

Training removes the blinkers

A long-running problem on testing a component for the car industry proved to be a taxing one for Pektron.

The world class manufacturer of electronics, supplying to a global customer base, put their best minds to the issue but were unable to resolve it. But thanks to an innovative training initiative the Pektron team was able to see the problem in a new light, find a solution and make substantial costs savings for the company.

Problem solving is something that manufacturers in the automotive industry are well used to but, because each business tackles it in different ways, there was no consistency in reaching solutions which can be transferred across the sector.

Thanks to the Automotive Industrial Partnership, a single industry-wide offering is now available with rigorous certification requirements based on training resolving real problems and saving the industry millions of pounds.

The innovative Advanced Problem Solving programme is led by Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd on behalf of the industry and Pektron's manufacturing director Ian Harpham has been impressed with the results.

"Everybody had an opinion on this one particular testing problem and everyone was wrong – we would not have got to the point of resolution without the training – it removed the blinkers from our thinking.

"We are involved in testing 300-400 different products – if we apply the same thinking to all of them then there is a real opportunity to make even more substantial savings than we already have."

The Advanced Problem Solving programme takes the tools from Six-Sigma (a well known approach utilised by the manufacturing sector to reduce productivity defects) and embeds them into whichever problem solving methodology is being applied.

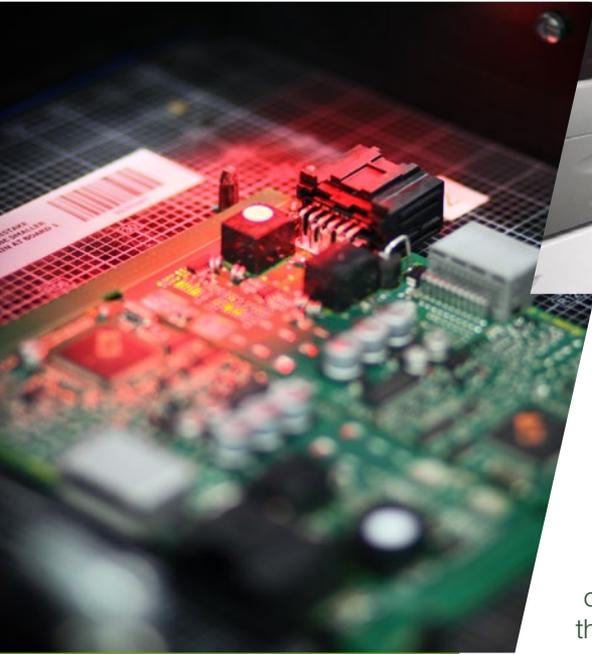
Training is delivered by specialist provider Capella Associates. Two levels of Advanced Problem Solving are available, 'Green Belt' and 'Black Belt'.



"We were able to solve a long-running testing problem on one of our components, saving us thousands of pounds so the training has more than paid for itself and it has provided a new qualification for employees and a new suite of tools to solve difficult problems."

Ian Harpham,
Pektron Manufacturing Director





The Green Belt training is aimed at those at engineer level, while Black Belt is for leaders/supervisors – though they are also suitable for other employees working in data rich environments such as logistics or management accounts.

Delivered over a period of 10 months, the training is a mix of taught (classroom) days, on-site coaching, project work and presentations / reviews.

It involves delegates applying the learning as they go through the course on a work based project which delivers real business benefits.

Pektron has four plants in Derbyshire and a workforce of 340 – 48% of its output is for export. With 50 years of experience in design, development and manufacture of industrial, automotive and agricultural products, its high-profile client

list includes Aston Martin, McLaren, Jaguar Land Rover, Case New Holland Tractors, Baxi Group and Dräger.

A further six employees will now undergo the Green Belt training and two will do the Black Belt course.

Mr Harpham said: “It is an extremely useful tool for solving difficult problems that are not obvious. This more structured approach means we reach an accurate, satisfactory conclusion much faster.”

Mr Harpham continued

“This is an example of the Automotive Industrial Partnership in action – with the large manufacturers working collaboratively with the supply chain for the benefit of the whole industry. Toyota have been extremely generous in giving their time and access to their fantastic facilities and the delivery of the training has been extremely professional and impressive.”

One of the key priorities of the Partnership is to support supply chain employers to gain access to industry standard technical, leadership and management programmes to upskill their existing workforce and develop new recruits.

The employers driving the Automotive Industrial Partnership include Bentley, BMW, Ford, GKN, Honda, Jaguar Land Rover, Nissan, Toyota and Vauxhall.

Employer led skills organisation Semta, industry trade association the SMMT, Industry Forum, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills and UKCES are also supporting the Partnership.



For more information on the *Advanced Problem Solving* course and the *Automotive Industrial Partnership* visit

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