

Support for Apprenticeships Leads Fairbrother & Grimshaw to Dugards

As is well known, the apprenticeship system is based on the concept of training a new generation of practitioners in a particular skill, or set of skills. And also just as well known, is the fact that there's not been a lot of engineering apprenticeships being dished-out over recent times and, in truth, apprenticeships have become a thing of the past for most manufacturing.

However, happily, it appears that there are still some engineering company within the engineering industry prepared to invest in the youth of today. So let's take this opportunity to celebrate one of those companies: Blackburn based Fairbrother & Grimshaw who have recently recruited the services of two young persons on Modern Apprenticeship schemes.

Fairbrother and Grimshaw are a Lancashire sub-contract engineering business who specialise in CNC Milling and CNC Turning and should deservedly be described as a successful engineering company who invest not only in technology but in people.

As a mainly CNC machine shop, Fairbrother & Grimshaw are a business who treat suppliers loyally in just the same manner they treat their customers. Being a large user of CNC machines, over recent years they felt they weren't receiving the loyal support it deserved from their existing machine tool supplier and took the calculated decision to opt for a new CNC machine tool provider.

It was one of those remarkable chance occurrences, where Fairbrother & Grimshaw's reinstatement of apprenticeships within their company inadvertently led to a beneficial change of machine tool suppliers for them.

Company Director, Neil Grimshaw explains, "Our business philosophy is to grow organically with both our suppliers and our customers. Our customer base relies on our

skills to provide both prototype and production machining capacity and our diverse range of customers dictates that we maintain a flexible manufacturing facility. We generally machine all types of components including couplings and adaptors for both the automotive and nuclear fuels industries. Often the machining process can be demanding and we find ourselves machining complex parts in very tough and hard materials to tight tolerances, with quantities varying from initial prototype runs through to batches of 100+ runs."

"Over recent years we had formed the view that our original machine tool supplier was handling our account in a somewhat complacent manner, and we were actively investigating other providers. The new apprentices we'd recruited earlier in the year were undertaking basic training at the local academy under the Training 2000 scheme. Naturally, we took an interest in the college training they were receiving and it was during drop-in visits to observe the college facilities that we first noted that the machine tools being used principally to train the apprentice engineers were Dugard machines."

"We were very impressed with what we saw at the college and our new apprentices spoke very highly of the Dugard machines, promoting the ease of programming and setting and also the overall performance of the Dugard machines as compared to others they'd used on the college campus."

"This resulted in us beginning to seriously conduct research into the Brighton based supplier, Dugard. We spent a lot of time comparing available machine tools and their suppliers, it was then it became apparent just how many installations Dugard had around the country and how well they serviced such diverse businesses, right from small sub-contract shops through to large OEMS; this filled us with a lot

of confidence."

"We really wanted to work with a supplier who could provide us with not just a Lathe now, but machining centres and even multi axis machines in the future, if the direction of our business changed: again we took comfort in Dugard's extensive product range portfolio."

"It was also evident that due to the size and nature of Dugard's business, they could supply us with a machine almost instantly. Other suppliers and manufacturers were quoting both higher prices and longer lead times, which was also a factor in our final decision. We were winning more work and needed to be assured of new machine delivery not next month or next week, but tomorrow."

"After placing our first order for a new Dugard 100 CNC Lathe we have been over the moon with both the machine installation and the support. Dugard have lived up to all of our expectations and in addition the machine has cut most of our cycles times by more than 50%, which means the payback time on the Dugard 100 Lathe will be far less than originally anticipated."

In conclusion Neil Grimshaw states, "Our long term business aim is to continue to increase our capacity, bring more apprentices into the business and grow our company into an even more successful component supplier serving several top-tier customers. In order for us to achieve our aims we require our suppliers to have a similar business ethos to our own and in Dugard, we genuinely believe that we have found one."

