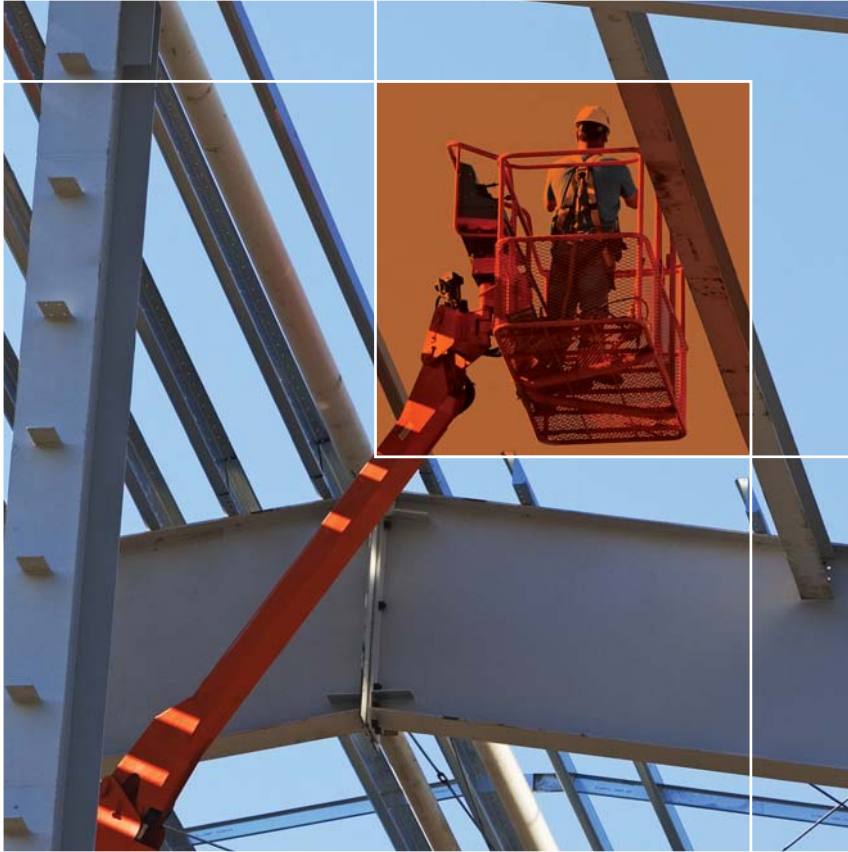


CASE STUDY

THE TANFIELD GROUP PLC



In 2006, Tanfield acquired UpRight Powered Access. Geoff Allison, Plant Manager at Tanfield's headquarters and flagship manufacturing site – Vigo Centre – was asked to move UpRight's entire manufacturing operations from Dublin to the North East of England. This change not only required the physical movement of plant machinery, but also the transfer of the required manufacturing skills from the existing staff to a new workforce in Tyne & Wear.

This was a huge challenge in an already complex process. The Dublin employees had been manufacturing UpRight's products for over 20 years. Their expertise could not easily be transferred from one site to another.

Furthermore, the rationale for the move was a need to ramp up production while increasing efficiencies, so Geoff needed to demonstrate a swift improvement from a new and dedicated, but inexperienced team. He looked for guidance on how to develop a robust skills strategy that would allow him to quickly train his team in the techniques required to build UpRight's products efficiently.

Geoff called upon the expertise of the Skills Academy, who worked closely with Geoff to assess the scope of his challenge by accompanying him on visits to both the Dublin and the Tyne & Wear sites. This provided a clear overview of the situation and gave the Skills Academy the insight needed to recommend a training programme that would ensure the quick development of a qualified and motivated workforce to rapidly meet the challenge of delivering high numbers of quality UpRight products.

“We needed a skills strategy which would deliver a qualified and highly efficient workforce quickly. I wanted expert assistance in creating a pathway to the right skills strategy.”

Geoff Allison
Plant Manager

Electric vehicle and aerial work platform manufacturer The Tanfield Group Plc quickly achieved productivity increases of nearly 1000% at its core manufacturing plant, following expert advice and guidance from the The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing (the Skills Academy).

The Tanfield Group, based in Tyne & Wear, produces zero emission commercial electric vehicles and aerial work platforms. It operates two very successful trading divisions – Smith Electric Vehicles and UpRight Powered Access. UpRight is the UK's largest manufacturer of self-propelled aerial work platforms, also known as cherry pickers.



This came in the form of the Skills Academy's recommendation for Tanfield to implement the NVQ for Business-Improvement Techniques (B-IT) Level 2 across its new UpRight workforce. This nationally recognised qualification arms candidates with an understanding of the techniques required to deliver a lean, efficient manufacturing environment. Critically, it allows candidates to apply what they learn to the specific conditions of their workplace, meaning they can quickly see how the theory has an impact in practice. Most importantly it allows Tanfield to motivate staff by giving something back – a nationally-recognised qualification which is part of a portfolio of certified skills they can take with them throughout their careers.

Not only did the Skills Academy identify the most appropriate qualification, they also advised Geoff on the training companies to consider for delivering the course, ensuring Tanfield selected a quality supplier validated against the Skills Academy's own high standards of competency. The Skills Academy even attended sales meetings with the selected company to make certain Tanfield got the best deal and joined monthly management meetings with QGS Synergy, the appointed training provider, to ensure the ongoing quality of the programme delivery.

"We are ensuring the quality of the entire programme," explains Bill Twigg, Development Director, the Skills Academy. "It doesn't stop when we've identified the right qualification. We are providing guidance and advice throughout the process. To offer a total support service for employers we must advise on strategy, content, delivery, implementation and evaluation. We are helping Tanfield make decisions every step of the way to ensure it derives real business benefit from its new training strategy."

Excellent results have already been forthcoming. Since June 2007 around 200 members of the new workforce have qualified or are now studying for the NVQ. Geoff expects to put at least another 40 through the programme in 2008. Most importantly, he can demonstrate a dramatic increase in the productivity of the workforce.

Geoff has been so impressed with the results of working with the Skills Academy he has asked them to advise on and ensure the quality delivery of stage two – the Lean Leaders programme. This industry developed qualification creates specialists in super-efficient manufacturing processes. By February next year, Tanfield will be able to boast almost 250 employees with an NVQ in B-IT Level 2 and three lean leaders, all under one roof.



"In September 2006 we were building 70 machines a month. In October 2007 we built in the region of 700. A lot of that is down to the growing workforce, but we would not have achieved this so quickly or so faultlessly without the guidance of the National Skills Academy for Manufacturing. Its support has accelerated our huge productivity gains."

Geoff Allison
Plant Manager