



Cutting Edge Business Beats Recession

Hunslet-based Garcross Engineering, launched by a pair of skilled sheet metalworkers with £1000 capital in the Seventies, has progressed to £3m turnover, an impressive high profile customer portfolio and now a new £350,000 state of the art management suite dedicated to the best customer service levels and working conditions.

This latest in a series of self-funded investments demonstrates how successful manufacturers have learned to fund expansion through the business rather than relying on borrowings. Garcross has also successfully developed niche markets with highly skilled metalworking and a prudent overall approach to finance to prosper through the recession.

The company's core business involves laser cutting for sophisticated signage for industries including medical, petro-chemical, retail and electrical across the UK. Linking state of the art shop-floor technology with the new IT and communications suite is seen as a platform for pursuing further business from blue chip customers.

Managing director David Crossland believes sustained investment in the latest metalworking technology has been a key factor in the firm's success story: "In the Eighties, we invested £300,000 in a new laser cutting machine, when other companies were still buying traditional punch machinery. The calculated risk paid off and we now have three of the latest laser cutting machines. Operating over 24x5 continental shifts."

The new expansion has been achieved within the original 5,000 sq ft footplate of the company's buildings. But skilful use of mezzanine levels has increased the total production and administration area to 13,000 sq ft.

David Crossland and Keith Gardner founded the company with £500 each and started business in a covered yard in Harehills. Mr Gardner relinquished his interests, due to illness, in the early Nineties. Garcross now employs 24 skilled workers with the management team including Mr Crossland's sons, who started as 16-year-old apprentices and now handle customer relations and project costing.

The company relocated from Harehills to Hunslet in 1980 and into the current Pepper Road premises, formerly the home of the Patent Steam Wagon Company, ten years ago. Recent expansion and construction work revealed original railway lines and artefacts from the industrial past and one piece of rail has been refurbished and retained as an objet d'art.

Built by Cross Green building company APP Construction, the new management suite forms an operational hub for Garcross, housing the latest IT systems for costing and project control. It features a modern meeting room, air conditioning throughout, flat-screen TV's and an advanced archive facility.

David Crossland adds: "Our continued investment in the latest automated production machinery has undoubtedly paid handsome dividends. Equally importantly, we took a view four years ago that a general downturn was on the way and adjusted our spending accordingly.

"As a result, we have been able to fund this substantial expansion from our own resources and believe this latest investment will help us to emerge even more strongly from the current recession."

Joint leader of Leeds City Council Cllr Andrew Carter said: "Manufacturers in Leeds, as elsewhere in the UK, have faced extremely difficult trading conditions over the last 12 months but there is strong evidence, despite the recession, that companies like Garcross continue to win new business and thrive as a result of investing for the future."

Ends

Photography: David Crossland: 1. With Garcross Engineering's laser cutting machine and 2. With colleague Jeff Brylov in the company's new management suite