

Employer Case Study

Advanced Engineering including Food Manufacturing and Related Industrial Chemistry

The Klass Group

The Klass Group is a working partnership composed of three established and well respected companies: Fieldhouse Industrial Services, Guard-Tech and Crescent Machinery Limited. Providing a one-stop solution to the engineering and manufacturing industry, the Group holds an impressive customer base with companies like Rolls Royce, Corus PLC, Bombardier Transportation, BAE Systems, Kvaerner Engineering & Construction, JCB Excavators Ltd, Tyco Safety Systems and Vickers Defence. Fieldhouse Industrial Services have grown over the past 14 years into one of the country's leading machine tool on-site service providers, covering emergency breakdown repairs, on-site maintenance, annual servicing, planned preventative maintenance, and machinery relocation.

Guard-Tech have successfully provided the industry with an invaluable old telescopic machine guard and swarf conveyor refurbishing service and, where necessary, the design and manufacture of new guards and conveyors.

Crescent Machinery have provided the industry, for the last 19 years, with a range of expert machine service and repair, machine parts replacements and the sourcing and delivery of new machines to ensure its customers suffer the minimum disruption to production.

Currently, the Group have been working on strengthening their competitive position within the increasingly dynamic marketplace and the high-level skills of its workforce. Turning to the WYLLN for assistance to achieve its enterprise goals, industrial support has been provided by the Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Sector Group on technical staff development and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). A lack of high level skills within advanced engineering and manufacturing is threatening the UK's ability to compete on a global stage. A problem exacerbated by today's challenging economic climate. In the past there has been a perception that universities and higher education organisations fail to equip learners with the necessary work-based skills, especially within engineering and manufacturing. We want to reverse this

trend by working in collaboration, thereby providing local employers with a voice to inform the development of work-based courses that are tailored to individual needs and deliver real bottom-line improvements.

A general shift towards the service and retail sector in this country has reduced the popularity of engineering and manufacturing as a career choice. This has been exacerbated by learners shying away from courses, like maths, which are perceived as more difficult. The highly skilled and technically specialised disciplines required by our organisations, cannot be learned overnight. To become proficient in certain skills requires literally years of training and work-based practice.

In effect, the WYLLN acts as a bridge between business and academia; working with the private sector to determine the gaps in learning and skill requirements and translating this information into vocational courses that can arm individuals with industry relevant skills.

“We look forward to working with the WYLLN and your companies. The challenges facing our Sector today are: being able to maintain production deadlines, keeping costs under control, whilst at the same time meeting and maintaining customer confidence and expectations. Added to this with acute skill-shortages now impacting on the industry, we are facing some difficult and tough times ahead. In my view the only way forward is for customers, suppliers and academia to come together and develop successful working partnerships.”

Kevin Fieldhouse, Managing Director, The Klass Group