

# WHERE ARE TOMORROW'S ENGINEERS?

IF YOU LISTEN TO ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ADVISERS – AND INDEED TO ONE OF ITS MINISTERS – YOU'D BE FORGIVEN FOR THINKING THAT FRESH BLOOD IS SEVERELY LACKING IN THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY. BUT IF YOU LOOK BEHIND THE HEADLINES AT SOME OF THE BUSINESSES WHICH ARE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE, THEN THE STORY IS A VERY DIFFERENT ONE.

Recent media interest began with a double-whammy of attention-grabbing soundbites. Chief Scientific Advisor at the Department for Business, Innovations and Skills – Professor John Perkins – warned that the UK's economic recovery could be 'constrained' by a lack of engineering skills. At the same time, Business Secretary Vince Cable claimed that a relatively low number of young people were choosing to study maths and science, in which 'engineers must have a strong foundation'.

With an acknowledged ageing workforce, meaning vital skills and experience are leaving the industry, it certainly looks grim for engineering. And yet there are happier headlines, successful initiatives, and plenty of bright young would-be engineers slipping into newly acquired overalls.

## The best of the best

Accredited as a Top Employer by the CRF Institute in 2013, *ERIKS* takes its

responsibilities for the future of the industry very seriously. Which is why the company runs not only an Apprenticeship scheme but also a Graduate scheme. And their success is being recognised beyond the business itself. While the media were focusing on the doom and gloom, two young *ERIKS* engineers were making headlines of their own, collecting a brace of awards.

Jacob Kane – an Apprentice with *ERIKS* Chesterfield – was awarded Apprentice of the Year by the Institute of Engineering and Technology, while fellow *ERIKS* employee Liam Greveson won the first-ever Exceptional Achievement Award from the Electrical Apparatus Service Association (EASA).

Jacob was fully-funded by *ERIKS* to study an Electrical and Mechanical Engineering BTEC, on the *ERIKS* Apprenticeship scheme. *ERIKS* takes on 10-15 apprentices across the UK every year for this 3-year scheme, which involves

24 weeks a year, 3 weeks at a time, at Loughborough College – one of the UK's leading universities for engineering and technology. Then in addition, the apprentice undertakes 40 weeks of full-time work in *ERIKS'* workshops.

Liam had spent 7 years with *ERIKS* before receiving his award from EASA. He also began as an Apprentice, starting on the shop floor as a Tester/Fitter, and is now a Condition Monitoring Engineer.

His award from EASA was presented to him in Palma, Mallorca, and he also visited two EASA member companies, including the award sponsor: Karsten Moholt AS of Norway.

## How managers are made

*ERIKS'* Graduate scheme – known as the *ERIKS* UK Academy – is a brand-new initiative from *ERIKS*. It will undoubtedly become another important contributor

of new blood to the industry, helping to boost the UK recovery in the short-term, and maintain and strengthen the country's engineering base in the long-term.

The scheme is currently in the recruitment and selection stage for its first year's intake, but the intention is to take on ten graduates for a comprehensive programme of learning and development across the business UK-wide, covering all divisions of the company. The scheme lasts for two years and offers three programmes, each one geared to graduates in a different discipline: either Electro-Mechanical Engineering, General Engineering, or Commercial Business and Management.

*ERIKS'* Learning and Development Department will put together a full training and development scheme for each graduate, including a personal development programme, and all the graduates will be mentored by senior management and the



David Arbuthnott  
Corporate Key Accounts Director,  
*ERIKS* UK

Having joined a family business – subsequently taken over by *ERIKS* – straight from University, I am in my 30th year with the company.

I started as a Graduate Trainee in the Commercial Department, managing National Agreements and customer entertainment facilities, assisting in importing spare parts from Germany and the USA, and acting as Quality Manager. A secondment as a Sales Representative for a Service Centre was followed by a period as Service Centre Manager. At 25 I became Commercial and Contracts Manager on the Board of Management, then managed our German distribution arm, subsequently returning as UK National Contracts Manager, becoming a Director in 1995.

When the business was acquired by *ERIKS* I was appointed European Key Accounts Director, before returning to my old role in 2010. I am delighted to be part of a company with very ambitious owners who can take a longer-term view.

HR Director. There will also be regular performance reviews.

## Planning for the future

The ultimate aim of both the Apprentice and Graduate schemes is to recruit quality candidates for *ERIKS*. Successful apprentices will go on to be employed in hands-on engineering roles for the company, but can also move into management positions. Graduates, meanwhile, are specifically recruited for eventual management posts. (See box-out).

So *ERIKS'* drive to develop the engineers of the future is not entirely altruistic. But why would potential employees want to work for *ERIKS*?

As Europe's leading industrial services partner, the company offers the potential of a rewarding career with a secure future. But it's more than that. The Top Employer accreditation from the CRF

Institute – an organisation that identifies the top performers in Human Resources – proves that *ERIKS* is committed to its employees and their care and development. The accolade recognised an outstanding level of employee care by *ERIKS* across several categories, citing the company's exceptionally high standards in categories such as Working Conditions, Training and Development, Career Development and Culture Management.

By training, developing and employing the best and brightest talent of today, *ERIKS* aims to create the best engineers of the future – which will, of course, be good for *ERIKS*. But it will also be good for all of us within the industry, and ultimately for everyone who will benefit from a prosperous UK.

