



Virtual Reality

The Harlow Group is set to become a pioneer of the virtual factory, the first of its kind outside Japan, which will push the company to the forefront of fabrication technology. It's a move that will help reduce the time taken between receipt of CAD file to completed formed parts.

The recent acquisitions of Amada laser and laser/punch combination machines together with automatic sheet loaders has allowed the company to run 'lights out' and therefore greatly increase capacity. "The introduction of this technology will act as a springboard that enables us to challenge all aspects of the traditional manufacturing process" says manufacturing director Marc Boulden, "considerable effort is already being applied to integrate the manufacturing cycle from customer enquiry to finished product"

With this in mind the next phase of investment at Harlow will concentrate on electronic data handling, 3D modelling, full off-line programming and robotics. The tool for this ambitious project is Amada's new VPSS (Virtual Prototype Simulation System).

We are working very closely with Amada to develop what will become the first VPSS facility outside of Japan. Within the next 12 months we hope to have all our new systems in place and fully operational.

The benefits to our customers are huge and include:

- Short programming times with offline automated pressbrake software
- Ability to accept almost every type of CAD data
- Faster machine set up time
- Accuracy and repeatability
- Reduced part handling
- Design and analysis recommendations
- Reduced lead times
- Lower costs

What we are doing will help differentiate the Harlow Group in the market place. The VPSS is crucial to achieving this goal.

For a greater insight into this process please request a copy of the CD showing the virtual facility in action within the Harlow Group.

They are accredited to ISO 9001:1987 .EN 29001: 1987 Design and Manufacture. They are members of the Lighting Industry Federation (LIF) and their products are eligible for the Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) scheme.

Their success is based on supplying top quality well engineered products, on time at affordable prices. As a strategic supplier, the Harlow Group are proud to be suppliers to Profile Lighting services and wish them every success for the future.



CUSTOMER FEATURE

Profile Lighting Services Ltd

Established in 1988 and based in Bishop's Stortford, Herts, Profile Lighting Services are manufacturers of lighting fittings for the retail, commercial, prison, health care, and education markets.

They have many blue chip clients including, Marks and Spencer's, Primark, Gap, Mothercare, Glaxo Smith Kline and numerous Local Authorities and Health Trusts.

A highly experienced design team equipped with the latest CAD facilities provide their clients with an expert design service for both luminaires and lighting schemes.

They manufacture a wide range of lighting fittings to satisfy their markets. Flexibility is the key, and much of their work involves adaptations to standard products and specialist bespoke commercial and architectural luminaires.



MD COMMENTS

How time flies. It has been a year since I took over this role much of which has been spent on reorganising and streamlining the business into a competitive and technology driven manufacturer.

Working in a sub-contract industry is no easy task. Threats from the Far East, significant energy price increases and fluctuations in materials costs have not only directly affected us but also the majority of our customers. Therefore the underlying reason for all our business transformations initiatives is the drive to boost productivity and reduce costs.

I truly believe that the recent investment and changes we have made will allow us to compete in market sectors where margins are being continually squeezed

We have taken a unique approach that applies a refreshing practicality to these issues. New technology challenges the traditional ways of manufacturing and provides the customer with reduced time to market, reliability, improved quality and competitive pricing

We are now able to respond rapidly to changing customer demands and can quickly adjust existing production to new projects. For us it is all about understanding the demands of each customer then offering a service to match that requirement.

The next phase of investment will be around reducing lead time for data transfer and automation of key processes through software integration. Be assured that the Harlow Group is fully committed to leading not following.

Bill Timpson
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Co-operation Pays

The significant benefits of supplier and customer partnerships have been comprehensively demonstrated by recent co-operation between Snap-On and the Harlow Group.

Snap-On took the strategic decision to redesign their MoT approved Emissions Analyser the DGA 2500 in order to reduce costs whilst increasing the features and benefits of the cabinet.

The DGA 2500 is the market leading emissions analyser in the UK MoT Testing market. If your car has an MoT test each year, there's a very good possibility that the testing station is using the DGA 2500.

Trevor Wootton, Senior Buyer for Snap On takes up the story.

"Both organisations put a lot of effort into getting the DGA 2500 right for the market place, whilst ensuring that assembly and configuration processes were efficient and time saving."

"Prototype units had to be produced to a tight timescale in order to meet the demands of the launch date. The DGA 2500 was unveiled at our industries premier UK show, the ATS that takes place at the NEC each year. We relied heavily on the Harlow Group's technical ability to assist design for manufacture, prototype and first

batch production. This was achieved through a series of design reviews with critical milestones agreed at each stage."

The new model is now in full production and is being well received in the market place.



MEET THE TEAM



David Carlisle

Technical Manager

Dave Carlisle manages the engineering department within the company with his main emphasis on computer aided design and re-engineering.

This year will be David's 30th anniversary working for the company making him one of our longest serving employees. During this time he has worked in a variety of roles from apprentice, production control, material logistics and now CAD/CAM. His years of experience and training makes him one of the most technically expert in the field of sheet metal manufacture.

Dave has seen a number of changes over the years but the rate of progress within the industry recently has amazed him, as he states "There has been massive change in the way our customers transfer data. The days where we have to program directly from a drawing are starting to fade into history. Most of the people we deal with now have sophisticated software packages that allow us to unfold and develop drawings in a very quick time".

Outside of work Dave spends a great deal of time keeping fit, including weight training and watersports.

Everyone at the Harlow Group would like to thank Dave for his dedication and loyalty. We all wish him many successful years ahead.

Four Square Gold Award Winner



Mike Hooton, left, awards Neil Pitts the Gold Award

The Harlow Group is proud to have been awarded the Gold Standard Supplier Award by major Drinks Dispenser Manufacturer Four Square

Making the presentation for Four Square was Mike Hooton, Vendor QA Manager, who commented:

"Quality is the first principle of the Mars Corporation.

Quality is our work and value for money is our goal.

We cannot achieve this at Four Square unless our suppliers share our vision, and that is what the Gold Standard programme is all about:

Selecting and helping to develop suppliers who can support us in our goal.

Harlow Group has demonstrated that they are such a supplier, from their excellent performance during 2005.

However, Gold Standard is not a one-year programme – it is about continuous improvement, year on year, towards the ideal of zero defects, and optimum value for money.

Good luck for 2006 – and beyond!"

Receiving the award on behalf of HGL Neil Pitts (Site Manager Harlow Group) stated:

"As a market leader in their field, Four Square rightly demands a very high standard of manufacture and delivery.

We have worked hard with Four Square to develop and perfect the manufacturing processes required to satisfy the requirements of the Gold Standard programme.

By applying kan-ban and lean principles we are able to supply direct to customer every day in less than 24 hours from receipt of order.

On behalf of all at HGL I am delighted to accept this award and look forward to meeting and beating the targets set for 2006/7."

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