company performance and supply chain details as well as verifying all certification, certifications and memberships. In the future users can also check the insurance cover and the financial health of any fire safety company. The aim is to make it possible for end users to conduct due diligence on potential contractors reliably in seconds.

It also enables users to compare contractors and product providers quickly – again, something that

*“A platform that can be completely transparent and show exactly what companies have in terms of their certifications and memberships”*



can be time-consuming to do and involve checking multiple websites.

Users will also be able to investigate sectoral differences to understand the market fragmentation, as well as accessing research insights, industry and regulatory reports, advisory services and webinars.

Igneo will encourage industry professionals to share their data to provide assurance and be encouraged to keep the information up to date on the site – it will be in their interests to do so as it will help potential contractors or customers to judge whether they can do business with them.

### Importance of Third Party Certification

Third party certification is an important part of the fire safety industry. It is the easiest and fastest way to see that the company, product or service is compliant with industry standards and has been judged by an independent auditor. It also guarantees competence.

This is vitally important as non-compliance with fire safety regulations can invalidate insurance policies and repeated non-compliance could result in court action.

A problem in the sector – although it is by no means unique to fire safety – is that some rogue businesses claim to have certain certifications on their website that they do not have. Previously, checking the veracity of their claims would involve checking the accreditor’s website – which people often fail to do. But Igneo has cross-checked information to ensure that any certifications on a company listing are correct and up to date.

The Igneo team also wants Igneo to be a resource to help end users to find out whether the company they are checking has the correct insurance to carry out the service for them.

“We’re working with insurance companies on understanding whether these companies have the right insurance,” Arj says. “That is a big challenge at the moment within the industry.”

Indeed, with increased scrutiny surrounding the fire industry following several high-profile events, there has been a significant increase in the cost of professional indemnity cover to the point it is unaffordable for some, while others have taken out reduced plans.

### Gathering Information

While a website containing information on all the companies operating in the fire and safety sector is a relatively simple idea, building it is a complex job.

With information on companies’ certifications, financial details etc spread across a wide range of websites, the first challenge for the Igneo team was to gather all that information together.

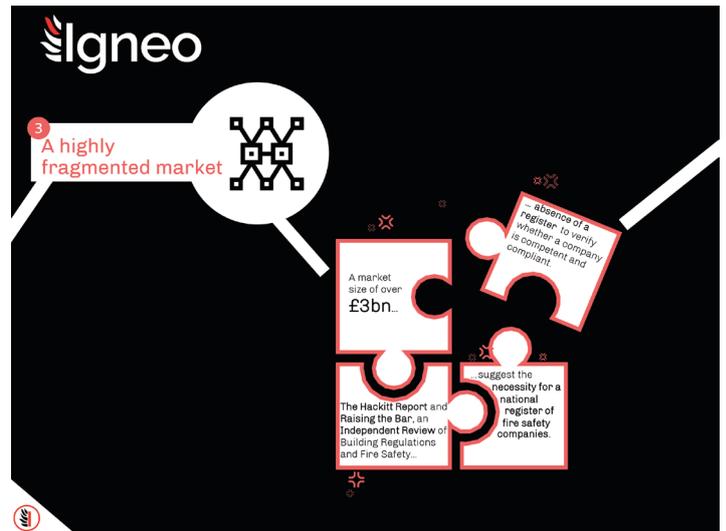
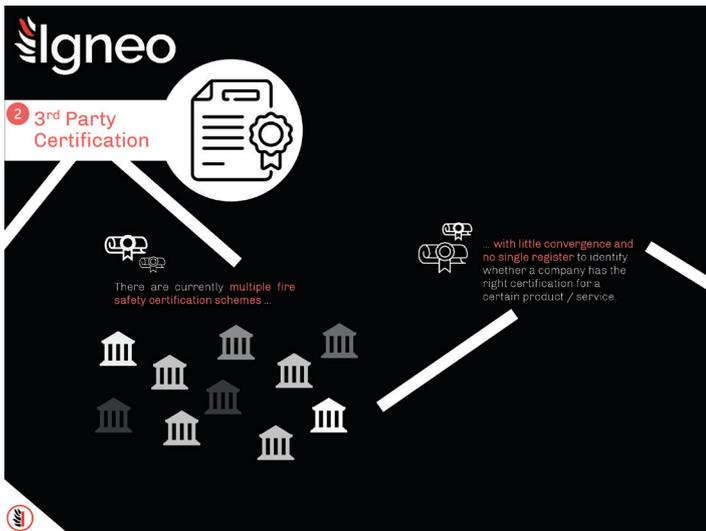
Arj did this by creating bots that scrape information from the websites of accrediting bodies. “It’s a bit like a data scraping tool,” he explains. “It involves [the bot] having to understand the website and see which features we want it to take.

“We take all the information from the various certification boards. For example, if I wanted to find out who was a member of the Fire Industry Association (FIA); I can have a look at their membership and then I scrape all this information to put into Igneo. It’s information that’s out there in the public domain, so it’s available to scrape.”

Once the information was scraped it was imported into the Igneo platform, where the data is ‘cleansed’ – some companies may use different versions of their name, or change their name over time, for instance, so there could have been some duplication of the data. It also meant all data was up to date.

“By doing that we were also able to set up a web crawler that looked on every one of those company websites and check whether it said they have a certain certification or membership,” Arj says. “As a result, we have two data sources; the accrediting firms and the actual website of the company. We then do a cross-

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*“We want to stay completely independent – it’s about increasing that level of convergence so that all the information is in one place”*

check to see who is stating they have something when they don’t. It’s about increasing the convergence in this sector. It can also help accrediting firms understand who might be using their brand without the right membership or certification.”

Igneo also includes information on the financial status of the company, which takes data that is freely available on the UK Companies House website or Dun & Bradstreet. Contractors increasingly want assurances that suppliers have the necessary financial stability to be able to fulfil a contract.

Insurance information will also be included, although currently this will be voluntary. Companies listed on Igneo will be encouraged to update their listing with their insurance information as a way of encouraging potential customers: “We have a variety of data sources, all in one format so an end user can get all the information that they need to get their services right.

“There’s probably 100,000 points that we are collecting, and we have 3,000 companies on Igneo at the moment.”

### Independent Platform

Igneo are keen to emphasise that the platform is independent of any company or accrediting body.

“We take data from everyone and then highlight that to an end user,” he says. “Because a lot of these accrediting firms are doing things in a similar way, they wouldn’t necessarily want to showcase the other accrediting firms’ certifications on their website.

“We want to stay completely independent – it’s about increasing that level of convergence so that all the information is in one place.”

The Igneo team have taken care to ensure that the website is easy to navigate and free to use. There are plans for a paid-for service for fire safety companies where they

will be able to access insights on who has viewed their profile, for example.

They are also looking at using the company data Igneo has collated to provide insights to companies: “We’re looking at creating some sort of benchmarking-type report. A lot of these will be free, but we’re looking at doing one on which companies are out there in the market, what sort of certifications and memberships they have got and comparing those companies.”

### Ready for Launch

Once the information had been collated and the website developed, Igneo conducted some end-user testing at the start of this year, which was very positive: “Everyone who saw it thought it was really good and it would be something that they could use.”

Now the platform has been built and is nearly ready for launch, Igneo’s focus will be to get the word out about it to the sector. While initial marketing has been predominantly done through social networking site LinkedIn, they are embarking on a more rounded marketing campaign, including meeting some potential end users too to talk them through it.

Launching a new platform is never easy – especially if it is something that has never been done before – but the Igneo team believe there is demand for it from those in the industry who want more information on companies they could be working with or buying from. In time, hopefully, it will become a go-to resource.

You can follow Igneo on LinkedIn at:  
[www.linkedin.com/company/igneofire/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/igneofire/)

For more information on Igneo, go the website at:  
<https://igneo.co.uk>