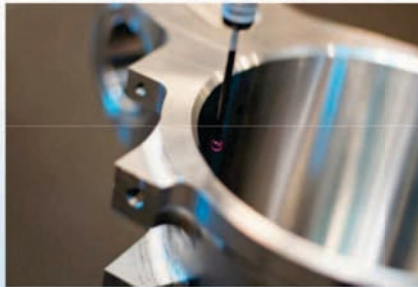




The Tools and the Talent

Universal Tool & Production Company Ltd (UTP) began production in 1952. Today, it is a high-end manufacturer for the aerospace, oil & gas, and nuclear industries, with plans for expansion into other sectors



UTP has been supplying businesses with tools and parts since 1952. Currently, the organisation supports the aerospace, oil & gas, and nuclear sectors. However, as new Managing Director Martin Todd points out, there have been moves toward developing markets and targeting potential customers in other sectors: "The renewable sector is an unstoppable locomotive, gathering pace and providing opportunities to manufacture and supply high quality parts for wind farms, solar panel installations and much more. Other sectors with potential for expanding the UTP portfolio include the defence and rail industries, and we are looking closely at ways in which we can support these vital areas as well as being prepared for future energy and engineering needs."

Building up the portfolio is just part of Martin's remit: "As the business leader, I must ensure the company's strategy is properly executed, with a highly developed and appropriately deployed UTP team. Much of my time, I am coaching and supporting the leadership team to take full advantage of future opportunities."

A phrase people commonly hear in this industry is Precision Engineering, Martin believes that UTP offers a specific variant on this, helping it to stand out amongst the competition: "As a high-end, low volume manufacturer of complex parts and components, our exacting customers expect compliance. This is not just regarding the supply of conforming product, but also in the way we conduct ourselves in business; our ethics policies; our values. I take a holistic view of Precision to include; the service we deliver to our customers;

our responsibilities towards our shareholders, our workforce and the local community, all within the bounds of a safe and sustainable environment.

The end goal is to create a UTP brand that is the 'Supplier, Customer and Employer' of choice."

In order to stand out from its competitors, UTP adopts a more collaborative approach with its customers: "Clients supply blueprints or design ideas to the UTP team and we provide feedback, often guiding them towards more cost-effective and efficient methods of manufacture. From a project management point of view, it's about identifying potential challenges and offering up mutually agreeable solutions," Martin analyses.

On top of a change at boardroom level, there has also been a major shift in terms of the production process. Prior to March 2017, there were two main bases in Fareham, on the South

Coast, but with the business moving five miles down the road to Lee-on-the-Solent, UTP is now operating out of one facility, something that Martin is inspired by: "The newly built 32,000 square foot workspace delivers a real 'wow' factor for visitors. Not only has this enabled a shop floor layout that promotes logical and efficient product flow, but it also gives ample floor space for expansion. The interior environment is much cleaner and more user-friendly. Overall, in terms of employee satisfaction, cost-effectiveness and positive customer impressions, this structure definitely ups the ante."

Employee welfare and recruitment is another element that Martin feels is crucial for future development: "New recruits are being sought now. I am committed to taking on four apprentices per year over the next three years. We are working very closely with Fareham College's LiMAS1 (Centre of Excellence in Engineering, Manufacturing and Advanced Skills Training) school, to identify suitable candidates to apply for apprenticeships at UTP. It is vitally important that more young people are encouraged into engineering and we will do our part. We are not just looking for technical competence, although obviously a good foundation is necessary. Successful candidates must be a good 'fit' with the rest of the team; knowing, believing and living the UTP values. We are open to people who are ambitious and want to advance their careers, but there is also a place for those who simply want to be secure in their work and feel that their needs are being well catered for."

There is a proactive move towards inclusion and diversity, as Martin feels the engineering sector would benefit from a wider range of experiences and backgrounds, welcoming new talent across the board. Traditionally, this has been hard to achieve, but Martin is confident that their close connection to local government, the local community and Fareham College will enable this going forward.

Part of that dedication to looking after workers is literally in the atmosphere at UTP: The purpose-built ICAX renewable energy system stores and extracts heat from the ground via an underground pipe system, keeping rooms inside the facility appropriately heated throughout the year. Martin is delighted with the installation: "This ICAX system is delivering a highly efficient heating and cooling regime to the building with no onsite emissions, and as a business we will continue to benefit from the rapid de-carbonisation of the grid, saving significant emissions throughout the lifetime of the factory. We are a business delivering high

quality, world class components with the latest technology and are delighted that the heating and cooling system supports that objective."

Also installed is the Fern Howard 'smart' lighting system, which, as well as providing suitable, ambient light for all weather conditions, is extremely environmentally friendly with its use of LED, sensor activated units both in the offices and on the shop floor.

Whilst being comfortable is important, safety is paramount: "We are keen to deal with health and safety problems before they occur, and part of this involves coaching. Employees are encouraged to stand away from the job if they become fatigued, rushed or distracted. They can return to tasks when it is safe to do so. This 'self-triggering' is just one aspect of being on top of safety, and of course the overall concept is that it is better to prevent problems before they happen."

Martin may be relatively new to his current position, but big plans are already being set in motion, though he concedes it will require some long term planning: "Over the next 12 months

we are looking to consolidate our position, ensuring that results are delivered from a quality and timing point of view. The longer term plan is to double in size over the next five years, and though that may sound like a steep curve, it is possible," he insists.

What Martin clearly believes is that he can make the business bigger and better: It is very encouraging that he wants as many people as possible to share in and be a part of its legacy, ensuring that new ideas can be brought in to further advance the organisation in the future, not to mention the benefits for a growing local community. As Martin summarises: "There are no barriers to this industry!"

Universal Tool & Production Company Ltd
 Services:
 Tool and parts manufacturer
www.utp.co.uk