

AMADA machines get Skillcraft fired-up for business

When SKILLCRAFT PRODUCTS LTD launched its business in 2019, the company deduced there was only one option for its sheet metal processing machinery: AMADA. Today, with a number of AMADA machines fully operational at the company's Wednesbury facility in the West Midlands, Skillcraft is going from strength to strength in the UK and is expanding its reach overseas.

Leveraging a strategy of ongoing investment and expansion, Skillcraft is both an OEM with its own portfolio of wood-fired ovens and a subcontractor that provides a full range of services to the sheet metal and fabrication industries.

“Our wood-fired ovens are doing exceptionally well, but first and foremost we are sheet metal workers,” confirms managing director and company founder Dave Gilbert, a man with over 30 years of industry experience. “We do a lot of subcontract design and manufacture for many sectors, which represents 70% of our business, as opposed to 30% for our Inferno range of wood-fired ovens. However, **our oven business is growing fast and attracting a lot of attention, largely because we make them here in the UK, using AMADA machines, rather than import them from abroad.**”

Skillcraft is very much a family invested business, with Mr Gilbert's wife, Lisa, son, three daughters and two son-in-laws all taking up roles within the company. Even the family's English bulldog 'Ozzie' serves as Skillcraft's official mascot, heralding the company's pride as a UK manufacturer.

“We subscribe to the 'Made in Britain' campaign as we feel it's a really important message,” says Mr Gilbert. “Until recently, if I went to buy a product, I never used to check its origin of manufacture. But I'm starting to look now and I think many others are doing the same. After all, making our products here on AMADA machines is not only about pride, it also avoids import tariffs and extra administration post-Brexit, while also minimising our carbon footprint through fewer transport miles. People are becoming more aware.”



Ozzie the English Bulldog
- Skillcraft's official mascot

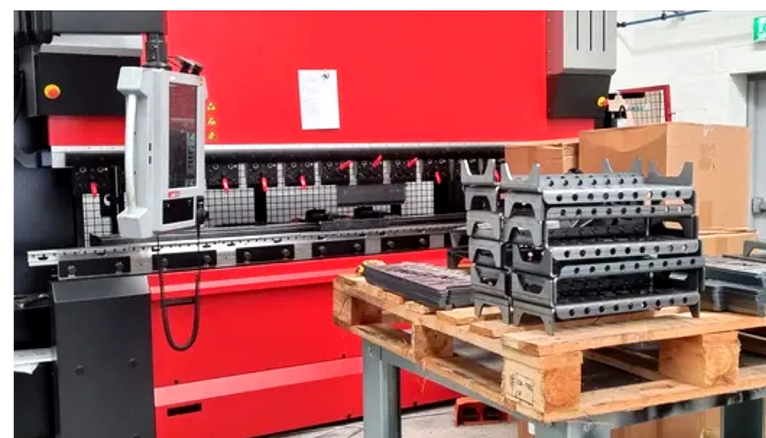


Aside from the manufacture of wood-fired ovens, the subcontract business at Skillcraft is booming. Industries such as HVAC, construction, catering equipment, storage solutions, road traffic management and acoustic engineering are all performing strongly. The company has even secured a notable military contract that is set to ramp up significantly over the coming 12 months. All of this makes for considerable progress in Skillcraft's 4 short years of trading.

"At first, we set up Skillcraft in a small rented unit, working there at weekends," explains Mr Gilbert, who soon took to the role full time. "We put any money we made towards new equipment and recruiting people, which prompted our relocation to a bigger unit in Wednesbury."

He goes on to explain what led him to AMADA's door for his production machinery: "In my previous roles, I've always bought AMADA. However, because it was now my own money, I took a careful look around the market to see if I could get even more value elsewhere, but **I couldn't beat AMADA**. They are a very safe pair of hands, offering reliable, competitive machines that help maximise productivity and uptime, supported by trustworthy back-up whenever required. It's the industry's best offer and I won't be using anyone else moving forward. We gradually invested in new AMADA machines, one by one. Every time we made some money we used it as a deposit on another machine."

Skillcraft began with an AMADA HFE-5020M2, a 4 axis, 2m, 50T press brake, before investing in a subsequent larger model, an HFE3i-1003, an 8 axis, 3m, 100T machine. The company then installed an AMADA Quattro laser cutting machine, while the most recent addition is an AMADA AE-2510NT punching machine with accompanying tool grinder, AMADA's TOGU-EU2.



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THE MIDLANDS