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Oil and Gas, Petroleum and Polymers

*cogent*

# Cogent Focus

SKILLS, QUALIFICATIONS, COMPETENCE AND INDUSTRY STANDARDS



**NNSA and PINSA success  
Employers back academies**  
pages 2-3

## INSIDE:



**Strategic skills  
projects for industry**  
page 2



**CATCH centre  
official launch**  
page 6



**Diplomas: schools  
now signing up**  
page 8

## From the CEO



Welcome to the second issue of Cogent *Focus* magazine during a period in which workforce development is rising to the top of the Government's agenda.

The strategic review of skills being carried out by Lord Leitch on behalf of the Treasury is due to issue a final report

in December. His conclusion so far is that the UK lacks a "world-class skills base" and that our productivity is significantly lower than our competitor countries. His interim report asserts that our national economic success depends on raising the capacity of staff.

All forecasts show that by 2020 the UK economy will be much more knowledge-intensive and that technology will further take over many areas of business operations. This, says Lord Leitch, means that the UK's economic growth needs to create and in turn will depend on 5m more skilled jobs, with the relative demand for lower skilled employment likely to decline.

Many employers in the Cogent sector are already heavily dependent upon high level skills. Science, technology and engineering underpin their successes and indeed there are 100s of high performing employers in our footprint who are continually moving up the value chain through skills and innovation.

The success stories are many and varied in all parts of the sector: from small firms to global businesses. However, throughout our Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) research, many Cogent sector employers have told us that they face skills shortages and gaps which are immediate and pressing.

Cogent is working hand-in-hand with employers to develop the solutions through collective strategic programmes for skills and recruitment issues that confront them individually, but are not always possible to rectify in isolation. Five key strategic projects we have agreed with industry are now underway.

As we go to press we have also received the news that The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has given the green light to a Process Industries National Skills Academy (PINSAs) and a Nuclear National Skills Academy (NNSA).

Cogent submitted the bids working with and on behalf of the industries. We are of course delighted that these two Academy bids have been successful, largely through the significant employer support for the projects. This has been in the form of considerable financial commitment and through expertise, input and collective employer determination to make the Academy vision a reality.

This vision is to provide a focus for excellence in workforce skills development. Employers have said that they want a Skills Academy that will provide national leadership and will move employers and employees from their current level of skills to those which are increasingly needed to prosper and remain competitive.

Employers and employees recognise that training and development is something that needs to be continuous throughout employment. Cogent will work with industry and through the new Academies to ensure that the very best and most appropriate qualifications, standards and training programmes are in place and that they are accessible and meet the real needs of business today.

Joanna Woolf  
CEO

# Cogent skills a

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has given the green light to a Process Industries National Skills Academy (PINSAs) and a Nuclear National Skills Academy (NNSA). The new Academies will go live at the end of 2007.

Cogent submitted the bids working with and on behalf of employers in the industries. Joanna Woolf said: "Cogent is delighted that these bids have been successful. We have worked in close collaboration with employers as

well as all the regional agencies and employer cluster organisations to reach this stage. These important partnerships will remain in place as we move forward."

Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills said: "Raising skills is essential to wealth creation and creating a society of opportunity for all. The National Skills Academy programme will improve our capacity for learning by driving up standards and specialisation with the learning sector."

The vision for the academies is

### Paul Londesborough, Vice President of GSK Pharmaceuticals:

"By committing to this opportunity for the sector, process industry employers are making a major contribution to raising productivity and performance now and in the future. Our industries have a long tradition of investing in training and PINSAs will bring a tremendous boost to this."

### Stan Higgins, CEO of the North East Process Industry Cluster (NEPIC):

"It is absolutely vital for our industries to be able to recruit and produce people with the right competencies and skills to enable the economy to grow. PINSAs is therefore an essential project for the industry in the UK."

## Skills agreement mov

### Strategic Programmes Up and Running

Cogent is finalising its Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) following months of research and consultation. This agreement represents a long-term relationship between employers and stakeholders to deliver relevant skills, training and development to employers in the chemicals, pharmaceuticals, nuclear, oil and gas, petroleum and polymer industries.

The action plan is based on the assessment of current and future skills needs, as well as current training and education provision. Five key programmes for the sector have been drawn up:

- 1. Cogent Careers Pathway:** Cogent is developing a "One Stop Shop" web-based careers information and guidance centre. This will include career pathways, profiles, case studies and role



Cogent Chairman John Beacham (right) with Skills Minister Phil Hope at an SSA event to mark Cogent SSA progress

# Academies get the go ahead

to provide a focus for excellence in workforce skills development. Employers are already taking the lead in the management of the Academies and a share of the funding during start-up. Both PINSA and the NNSA have already received significant pledges of funding from employers for the first three years. Long term the academies will be self funding.

In return, employers will be able to drive the skills agenda for their industries. For the first time they will be able to design skills development programmes specific to their needs on a national scale and have them

delivered in a way that suits them: on site, online or through a network of Centres of Excellence as well as nationally or regionally.

Skills Academies are a critical delivery route for the Cogent Sector Skills Agreement (SSA). Put simply, this Agreement is a compact between employers, training providers and government. Employers lay out their workforce and skills requirements and in return, the providers and government agree to deliver and fund training tailored to this need, subject to employers' commitment to the training.

## The Academies will:

- deliver high quality training based on world class standards;
- build networks with a range of existing learning providers, so that new approaches and higher standards are shared across the sector and with other SSCs, and benefit both employees and employers;
- provide leading edge teaching in a modern learning environment;
- establish centres of innovation aimed at shaping training programmes to meet the sectors' needs;
- be flexible, working closely with employers;
- be part of the formal education system; deliver to SMEs through regional clusters.

### Glyn Hughes, CEO of Humber Chemical Focus:

"The process industries sector skills needs can't be met unless a true partnership between the public and private sector groups is in place. Creation of PINSA is a key national milestone in this journey."

### Chris Ashcroft, General Manager of Chemicals Northwest:

"As the region with the largest concentration of firms and employment, we have worked hard with Cogent and our colleagues from other regions to make this a reality. Skills issues dominate the arena now and into the future."

### Jane Mockford, CEO of Yorkshire Chemical Focus:

"Skills development is vital to meet the future needs of chemistry based businesses. The partnership between public and private sector groups through PINSA is a first key step on this journey."



## es into delivery phase

models. Please go to [www.cogent-ssc.com](http://www.cogent-ssc.com) give us your feedback on the site which is in development.

### 2. Cogent Upskilling Programme:

Cogent is developing a programme that allows employees' existing skills to be recognised. It is a modular approach with accreditation against national standards.

### 3. Cogent Apprenticeship Programme:

Cogent is developing an Apprenticeship framework which is setting a clear standard for our industries with the appropriate balance of generic and industry specific skills.

### 4. Cogent Competence Framework:

Cogent is building on existing guidelines to develop a best-practice competence assurance standard for the sector.

### 5. Cogent Industry Passports:

Cogent is undertaking a comprehensive review of passports for contractors, identifying gaps in existing provision and putting appropriate and streamlined passport arrangements in place.

Cogent Director of Research Liz Rooney said: "The SSA process is laying the foundations for tremendous performance and economic success. Employers have made their skills and recruitment requirements very clear."

Stuart Harrison, UKAEA HR Business Compliance Manager added: "With the changing business environment that the sector faces, UKAEA very much support the efforts Cogent is making to provide career pathways and demonstrable and transferable accredited skills. This is a highly skilled sector and as such warrants this significant attention to ensure UK plc remains at the forefront of business development in this area."

Philip Marchant, Marchant Manufacturing also added his support: "The SSA is the first step in providing the polymer industry with the career structure and skill improvement programme that we have been asking for. The industry now has to make sure that it works and that we make full use of it for the benefit of our employees and companies."

**Tony Blair, Prime Minister:** "It is vital that we continue to improve skills right across the board. The new National Skills Academies are an exciting partnership between Government and industry to ensure we have the well-trained staff needed for the future."

**David Bonser, Director, BNFL:** "It is vital that the education and training provision we require is led by the needs of the nuclear industry. The challenges of the NDA programme and of new build and operation will add to demand for high quality training for much of the workforce. A National Skills Academy means that employers will be able to determine the programmes on offer."

## Building the PINSA team

**Cogent is currently advertising vacancies for PINSA – including a Project Director and Project Managers.**

Cogent is seeking innovative, clear-thinking and influential candidates, with an exceptional record of achievement and an understanding of industry's needs. Interested candidates should contact Jo Fish, Veena Bhatti or Peter Addison-Child at Navigate Group on 0870 240 6800.

Please go to [www.pinsateam.co.uk](http://www.pinsateam.co.uk) for more information.

# NDA gains new role in waste disposal

**The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has welcomed its extended role as the single UK body responsible for implementing geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste. The decision, announced by UK, Scottish and Welsh Environment Ministers, widens the NDA's remit to now oversee the full cycle of nuclear waste management and disposal.**

NDA Chief Executive, Dr Ian Roxburgh, said: "We welcome this decision as it heralds a new era for nuclear waste management in the UK, setting out a clear path towards deep geological disposal as supported by the NDA.

"We are pleased to take on the responsibility for providing a national integrated approach towards the recovery, treatment, storage, transportation and ultimate disposal of the UK's higher activity radioactive waste. This builds on our existing accountability under the Energy Act for low level waste disposal.

He added: "The NDA continues to work hard to build trust for safe and environmentally responsible nuclear site clean-up, and there are clear benefits in terms of knowledge and accountability for us taking



on similar responsibility for waste disposal. We already work in an open and transparent way and we will ensure we continue to do so in taking forward the challenge Government has set us to plan and develop a geological disposal facility."

John Haddon, Cogent Nuclear Industry Skills Director said: "Nuclear employers will be very pleased to hear that responsibility for waste disposal has now been given to the

NDA. This is a challenging task, and Cogent offers its full support.

"It will require both nuclear and conventional engineering and science skills and these requirements must be borne in mind looking to the industry's future. Cogent will continue with its remit for the development of accredited qualifications and frameworks to assist in this important programme of work."

## Government announces plans for a national nuclear laboratory

**The future of BNFL's nuclear clean-up and research arms have been announced by the Government, as it approved plans to break up and sell British Nuclear Group and announced its intention to establish a new National Nuclear Laboratory.**

The new National Nuclear Laboratory will be formed out of the British Technology Centre at Sellafield and Nexia Solutions, the research company currently owned by BNFL.

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Alistair Darling said, "We have looked at how to best safeguard the UK's key nuclear R&D skills and capabilities to ensure that our future requirements are met.

"The National Nuclear Laboratory will play a key role in supporting the UK's R&D requirements, and operate world-class facilities. As the market for the provision for R&D skills develops, the NNL will ensure key skills are safeguarded and enhanced, part of which will entail the NNL playing a key role in the development of the UK's R&D supply base."

John Haddon, Cogent's Skills Director for the Nuclear industry added: "This facility will protect the R&D skills Britain has in the sector, particularly around decommissioning and the fuel cycle, and we are delighted that the government has been able to make the commitment. It will also contribute to and support the NDA in its new role of managing nuclear waste."

## World class gold standard set to boost skills

**The Cogent DTI funded initiative the "Chemical Gold Standard" has now identified the key skills and competency requirements for the core roles in the sector, based on world-class industry standards. This follows a major consultation exercise with chemicals and pharmaceuticals employers, who have made clear their skills needs now and in the future.**

The Gold Standard defines the skills, competencies and qualifications required for a world-class chemicals and pharmaceuticals industry. It means that employers can benchmark their job roles against an industry recognised and endorsed standard. They will then be able to better define their skill needs and make clear what kind of training provision they require. All of this can then be dovetailed with available funding.

The templates for Process Technician Level 3 and Craft Technician Level 3 are now complete and have been fully endorsed by the Gold Standard employer working group. These aspirational templates encompass the qualifications,



knowledge, skills and competencies required in three key areas critical to these key roles:

- Improving Productivity
- Licence to Operate (safety, health and environment, SHE)
- Innovation

The templates use existing qualifications and standards, and the process has identified a need for a number of new accredited qualifications in some areas including business improvement and Safety Health and Environment (SHE). Developments are now underway to modify or enhance existing course programmes so that they meet the rigorous requirements of the Gold Standard.

Cogent is now keen to implement

the Gold Standard across all key job roles and at all levels, and to work with the industry to ensure that the standard is maintained by aligning it with rigorous competence assurance processes which ensure that the role profiles are always completely current.

Cogent CEO Joanna Woolf said: "The Gold Standard is key to driving forward Cogent's upskilling programme. Of the 38,000 Cogent sector employees in England said to have skill gaps, 41 per cent are in Process and Plant Operative occupations – the core workforce of our sector. This issue is particularly pressing as approximately 75 per cent of today's workforce will still be in employment in 2020."

Tony Birch, Director, BASF said: "The need for upskilling around technical skills and on core behavioural skills such as communications, business improvement, customer service and the ability to work in teams is something which is recognised and is being taken forward by the industry. The Gold Standard provides the framework for this and will ensure a world class approach." **For more information contact [rob.bevan@kogent-ssc.com](mailto:rob.bevan@kogent-ssc.com)**



## Cogent inducts train to gain brokers

**Cogent** has delivered a series of induction presentations to newly appointed Train to Gain Skills Brokers to highlight sector skills needs, qualifications available and contracted Education and Training providers able to offer services to employers in the sector. The sessions cover all the English regions.

Cogent Skills Director, Bill Erskine, who is overseeing the project, said: "This forms part of an initiative that aims to bring the maximum benefits of the Government's Train to Gain programme and the associated funding support to employers in the sector."

Working closely with an experienced Train to Gain Skills Broker, employers can provide quality, affordable training for employees. Brokers will work with employers to:

- Identify the skills the business needs
- Advise on relevant training providers
- Agree a tailored training package
- Identify available funding
- Review progress with implementation

To contact a Skills Broker in your area please call 08000 15 55 45. For more information go to [www.train2ogain.gov.uk](http://www.train2ogain.gov.uk)

# OPITO agreement for upstream industry

**The Offshore Oil and Gas Industry** is included within Cogent's footprint and as part of its strategy of providing focused services into the industry Cogent and its subsidiary OPITO, (which is based in Aberdeen), have agreed to delegate complete authority and responsibility for ascertaining and responding to the training and skills needs of the UK Upstream Oil and Gas Industry to OPITO.

Cogent will continue to interface with the Government and the appropriate stakeholders regarding UK policy and government education and skills provision, while OPITO will continue to work with employers to deliver the specific needs of the Oil and Gas Industry.

OPITO CEO David Doig said: "OPITO benefits from significant



brand recognition in both the domestic and international markets. The real strength of OPITO is its connectivity with the upstream industry both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

"By listening to industry employers we gain a clear

understanding of the Emergency Response and Technical skills that are needed in the workplace now, as well as those anticipated in the future."

For more information visit [www.opito.net](http://www.opito.net)

## New owners for PICME

**Manchester-based engineering and consultancy company Haden Freeman has acquired PICME, the Process Industry Centre for Manufacturing Excellence, from the Chemical Industries Association.**

PICME was originally set up in 2001, with DTI backing, with the aim of helping UK manufacturers of chemicals, pharmaceuticals, plastics and rubber to improve their competitiveness and efficiency.

Haden Freeman says the purchase will complement its

wide portfolio of engineering and business support services. Operating as an independent business unit with the HFL group, it will continue to deliver its government funded productivity programmes and develop its existing partnerships, including its work with Cogent around Business Improvement Techniques (BIT).

"I am delighted that PICME's contribution to the sustainability of Cogent industries has been secured. The delivery of BIT to our employers is key to ensuring that they remain

competitive," says Rob Bevan, Cogent, Chemical Sector Skills Director.

"We have watched PICME grow and develop and very much admire its people-based approach to process improvement," says Nigel Hirst, MD of HFL.

Welcoming the new owners, PICME Chief Executive Michael Glass said: "Haden Freeman will allow us to further build our capacity and continue to deliver outstanding results and significant returns for clients."

## Oil storage task group announces recommendations

**The Standards Task Group, comprised of representatives from Trade Associations engaged in the storage of petroleum products at major locations subject to COMAH regulations and the Competent Authority charged with their regulation, has announced its initial recommendations designed to enhance safety and environmental standards at these sites.**

Chairman of the Task Group Ken Rivers said, "Since its formation in June, the forty or more people directly involved in the Task Group have worked hard to identify best practice to enhance safety at major petroleum storage terminals, particularly those

receiving petrol via pipeline. The Task Group's programme has resulted in immediate actions to be taken and work to produce enhanced industry guidelines."

He continued "Petroleum products play a vital role in the day-to-day life of everybody and confidence in the safety of the industry's operations is paramount. The immediate actions recommended by the Task Group to review equipment and operations in key areas will contribute to ensuring safety-critical systems function to a high standard."

Cogent is now involved with the Oil Storage Standards Task Group and will be supporting the skills issues arising from the actions recommended by the group.



The Buncefield Standards Task Group was established in June 2006 in the aftermath of the explosion and fire at Hertfordshire Oil Storage Limited (HOSL) Buncefield terminal

in December 2005, to make recommendations to enhance safety and environmental standards at major petroleum storage facilities.

# CATCH open for business

The £8m CATCH (Centre for the Assessment of Technical Competence - Humber) was formally opened for business at the end of September by Sir Digby Jones.

CATCH represents an £8 million investment and is the most modern chemical industry training facility in the country. It provides the region with a unique opportunity to safely train and assess employees on large scale industrial equipment. It offers huge benefits for the practical training of apprentices and employers can also use CATCH to upskill and assess the skills of existing staff.

The need to provide employees with the skills and enthusiasm to work in the chemical industry is a pressing issue in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Too few young people are coming forward, and the nature of the industry can make it particularly difficult to provide training on-the-job.

## Academy boost for signmaking

The Roland Academy, based at Walsall College, provides the first industry accredited training programme in the UK for the display graphics and sign making industries. It is a partnership between the college and digital technology giant Roland DG that aims to enhance digital sign making.

Brian Manning, Cogent's Skills Expert for Polymers said: "This partnership is bringing together some of the more progressive thinking in industry and education, and it is enormously important. This type of initiative ensures greater sustainability of the facilities and provides technically competent and relevant provision for the industry."

The Roland Academy addresses the needs of the graphics industry for dedicated, professional education and training. The Academy is based in a purpose designed facility in Birmingham which is equipped with the latest Roland systems and staffed by professional educators.

The new Academy is the latest in a series of strategic partnerships established by Walsall College, which is committed to developing leading edge skills that will be of benefit to business.



CATCH is designed to help bridge the skills gap, by providing a real life work environment. Although with water being pumped instead of chemicals, safety concerns are minimised.

Clive Rounce, CATCH General Manager, who is responsible for commissioning and running the site explains, "It's a complete work environment, with indoor and outdoor work areas fully equipped with process equipment donated by local industry, together with training workshops and conference facilities. It means that people can come in and train under actual 'Permit To Work Conditions,' and practice a whole range of work activities without risk. Apprentices and other learners have the chance to get real hands-on

experience of live liquid circuits in safety."

Gareth James, Cogent Board member, Chairman of Humber Chemical Focus (HCF) and Works

General Manager of the BP European Acetyls site at Saltend, Hull, added: "Skills and training, is the biggest long term issue facing our industry and

one that HCF is working hard to address. Employers face a number of challenges: we are continuing to see a decline in the number of students interested in studying science and for the last ten years we have also seen huge reductions in traditional apprenticeship schemes. HCF's great achievement in the skills arena is that by working with and through others it has brought us CATCH."

Cogent CEO, Joanna Woolf attended the launch, she said: "CATCH is addressing a pressing issue: skills shortages which are being experienced here and now. It is a huge boost for employers who represent an industry that generates more than 25 per cent of the Humber manufacturing output, providing highly skilled and well paid employment and supporting many more jobs in the engineering contractor and other support industries."

For more information visit [www.catch-uk.org](http://www.catch-uk.org)



## Scottish skills fund pays for learning

Individuals who are over 18 and living in Scotland can get up to £200 towards the cost of learning new skills with an individual learning account from ILA Scotland.

ILA Scotland is a Scottish

### Preparation for Work Programme:

Cogent is developing a Preparation for Work Programme aimed at secondary school pupils in remote areas of the Scottish Islands wishing to enter the world of work in industries within the Cogent footprint. This project fits into two of Cogent's "big ticket" items Career Pathways and the Apprenticeship Programme.

Executive scheme which helps people pay for learning that they can do at a time, place, pace and in a way that suits them. Individuals earning £15,000 or less could get up to £200 per year towards the cost of learning. Those earning more than £15,000 a year could get up to £100 a year.

Liz Rooney, Cogent's Director of Research and Policy said; "For our employers and employees, there is an offer of funding for a wide variety of health and safety modules, as well as engineering and administration related provision. The funding does not discriminate on company size or the individual's qualification level."

There are a wide range of courses available – call 0808 100 1090 for more details or go to [www.ilascotland.org.uk](http://www.ilascotland.org.uk).

## Wales skills survey

Cogent's industry skills profile project for the chemical refining, storage and polymers sectors in South Wales is moving into the final phase. It is identifying critical skills gaps in those sectors and will present the outcomes of the research to employers upon completion of the final report.

Mike Lynham Cogent Skills Director for Wales said: "We have asked Cogent employers to provide feedback about their future skills and training requirements for this important project which we are running in partnership with the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills part of the Welsh Assembly Government (DELLS).

"We are currently collating and analysing this data and will use it to seek support for providing the training provision which will enable employers to become more successful and productive in the future."

## Skills for energy gains momentum

**Cogent CEO Joanna Woolf told the audience at the EEEGR summer conference that the drive to ensure that the East of England's energy industry has the skilled staff it needs for success has "got off to a really good start."**

Joanna, who is Chair of the Skills for Energy Programme for the East of England, launched the programme the day after the inaugural meeting of the Skills for Energy Management Group.

She told the conference that there was keen competition for young people and skills across the board and, when it came to skills, the region reflected the Cogent national picture. Almost half the workforce (46 per cent) was aged 45 and over, 28 per cent of workers were due to retire in the next 10 years and only 5 per cent were under 25.

The Skills for Energy Programme is already starting to have an effect in the region by pursuing three strands: appealing to young people; making it easy for people to join from outside the industry; and upskilling the current workforce.

Project teams have now been formed and much work has already been done by the Sector Skills Councils, Cogent, ECITB and EU Skills.

Joanna said: "There's a great representation from local industry and businesses but there is still a lot of work to do. It's just the start of what I think could be an extremely effective board driving the skills agenda forward in the East of England. It's got to be an industry agenda that we work on to make sure we're addressing the right priorities and the right problems."

David Wilkinson, Skills for Energy Programme Co-ordinator, agreed. He said: "The East of England Skills for Energy programme has already made considerable progress since its inception. As a result of significant input from the Energy Industry a new strategic approach to tackle key issues for the industry and the region, to be published in November 2006, will deliver a targeted and sustainable approach to skills, training, recruitment and sector attraction in the East of England through to 2008 and beyond."

## CASE STUDY

# Making upskilling advances in signs

**Allen Signs Ltd of Lincoln specialises in the design and manufacture of a diverse range of signs and vehicle livery for use in road traffic, industry, commerce, education and professional sectors, supplying both national and local companies.**

This family owned company set up business over forty years ago and focuses on personal service based on the traditional values of good customer care. Key to its success to date is having a team of expert staff with in-house manufacturing capabilities. Allen Signs employs 13 members of staff. People are at the heart of the business – as reflected by the commitment to achieving IIP status.

David Allen has recently taken over the reins from his father who retired this summer. He has worked closely with Cogent SSC Sector Skills Development Director Bill Erskine to be able to pursue his own personal leadership development in preparation for this new challenge.

As a small business and employer – companies such as Allen Signs Ltd who employ less than 50 employees, make up almost 99 per cent of the 3.8 million businesses across the United Kingdom. Research shows that being a manager of a small business can be the most demanding but yet rewarding of jobs. However issues of leadership, survival and innovation all constantly compete for attention.

An initiative designed to help the micro or small business owners or managers was piloted during 2005 by the Skills for Business Network. Although based on tried and trusted action learning techniques, it needed to be tuned into the small business environment and their needs. Recognising this as an opportunity for David Allen's own personal development, Cogent's Bill Erskine approached him with the invitation to take part in one of the pilots in nearby Nottingham.

Participants were asked to attend a series of workshops run over a period of four to five months. All were asked to bring a real leadership business problem to the programme.

Individual participants on the pilots have since described personal improvements in many areas, including a better work-life balance, improved time management, greater confidence to change the company, improved delegation, increased personal motivation and instigating new initiatives to improve staff motivation.

David Allen believes one of the advantages of taking part in the pilot was being able to share business problems with other managers or owners. Although fellow participants were not in the same business, many of the leadership issues experienced were similar, irrespective of the business sector.

On a personal level, he found he now recognises his own strengths and trusts the decisions he makes. "I am more confident at leading staff and managing day to day problems. For example I recently moved one employee into a role that best suited their skills and gave them more responsibility. I am pleased to say that not only is the person doing well with their new challenge, it is in turn helping the business as well.

"I am now in the process of developing business plans for the future as we are keen to see not only our customers coming back again and again but also be able to attract new customers. Through this programme I now realise it is not necessary to know and do every job myself.

"It is my view that leadership and management are quite different and to be an effective leader in addressing problems you need to be able to recognise strengths, whether it be an employee, process or system."



**Alan Merryweather joined Allen Signs six years ago, determined to become a professional signmaker. He has now completed an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship in Signmaking – a process which has taken him five years. This is the top accolade in the Apprenticeship Programme, and one which requires an ongoing commitment.**

**David Allen, Allen Signs Managing Director takes up the story:**

"Alan has worked extremely hard since joining. His advanced Apprenticeship is an excellent achievement. But success did not come overnight. Alan had to complete every detailed stage of the programme and his progress has been underpinned by all his professional work across a range of clients."

Alan's development has given him a wide range of skills and the ability to approach a job in an innovative manner. The scheme has also resulted in increased confidence, excellent attention to detail and has boosted his organisational ability. The next step for Alan is to undertake a management NVQ and to further hone and develop his supervisory and business management skills.



David Allen (left) with Alan Merryweather, assessing dimensions

Alan Merryweather would recommend anyone looking to progress in signmaking to undertake an Apprenticeship. It has been an essential part of building a successful career at Allen Signs.

# 14-19 Diplomas: schools and colleges get on board



The introduction of Diplomas is key to the Government's 14-19 reform. Diplomas will give young people an unprecedented alternative to traditional learning by offering an imaginative and innovative blend of general education and applied learning.

Cogent is involved in the development of two Diplomas: Engineering and Manufacturing – along with a number of other SSCs. The Engineering Diploma has moved into stage 2: this means that work has started in partnership with the Awarding Bodies to develop the syllabus and induction activities for teacher training are underway. The Diploma will go live in September 2008.

The Manufacturing Diploma team is at an earlier stage of development, and a series of consultation events looking at content have taken place during the year. This Diploma will go live in September 2009.

The Department of Education and Skills (DfES) has said that it wants schools, colleges and others to begin to consider now what the Engineering Diploma will mean for them. They will be expected to deliver specialised Diplomas as part of a collaborative local partnership, rather than acting independently.

## Gateway

Those local partnerships who are interested in offering the Diploma from September 2008 will need to pass through a "Gateway" which will



assess their readiness to deliver. Brian Martin, Learner Pathway Planning Manager at Sandwell 14-19 Learning is heavily involved in meeting the Gateway requirements, he said: "The partnership in Sandwell builds on very strong curriculum collaboration amongst employers including training providers, schools, colleges and higher education. We are keen to be at the forefront of developments and have the infrastructure and commitment in place to deliver imaginative diploma programmes for our learners.

"Diploma development groups comprised of staff from a range of institutions and providers are leading the progress to address the Gateway requirements in learning lines."

Minister for Schools, Jim Knight said: "What this country really needs – what employers and universities are crying out for – is people who can think for themselves. Who can reflect, be creative, and persist when things get tough.

"That's exactly what the new diplomas are designed to deliver. By involving

universities as well as employers in the development of the diplomas, we will guarantee that these qualifications will help young people go on to Higher Education as well as out into the workplace. Instead of wearily dusting off their textbooks young people will be able to put their learning into practice in a whole range of ways. This will inspire and motivate them into staying on."

## Further information

More detailed information on the Gateway, can be found at [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk).

This explains how the process works, and how schools, colleges and others can express an interest in taking part.

Employers looking to get involved in the development of these Diplomas can go to:

[www.engineeringdiploma.co.uk](http://www.engineeringdiploma.co.uk)  
[www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk](http://www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk)

**For more information on Cogent's involvement contact [ian.moores@cogent-ssc.com](mailto:ian.moores@cogent-ssc.com)**

## Process skills national event 2007

A major conference for employers in the process industry is set to take place on the 17th July next year. The day will be preceded by a dinner the night before.

The event, which is being held at the National Science Learning Centre at the University of York, is aimed at all those interested in skills and education issues in the process industries. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

Interested parties can contact Leanne McNamara: [leanne@ycf.org.uk](mailto:leanne@ycf.org.uk). Delegates can register at [www.ycf.org.uk/events](http://www.ycf.org.uk/events)

## Closing the skills gap

Find out about the latest developments including PINSA, 'Train to Gain' funding and the latest Apprenticeship options.

This event is being run by Chemicals Northwest and is taking place on 11th January 2007 at the Preston Marriott Hotel, Preston.

For further information contact: [anita.potterill.tilney@chemicalsnorthwest.org.uk](mailto:anita.potterill.tilney@chemicalsnorthwest.org.uk)

## Diploma events for final say!

Two final consultation events for the Manufacturing Diploma are taking place early next year.

30th January 2007 (Leeds)  
 8th February 2007 (London)

This is the last chance to have your say and to give the future qualification your stamp of approval before it is passed to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). To book your place please email your contact details and preferred location to [enquiries@manufacturingdiploma.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@manufacturingdiploma.co.uk).

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