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For immediate release

New programme of support launched to help small and medium manufacturers build better businesses and generate sustainable growth

IfM Education and Consultancy Services (IfM ECS) Limited, the dissemination arm of the University of Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing (IfM), has launched a UK-wide programme of support for small and medium sized manufacturing businesses, following the success of recent projects in the Midlands and East of England.

The projects demonstrate that firms ambitious to build better businesses can increase their revenues, create employment and boost profitability. These benefits have been achieved across a range of sectors including chemical treatment, electronics, food, instrumentation and materials handling. Examples of improvements include increments of between 25% and 100% in revenue per employee.

Dr Derek Ford who leads the small business team at IfM ECS said "The programme recognises that SME senior managers work 'in' the business - typically leading Sales, Operations or Finance - and have little time to work 'on' the business to identify how the firm can best develop and grow. Our programme is designed to focus on the parts of the business that will really make a difference, using the minimum of time and resources."

The launch of the programme coincides with the recent Government Growth Summit where the need to boost growth in the UK manufacturing is top of the agenda.

Building on research and education outputs from the Institute for Manufacturing which have been configured specifically for manufacturing SMEs, the programme applies efficient, structured and results-oriented approaches that are accessible to managers in manufacturing SMEs. The programme requires only 12-to-20 days of engagement with the IfM ECS facilitator over a period of nine months to one-and-a-half years to achieve real improvements to the business.

Engagement for a manufacturing SME typically consists of three stages:

1. Prioritisation, which reveals top priority areas for the company, and a tailored action plan to develop capabilities and achieve real improvement
2. Business Strategy, which often identifies new market or product opportunities; how the firm should compete; and an action plan for implementing the strategy
3. Capability Development, which helps build the firm's ability to:
 - o win orders, such as through superior delivery performance or by offering distinctive customer value, and
 - o manage constraints to growth, such as demand, cash or supply, more effectively

IfM ECS's facilitators have many years of senior manufacturing management experience (often as operations director, general manager or owner). The facilitators take a collaborative approach, working closely with each company in order to transfer know-how and build capabilities.

Rob Dale, Managing Director of Dale Foods said, "The team at the IfM ECS are great to work with and bring years of practical experience as well as excellent academic and theoretical underpinning to the table. We look forward to working closely with them over the coming years".

Extensive experience has been gained from working successfully with hundreds of business across the country and most recently in the Midlands and East of England as part of publicly funded initiatives, such as the Essex Manufacturing Innovation & Growth Programme (EMIG).

David Adlington, Head of Enterprise, Essex County Council noted, "Through our 3 year partnership with IfM ECS we have delivered the Essex Manufacturing Innovation and Growth programme (EMIG) to over 100 manufacturers in Essex, enabling them to realise their aspirations to develop and grow their business."

Following the positive impact of the projects in the Midlands and East of England, IfM ECS is now offering its SME support services across the UK, with experienced facilitators based in the North and North West, the Midlands, Wales, South and East England. A new guide to the programme is now available from IfM ECS, entitled 'Help For Smaller Manufacturers'. Please email ifm-enquiries@eng.cam.ac.uk for a free copy.

Notes for Editors

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IfM Education and Consultancy Services Limited

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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.

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