



PROUD TO SUPPORT MAKERS, CREATORS AND INNOVATORS

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Guy Atkins, Managing Director, JoBird

JOBIRD

JoBird is an internationally recognised leader in the design and manufacture of lifesaving and fire safety equipment storage. Established in 1986, the business came about as the result of a need to store the vital fire fighting clothing it was selling into difficult and inhospitable environments.

Now, having expanded and selling globally into more than 30 countries around the world, JoBird manufactures 90% of its composite cabinet products in the UK and has won the Queen's Award for Enterprise: Innovation 2018 and International Trade in 2013.

Guy Atkins, Managing Director, sits on Make UK's Regional Membership Board and the business has been a Make UK member for more than 5 years. “What is great for us as a small business of 25 employees is that we have ‘equal access’ within Make UK. Make UK supports some extremely large organisations and can attract speakers of the highest profile but, when we all get together, we are treated the same.

“As a business whose mission is to help protect lives globally, it is beneficial to access these large organisations, as we sell indirectly into some of the world's largest oil and gas companies.”

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT BREXIT

"It's not all about Brexit." Words you don't hear too often at the moment but, like many companies, JoBird has numerous other business issues that they are exposed to as a result of exporting to so many countries. The wider support when it comes to tackling these non-Brexit issues can be refreshing.

"Our custom-made products are supplied to places where conditions can be as extreme as 200 mile an hour winds in Australia, or minus 40-degree temperatures in Kazakhstan, and risks like political uncertainty in the Gulf, changing oil prices and currency fluctuations can affect us long-term." Guy welcomes the chance to participate in discussions with other Make UK members and speakers like the Bank of England.

He also finds the opportunity to visit fellow members' businesses fascinating. "I'm able to tap into useful manufacturing skills and knowledge. With exposure to a diverse range of manufacturing companies in other sectors, sometimes there are lessons to be learned in places that aren't necessarily obvious."



Guy Atkins, Managing Director, JoBird

THE NEED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

JoBird has taken on their first Apprentice in Composite Engineering, Guy reflected on how the country needs to bring young people, with a new generation of skills, into the workforce.

And, as the business stands on the cusp of Lean manufacturing, JoBird has invested in an R&D Manager's role, having sponsored an Engineering Doctorate at University of Bristol. "As a country we need to increase productivity via skills and investment," said Guy, who was delighted by the level of enthusiasm shown by the university when it came to working with a small business.

"There is an untapped knowledge base which exists within SMEs, but most SMEs aren't aware of what the universities can offer them. If universities could just reach out to small businesses, especially those that don't usually have an R&D function, they could create a pathway to fast-track learning."

GREAT BRITISH MANUFACTURING

Guy believes that the UK is finally turning a corner and that engineers are slowly beginning to receive the recognition that they deserve, and he is keen to see more positivity within the industry.

"The work that Make UK does to celebrate, support and champion UK manufacturing, is essential.

"When I go overseas the UK is seen as a large, trustworthy, manufacturing country with integrity and a reputation for quality. We need to be proud of our manufacturing and not underestimate what we are capable of."

At Make UK we've been providing our members with the influence, insight and connections to help them grow for more than 120 years.

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