

ards

BUSINESS



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Commitment to

training is the ke

KMF treats its apprentices like gold dust, and as a result unearths some real stars among their ranks. The Newcastle sheet metal precision engineering specialist has long been strong on leading the way when it comes to investing in a skilled workforce to secure its future.

Apprentices all taught in-house

And - turning over some £21 million a year and providing 250 local jobs - KMF is also a contender for the Fortis Insurance Solutions-sponsored Training Excellence Award, part of *The Sentinel* Business Awards presented in association with the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Recognising that one of the most serious threats to British manufacturing was a potential lack of skilled engineers, it has been taking on four new apprentices a year since 2001.

And such has been the relationships built that at least 90 per cent of those are still working within the company, with some going on to become senior members of staff.

Never content to under-exploit a good idea, the company recently launched its own £600,000 custom-built training centre, opened by company founder Michael Higgins and former world land speed record holder Richard Noble OBE, a director of the Bloodhound team now bidding to reach 1,000 mph.

Former apprentice Peter Krynicki won the Metals Industry Apprentice of the Year 2007 Award and, now a technician, he also acts as mentor and assessor to those following in his footsteps.

All KMF apprentice training has been carried out in-house for the past four years.

Following his latest visit, EAL inspector Mark Haig said: "It is inspiring to see that KMF recognises the importance of providing its apprentices with top class facilities and training."

"That guarantees they receive the highest levels of practical experience using the latest technology," said managing director Gareth Higgins.

But the firm's professional development strategy ranges right across the age and trade spectrum, enabling its workforce to remain multi-skilled and capable of meeting the ever-changing demands of its marketplace.

"By bringing training in-house we have

been able to commit to the EAL (EMTA) training route which meets our requirements, including application and use of all the latest computerised machine tool technology."

Over the past year the family-owned company has invested more than £1 million in leading-edge manufacturing equipment.



Training evaluator Mark Haig, left, with apprentices from KMF. They are, left to right, Joe Cowen, Matt Page and Joe Pemberton. Main picture shows the KMF training centre in Newcastle.



THE SENTINEL BUSINESS AWARDS

- Business of the Year Start-up Business
- Small Business of the Year International Trade
- Young Businessperson of the Year Environmental
- Business Innovation Award Design Excellence
- Training Excellence Award Best Use of IT/Communications

Company Name _____

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