

Acoustica: a company that's never standing still

Innovative noise control firm welcomed to Fan Valley

A big noise in the sound control industry, Acoustica Manufacturing, moved to Easter Park this summer bringing with it a passion for innovation. Irene Kettle discovers why the company which counts Rolls Royce, British Airways, General Motors, Glaxo Smith Kline, Thames Water, Tyco Oil & Gas, UK Ministry of Defence, Proctor & Gamble, Tesco and the United States Air Force among its clients decided to move to Colchester.

Just 24 hours after receiving the keys to their new Head Office and Centre of Excellence at Easter Park, Acoustica had made its first delivery. The consignment was to fan manufacturer Fläkt Woods next door in Axial Way.

Fläkt Woods is a major customer of Acoustica and one of the reasons for the move from Romsey, Southampton to what MD Russell Wheeler says is known as Fan Valley.

"We are here for Fläkt Woods and the fact that the A12 in our industry is known as Fan Valley (like Silicon Valley!). The name is because of Fläkt Woods who has been here 100 years and other businesses which seem to cluster in this area. At Sudbury, for example, there is a sound research firm who do our testing in an acoustics lab - they have the lowest background noise in the UK. We used to work with Matthews & Yates so we have been sending our product to Colchester every day for years. We realised we were sending a 40ft truck or someone from our team every day to Fläkt Woods from Southampton so we thought about the move."

Specialist engineering company Acoustica don't just deal with fans. They are involved in the control of industrial and environmental noise and vibration. Their success is attributed to a passion for innovation. After years of research, testing and experience the company have designed and developed a wide range of innovative solutions which they manufacture themselves.

"Our culture is one of continual improvement and innovation, which is a result of investing time, training and enthusiasm into talented people," Russell explained. "This success has led to us currently having several patent applications progressing and a

pipeline of unique products planned for launch."

"Research and development is a big part of what we do. A lot of this technology is very old and quite passive and some of the methods have been used for some time so we try and change things. So we have seven products in process. We do that all the time and it is successful."

"You need to innovate in order to lead the industry into new directions and that gives you better opportunity for bigger margins particularly if you can protect your designs. It also means that you are not under threat from low cost countries who struggle in our industry because they are so far away in terms of geography."

Russell says Acoustica can offer excellence in engineering at a fast pace. "The lead times are so compressed in the type of product that we produce that they are six to eight weeks away by ship in China and we have always delivered the finished product by then. We never do anything in any more than eight weeks and that can include design and manufacturing."

Acoustica has always manufactured its own products. This has led to a diverse and specialist manufacturing expertise using the latest CAD CAM and material resource planning systems to manage internal processes including CNC punching, CNC metal spinning, CNC folding and welding. All components are manufactured using computer numerically controlled equipment.

The company carries out acoustic surveys in accordance with ISO standards and offers a design service for detailed acoustic analysis prior to construction, in order to mitigate potential noise problems.

They also offer a full site surveying team and project manage the site installation of many solutions, including full health and safety compliance and risk assessment service.

Russell has been in the industry for 12 years and with Acoustica since it started four years ago.

"We really have a bond and a co-destiny relationship."

The assembly lines are in Easter Park and the next few months will see more equipment being moved into the new 32,000 sq ft factory which has plenty of room for the expansion Russell envisages. "This site gives us lots of capacity to grow and over the next few years we expect the number of employees to increase quite significantly," he said.

Initially 30 people will be employed in Colchester, with up to ten of those transferring and there will be lots of capacity to grow over the next few years and we expect that to grow quite significantly. Nationwide deliveries will be made from Colchester.

The proximity to Fläkt Woods, which gave Acoustica an award for excellent performance last year, will also bring more joint working and growth.

"We really have a bond and a co-destiny relationship. We have already developed some products with them that they are now launching globally."

Now Acoustica is in Colchester there is no excuse not to consult them about any noise and vibration problems and let them engineer a solution.

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