

Denford Managing Director becomes Diploma Champion

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Denford managing director, Simon Moorhouse, has signed up to champion a pioneering new qualification aimed at giving young people a hands-on education in manufacturing.

He has joined a national network of employer champions who work to encourage colleagues in the industry to get involved with the Diploma in Manufacturing and Product Design (MPD), which was introduced for 14 to 19 year olds in schools and colleges around England in September 2009.

Simon has spent the last 10 years as managing director of the Brighouse-based company, which makes and exports CAD/CAM machines and technology for education and training markets across the globe.

He says his 30 years' experience working in manufacturing and engineering at home and overseas, including managing companies in Europe and the Far East, has given him an insight into how far manufacturing has slipped off the radar as a potential career option for young people in the UK. He believes this is largely an issue of education, and believes the Diploma in MPD will help reignite interest in the industry.

He said: "In countries such as China, Pakistan and India, they still value engineering and manufacturing as a career – it's seen as high tech and a fantastic opportunity. It was the same here when I was young. I spent three years as a commercial apprentice - part of that was on the shop floor, but I was also learning about things like finance, marketing and sales. It gave me a good, rounded base from which to work, and I'm still using those skills today.

"Our message is to promote the Diploma for MPD as a way of encouraging that kind of interest in manufacturing among young people again. It is in all our interests as employers to get the best students into manufacturing and to inspire young people to understand that it's a sophisticated, high-tech, diverse industry with great career prospects. There are a lot of companies crying out skilled people, so let's invest to develop the next generation."

Simon believes the UK still competes on the world stage for excellence in manufacturing and engineering, but there is a lack of understanding about the industry and its strengths. "Many UK companies remain highly successful and are here for the long term. They continue to offer great career prospects for bright young people.

"One good example with a base in Yorkshire is my old employer Kodak. Although people may not see them as a manufacturing and design company, they are. They are still a big employer and have had to change dramatically over the last 10 years. There are a lot of companies that students aren't aware of, and as champions it's our job to make sure that the industry's profile is raised."

The Diploma in MPD has been developed to sit alongside traditional academic qualifications, with students dividing their time between classroom, college, and real work environments. It is being delivered by consortia, or approved partnerships of local schools, colleges and employers. Employers are directly involved in delivery, offering their time and expertise in variety of ways including running work experience placements, hosting site visits, giving presentations and talks, keeping teachers up-to-date with sector developments and setting project topics based on real-life manufacturing scenarios.

For more information, visit the website for the Diploma in Manufacturing and Product Design, at www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk