

CASE STUDY

AUTO MARINE CABLES



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Alan Ainscough
Operations Manager

Auto Marine Cables sees investment in training repaid in substantial cost savings.

With the help of The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing (the Skills Academy), Manchester-based Auto Marine Cables Limited is reaping the rewards of a long-term investment in skills training and, in particular, lean manufacturing tools and techniques.

The company, founded in 1964, specialises in the manufacture of low voltage cables for the automotive and marine manufacturing industries. It has the capacity to produce more than two million metres of cable every week with its extrusion lines operating 24 hours a day.

Over the past 45 years it has seen consistent growth in both turnover and product portfolio.



Auto Marine Cables has experienced a £40,000 a year reduction in costs, as a result of its structured approach to staff development in the area of lean manufacturing.

The company’s drivers for this were two-fold:

- Improvements in productivity
- Improvements in customer satisfaction

Although these early initiatives had a positive effect on the business as a whole, the benefits to shop floor productivity remained limited.

Business Improvement Techniques

Alan Ainscough, the company’s Operations Manager, takes up the story: “As a company we realised that we needed sustainable shop floor-based productivity improvements.

“Our employees needed to realise their potential to continuously contribute to the identification and implementation of these types of improvements.

“The Business Improvement Techniques (B-IT) NVQ qualification was chosen to drive through this improvement strategy as it represented a ‘low risk’ option that was funded totally through the Learning and Skills Council’s Train 2 Gain funding.

“The only costs we had were ‘off job’ ones, amounting to approximately £11,000, but we have seen this investment repaid many times over.”

In order to maximise the benefits of its investment in skills development, AMC needed a training provider with particular expertise in the manufacturing sector.

They eventually chose two North West-based providers, Business Impact Ltd and Preston College, after learning that they were approved with the Skills Academy for the delivery of B-IT training and NVQ assessment.

Continued Alan: "Following an initial pilot in 2007 that involved six members of staff, the BIT NVQ is now compulsory for all shop floor and office-based employees under the age of 60.

"So far 36 operators have achieved B-IT NVQ Level 2 and six of these have gone on to achieve Level 3.

"As a direct result of the improvement projects that followed, we have seen a reduction in costs across a number of production areas, e.g. reduced waste material during the extrusion process of 12.5% and the re-use of packaging materials in the processing area.

"We have also seen further cost savings as a result of reduced electricity consumption and a 30% reduction in compressed air usage."

Alan also said the company had seen improvements in health and safety whilst improved communication through team briefs, employee updates and newsletters had helped to boost productivity and morale.

"Giving our employees practical hands-on training, learning the necessary improvement skills, supported by a recognisable qualification, was the missing link in our improvement strategy; which is now complete. The success and benefits have exceeded my expectations, and they give us a great platform to build upon," he added.

Alan's enthusiasm for the programme is shared by Peter Hammond, Managing Director of AMC, who believes that the days of 'just do your job and don't ask any questions' have long gone.

"If you want your business to be successful in the 21st century, you need everyone to work towards your company's goals and targets. People need to understand the logic behind your improvement programme and spend no time resisting, and all their time working as a team towards the common cause," he explained.

"B-IT NVQ Levels 2 and 3 underpin this education process with notable improvements not only in savings coming through targeted improvement projects, but also in our day to day activities. Thinking this way is becoming a way of life."

Forward Thinking Company

The Skills Academy says they are delighted to be working with such a forward thinking company that puts training at the heart of its future plans.

"The Skills Academy believes that training and development are essential for the survival and future prosperity of manufacturing companies in the UK.

"But this training needs to be structured and appropriate to the needs of individual businesses. We are working hard to ensure that providers, approved by the Skills Academy, deliver the high levels of skills training that are required.

"AMC provides an excellent example of just what can be achieved by adopting the latest working practices and combining them with the most appropriate training for the entire workforce."



Auto Marine Cables Factfile

- First started manufacturing cables for the automotive and marine industries in 1964.
- Currently employs 67 people.
- In total AMC produces around two million metres of cable per week.
- It is also the official UK aftermarket distributor for the range of fuses and circuit protection products from MTA in Italy.
- In 2005 Auto Marine Cables embarked on its structured development programme in lean manufacturing. The Skills Academy became involved in 2007 where AMC undertook B-IT NVQ at Levels 2 and 3.