



Simon Cowell

“My proudest achievement has been the success of the shows and artists I have been involved with, because they were made in Britain”

The future Getting hi-tech product to market faster

Competing with the best in the world

“Proud to be British and proud to be market leaders,” says Barry Tabor, MD of British Converting Solutions Ltd, (BCS) the Leighton Buzzard-based manufacturer of box making and printing machinery.

Faced with the challenging economic conditions of 2009, the business embarked on a rigorous R&D programme to redesign its range of machinery. The objective was to engineer machines, incorporating cutting-edge technology that could be manufactured efficiently for export across the world. BCS’s competition is from high-cost German and low-cost Far East manufacturers. To ensure a competitive advantage, BCS’s aim was to design machines “competitive in price and performance”.

To meet these objectives, BCS design engineers worked with selected supply partners and ensured that years of employee experience were taken onboard, to create machines that incorporated both the latest technology and established engineering principles that are the fundamental building blocks of the business’s success.

Prototypes were installed at customer sites for BETA testing. 3D CAD design and the creation of an in-house software development team enabled the business to fast-track this ambitious development programme.

Since 2009, turnover has trebled and, in 2013, export sales accounted for 75 per cent of sales. Direct sales offices have opened in the USA, France and Poland while, in other markets, distribution deals are in place to promote and support machines. And as an SME employing 30 people, BCS’s six apprentice engineers ensure the business has the skills to develop and invest in the future.

Tabor adds: “For years, British manufacturing was tarnished by the reputation of the 60s and 70s. Today, we have the skills to compete with the best in the world. Our success is testimony to this.”

01525 379359
www.bcscorrugated.com

ITRON has been writing software and producing the electronic circuits to control small electronic display screens for almost 30 years in the UK, when most of its competitors have moved to Asia. Its predominantly European customer base extends from blue-chip companies making servers and telecom equipment through to high-end audio systems, vending machines, pub gaming machines and industrial control systems.

The arrival of the smartphone some five years ago redefined what is hi-tech in displays, with multi-colour screens and touch control. A natural response would have been to adopt the latest technology, increase the system processing power, install a Linux or similar system and encourage customers to move to new expensive development systems and recruit highly paid engineers. But customers had been downsizing engineering departments for many years, which meant a more realistic solution was needed.

Reviewing the market in 2009, it became apparent that, although physical hardware could be designed in two months, writing the application software could take six to 12 months. ITRON managing director Andy Stubbings outlined a new operating



language, drawing influence from web and traditional C languages, which would significantly reduce the software writing time and drive a new sales strategy for the company.

After a year of development, ITRON released its first-generation colour display system and was swamped by customer demand. For £85, anyone

with basic web page writing capability could create an application in 12-15 hours, then visit clients with a working demonstration rather than just a paper-based idea. This resulted in high client confidence and rapid contract closure.

The next two years saw ITRON open the door to customer-requested enhancement and the itronOS+ operating language near completion. It now includes many capabilities seen in office software, such as graphs, slide shows and spreadsheets, with many communication protocols including those found in MIDI music synthesisers and DMX theatre lighting control.

The proof of its success is that ITRON now sells 95 per cent of its product with itronOS+ installed and only 5 per cent with Linux. ITRON’s second-generation hardware (seen in the picture) adopts a cost model similar to raspberry PI, and is propelling sales to a new level.

Whether you are setting up business in a technology centre or underneath the railway arches of Dalston, getting to market fast with the latest technology can be made possible for all and not just the high tech giants.

info@itronos.com
www.itronos.com

In focus: Offshoring or reshoring? A management headache...

Opinions may be divided on whether the flow of offshoring projects to low-cost countries is slowing, or if UK manufacturing is really seeing an upsurge in reshoring activity. For many years, iPRO Solutions has been a market leader in providing low-cost sourcing solutions to the manufacturing sector. “Because of our experience, iPRO has always seen changes in sourcing trends very early and has adapted,” explains CEO Martin Deas.

In recent years iPRO has expanded from being based in Malaysia and China, to developing sourcing expertise in India and Vietnam, as costs were rising in China and customers wanted options.

Sourcing in Asia is not about to stop anytime soon and, while iPRO does not see any significant levels of reshoring taking place, we do see more businesses who might have taken work offshore 10 years ago looking initially for options locally.

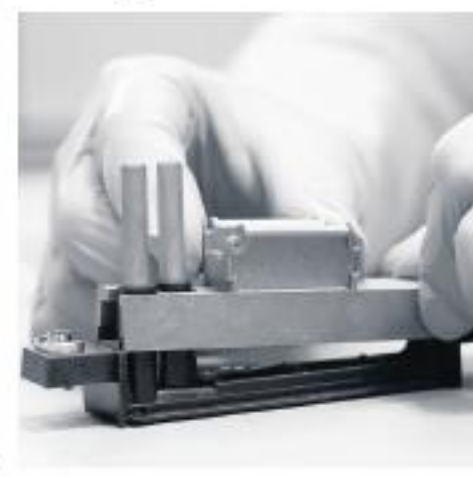
iPRO wanted to address

this emerging trend so, 18 months ago, set up iPRO Manufacturing in the UK. This facility is all about providing flexibility and robust solutions for customers, whether they want to manufacture offshore, onshore or have difficult challenges to overcome.

iPRO’s ability to combine UK assembly with Asia-sourced materials fits extremely well with its existing infrastructure in the UK and Asia, and resolves a number of difficult

challenges facing companies that want to assemble in the UK but who need to manage materials from globally-based suppliers.

01844 292630
www.iprosolutions.co.uk



Business Zone
Made in Britain Industry view