

# CASE STUDY

## HYDRAM

YOUR COMPLETE MANUFACTURING PARTNER



## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

**Bringing training in-house has proved a shrewd investment for County Durham Engineering firm Hydrum Sheet Metalwork.**



In 2011 the company removed apprentices from the local colleges and training providers to set up its own training department on site in Chilton, Ferryhill – turning to EAL, the specialist awarding organisation for industry, to support them.

Neil Mawson, Hydrum's Training Manager said: "We had specific business needs and processes that the local colleges were not teaching. The curriculum was fixed and had no flexibility to tailor it to the smaller employers. By training our apprentices in house they gain bespoke skills, delivered by a small training team made up of senior members of staff including a dedicated Training Manager."

Hydrum has been recognised as one of the 50 fastest growing companies in the North East with plans to build on increasing turnover and profit with an annual recruitment of apprentices.

"We deliver all aspects of our apprentice training using engineers and technicians from the shop floor to teach and train the apprentices," said Neil. "It gives our learners very bespoke training in the sheet metal industry."

“We realise to continue expanding we need to develop our workforce. The current staff are aging, and apprentices are learning from the wealth of knowledge and information from within the business while they are still working here. Bringing in young people with a passion and interest for this industry is vital to the future of Hydram as a cutting edge business.”

Hydram delivers up to NVQ Level 3 as an EAL recognised centre. The qualifications include:

- Diploma in Engineering Technology level 3
- Engineering Technical Support level 3 (QETS3)
- Fabrication and Welding Engineering level 3 (QFWE3)
- Mechanical Manufacture Engineering level 3 (QMME3)

Role include;

- Manual Welder (MAG & TAG) – QFWE3
- Robot Welding Operative – QETS3
- Quality Technician – QETS3
- CNC Machining – QMME3
- CNC Fabrication – QMME3
- Toolmaker – QMME3
- Engineering Purchasing and Supply – QETS3
- Engineering Health, Safety & Environment – QETS3

Neil said: “EAL was chosen to partner us as it is recognised as a leading provider of engineering programmes. We have an excellent relationship with the External Quality Assessor (Derrick Manley) and have always found him to be approachable and quick to answer any questions. The customer service team is excellent for support regarding pathway options, technical help with the online systems and general questions regarding qualifications.”

Established in 1977, Hydram is one of the largest sheet metalwork manufacturers in Europe, supplying precision sheet metal products, components and precision fabrications to a wide range of customers.

It currently employs around 230 staff including 13 apprentices, split between first (8) and second (5) years. They are in a mixture of roles primarily based around engineering disciplines with one Business Administration. “We aim to recruit up to ten apprentices each academic year.

Recruitment starts in the spring and ends in late summer for a September start,” said Neil. “In 2015 we had over 390

applicants for the positions we had available. We usually have one intake per year, but have taken mid-year starts if a suitable candidate appears. The target for the apprenticeship programme is to have 20% of our workforce as current or recently completed apprentices.”

The dedicated training facility on site is fully equipped with all the relevant machinery and technology.

Hydram apprentices study on a two year programme. In the first year they rotate throughout the whole business, gaining an understanding of what the company does and the processes involved, allowing them to make an informed choice regarding their engineering specialism for the second year.

The Institute of Mechanical Engineers (iMechE) accreditation for the apprenticeship programmes was awarded in late 2014.

In 2015 Hydram was listed as one of the North East region’s fastest growing companies. Organised by leading law firm Ward Hadaway and backed by The Journal newspaper, the list highlights and celebrates the achievements of the profitable, privately-owned companies in the region who have grown their turnover by the largest amount in recent years.

Hydram was also nominated for this year’s annual TMMX awards in the “Partnership with Education” category, these awards are a joint ceremony between the Manufacturer and the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (iMechE).

Neil added: “We are delighted to have been recognised as one of the fastest growing companies and to be nominated for the award as we feel that we support local and regional educational establishments in many ways.

“We have provided curriculum support in the form of CAD workbooks and tutorials along with facilitating lessons on engineering topics. We attend careers fairs, operate site tours and visits tailored to the current curriculum and we offer work experience placements to schools and colleges.

“We also support primary schools with the primary engineer project, and have offered secondary schools support with F1 in Schools (accredited by EAL) and Green power projects.”

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