

16th October 2012
For immediate release

Help for Essex manufacturing firms to boost performance and create new jobs

A new programme of support for small, medium-sized (SME) and start-up manufacturing companies based in Essex has been launched by IfM Education and Consultancy Services (IfM ECS) in partnership with Essex County Council.

By providing these SMEs and start-ups with mentors, Essex County Council is seeking to improve their business performance and create new jobs across the county. The programme has been launched as part of the broader EIP INVEST Essex Innovation Programme which supports entrepreneurs and companies that have innovative products and services.

Over the next six months, IfM ECS is looking to begin mentoring engagements with 50 Essex-based manufacturing companies who have fewer than 250 employees. Companies who sign up will be given guidance and support free of charge by one of the IfM ECS team of specialist consultants.

IfM ECS played an important part in delivering the successful Essex Manufacturing Innovation and Growth (EMIG) programme. Essex company, RWO Marine, which manufactures high performance equipment for sailing vessels around the world, has already benefited from its expertise as part of the EMIG programme when it needed help to develop designs for a new product that would improve its competitive advantage.

Managing Director, Ron Owen, said, "We were very impressed by the standard of work provided by the programme. A thorough review of the market was carried out by IfM Education and Consultancy Services which provided detailed analysis of the competition. Most importantly we were given an independent perspective on the development of the product."

The company is now considering another project that they would like to work on with EIP INVEST Essex and IfM ECS.

The new mentoring programme will help companies to:

- Understand and prioritise their business-wide development needs
- Identify which markets and products to focus on, and how to compete
- Enable business growth through new products delivered on-time and on-budget
- Decide how and where to make products, and how to improve quality, cost, and delivery
- Decide whether and how to grow revenues through product-related services

Dr Derek Ford, who heads the IfM ECS's team supporting SMEs and start-up companies, said: "We are delighted to be working with Essex County Council on this programme. We have a team of very experienced practitioners who will be working with companies to improve their businesses and increase economic activity in the county. The team has a strong record of helping firms to grow revenues and profits – and of helping safeguard existing jobs and creating new ones."

For further information on the Essex Innovation Programme:

<http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/services/overview/sme/essex/>

Notes for Editors

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IfM Education and Consultancy Services Limited

IfM ECS is wholly-owned by the University of Cambridge. It disseminates the Institute for Manufacturing's research and education outputs to industry and government through education, consultancy, events, and publications.

The University of Cambridge's Institute for Manufacturing (IfM) is a division of the Department of Engineering. The IfM brings together expertise in management, economics and technology to address the full spectrum of industrial issues. Its activities integrate research and education with practical application in companies, providing a unique environment for the creation of new ideas and approaches to modern industrial practice. The IfM works closely with industry, at a Regional, national and international level, providing strategic, technical and operational expertise to help companies to grow and to become more competitive.