

Designers return to share their knowledge

Two University of Wolverhampton graduates are returning to the classroom to share their expertise with designers of the future.

Company directors Steve Campbell and Marie Campbell both graduated with a BA (Hons) in Graphic Communication in 2002 and set up Wolverhampton-based Début in June 2005, after gaining experience working within the design industry.

They are now regularly working alongside the marketing departments of the School of Art & Design and School of Education on newsletters, and also worked on the website and event catalogue for the recent Glass Routes exhibition. They are preparing to talk to third year Graphic Communication students about their experiences in the graphic design industry.

Plans are under way for the company to take a graduate on a 10-week placement through the Knowledge Innovation Technology Transfer Scheme (KITTS) in Spring 2009.

Steve Campbell, managing director of Début, said: "We're extremely pleased with how Début is developing both locally and nationally. All of our hard work and dedication, along with the support networks within Wolverhampton and in particular, the support we received from our former lecturers at the University of Wolverhampton, has contributed to our success."

Nut and bolt company proves manufacturing in the Black Country is still going strong

PRD is forging ahead despite the downturn

A leading Willenhall nut and bolt company is surviving the automotive and construction downturn, by staying away from these volatile industries.

Instead, PRD Fasteners has focused on supplying high integrity and quality critical fasteners to sectors such as power generation, oil and gas, petrochemical and associated heavy engineering.

PRD supplies customers worldwide from a facility in the heart of the West Midlands with hot forged and bar-turned fasteners and CNC machined components. At the same time, it provides in-house specialist heat treatment and testing laboratory services.

PRD has grown over a 25-year period and now employs 130 people at its site in Monmer Close, Willenhall, proving that manufacturing in the West Midlands is still going strong despite the recession. A merger between PRD Fasteners and Lone Star Fasteners of Houston, Texas, in 2007 created the Lone Star PRD Group, which now includes companies in the UK, USA, Romania and Dubai.

PRD managing director Stuart Roden has been in the hot seat for four years after joining the company in 1990 as part of the sales team and has overseen a period of growth both in terms of turnover and in the company's manufacturing operations.

He said: "We offer a wide range of services so we can develop partnerships with our cus-



CNC operator programmer Ryan Hartshorn works on a job



Some of the largest high quality fasteners



Impact testing is carried out at PRD

tomers providing the service they want and to do this we have to keep a wide selection of fully certified material and finished parts in stock.

"We also provide our customers with logistic services including consignment stock and kitting direct to our customers' assembly line cutting out the cost of stocking the parts themselves."

The diversity and flexibility of PRD's manufacturing facility means they are able to provide nuts and bolts and CNC machined components from 2mm diameter up to one metre in diameter with a scope of over three metres long, in a variety of material grades.

PRD work very closely with their customers to provide safety critical fasteners and CNC machined components to drawings and recognised British, European or worldwide standards, but

also gets involved with reverse engineering of parts where a drawing or standard is not available.

"We are able to provide advice to our customers on material and engineering applications with reverse engineering solutions through our internal CNC controlled measuring equipment and CAD production CNC facility to manufacture replacements for the customers original worn out or broken parts," said Mr Roden.

It's one of the reasons why the company runs its own testing laboratory and heat treatment facility, ensuring every part that leaves the factory meets the necessary standards set by the customer.

The success of this flexibility means that customers can depend on PRD to provide scheduled deliveries as well as relying on their 24-hour call-out service across all of its manufacturing facility.

"If you have a problem at a power station or on an oil rig you don't want to be waiting around any longer than you need to get it fixed, so one call to PRD and the problem is dealt with whatever time of day or night," said Mr Roden.

The company has invested in its own capabilities, with around £500,000 spent on capital investment last year and the same amount in the budget for this year. It makes the most of a skilled workforce, more than 60 per cent of whom have been with the firm at least five years. As well as the production team, there is a large sales team.

While it may be tough in manufacturing at the moment, it hasn't stopped PRD hitting its target of bringing in more £1 million of work a month so far this year as it works towards an expected turnover figure of £13.5 million.