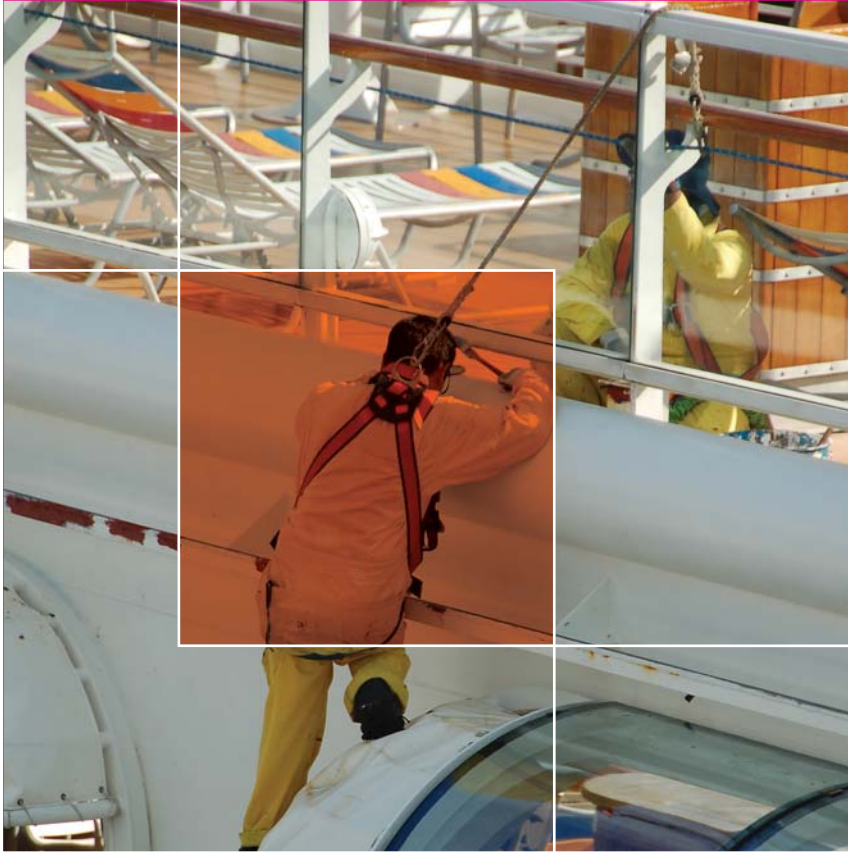


# CASE STUDY

## COONEY MARINE



Keen to boost its performance in a challenging, changing environment, the company underwent an integrated programme which linking Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) intervention at management level with shopfloor training in 'lean' and Business Improvement Techniques (B-IT). The programme was brokered by Semta and funded by the Learning Skills Council with support from the European Social Fund.

### The Programme

Whilst MAS senior practitioner, John Ransford, worked with managers to address strategic business issues, Neil Tobin, a B-IT trainer from Northampton College, worked with a team of shopfloor employees to carry out a productivity and competitiveness (PAC) analysis. He gathered data on quality, cost and delivery (QCD) to measure the company's performance, identifying three areas of the business on which to focus B-IT activity and presented his findings to management.

John complemented this by giving managers a more in-depth view of how B-IT relates to business operations and its impact on the bottom line. "We needed to make sure management and the shopfloor understood each other's perspectives so that everyone was moving in the same direction," John explains. "It all came together in a very well-integrated approach for the whole company."

Neil held workshops in the company to give shopfloor employees the theoretical input required for the Level 2 NVQ in B-IT. John helped coach and mentor the improvement teams and managers as they tackled work-based projects that generated NVQ evidence.

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**John Ransford**  
MAS Senior  
Practitioner

**An initiative to build the capacity for delivering productivity and competitiveness gains in manufacturing companies has helped Cooney Marine achieve business improvements and a better qualified workforce. It also helped develop providers towards the high standards demanded by the National Skills Academy (the Skills Academy), enabling the Skills Academy and other manufacturers to benefit.**

### The Company

Cooney Marine is a leading manufacturer of fabricated mirror-finish stainless steel yacht equipment and deck fittings, largely for the marine leisure industry. A small family-owned business based in Kettering, the company employs 50 people.

## The Outcomes

By the end of the programme 19 employees will have gained the B-IT NVQ at Level 2. Projects carried out by NVQ candidates have led to a number of improvements in key QCD measures, including: a 123% improvement in delivery schedule achievement, a 139% rise in valued added per person, increased stock turns and better floor space utilisation.

“The PAC project has given us a better understanding of the business and helped us address key issues and cope with change,” says operations director, Andy Sims. “We have a good apprentice training programme but saw the PAC project as an opportunity to involve our older people and change our culture. From that point of view it’s been successful. We know we have to get our people skilled up and continue to develop them and believe this is the way forward, so putting people through the B-IT NVQ is something we want to expand.” Profitability has also increased and the programme has equipped Cooney Marine to meet a large new order which is set to boost its turnover by 25%.

## Developing the Provider Network

The Semta project contributed to the hands-on training and development of the Skills Academy’s providers, ensuring college staff and other providers have the thorough subject knowledge and up-to-date industry experience required to deliver a top-quality service.

With a background in production engineering and lean manufacturing, Neil Tobin joined Northampton College – now a Skills Academy provider – from industry in September 2006 to deliver B-IT training. Through the project he received initial training in B-IT delivery and PAC analysis and gained his A1 assessor qualification with EEF East Midlands and Mid Anglia. He was then referred to the Skills Academy where he undertook further training to extend his skills and knowledge. The Semta programme at Cooney Marine provided funding for Neil to receive on-the-job support in PAC analysis from MAS lean expert, John Ransford. It also gave him the opportunity to be assessed on his work in the company to make sure he met the required standards. Having successfully completed the first stages of his B-IT delivery training, Neil is undertaking his Level 3 B-IT NVQ at top lean manufacturer, Toyota – the final step in meeting the Skills Academy rigorous criteria for provider accreditation.

