

Engineering and Manufacturing Network



Forging a community with nearly 200 members, a vibrant events programme and a major annual showcase, Engineering and Manufacturing Network (EMN) is one of the North East England's strongest industry organisations and it's going from strength to strength...

In April this year, 124 members of the engineering and manufacturing community – representing SMEs to multinationals – came together to renew relationships, exchange ideas and hear from the Engineering and Manufacturing Network about its plans for 2023 and beyond.

And the sell-out 'Engineers and Manufacturers Assemble' event, held on a Friday morning at Houghton-le-Spring's Rainton Arena, showed just how popular EMN has become with engineering and manufacturing companies who are looking for more than just sales leads from a network...

Incorporated in 2015, EMN is dedicated to supporting businesses and their people in North East England. Its members, from SMEs to PLCs, stretch across the region. EMN helps its members to solve problems and overcome challenges, by combining informed signposting and personal introductions with a knowledgeable community of businesses. This offering is reinforced by a range of EMN affiliate partners specialising in law, HR and recruitment, marketing, finance, business support, IT, software, insurance and wealth management.

EMN also delivers the long established annual EMCON event – formerly known as Oktoberfest – which showcases engineering and manufacturing in North East England and beyond. It attracts hundreds of exhibitors and delegates each year, and is a real flagship for the region.

So why are so many companies - from robotics specialists to fabricators, precision engineering firms to security product manufacturers - drawn to EMN?



"Running a business can be very lonely – sometimes it feels like there is no one to turn to," says Ailsa Anderson, Director of Development of EMN. "We have built a community where people can access impartial advice, share their problems and speak to those who are going through the same things.

"Yes, EMN can help companies create new business opportunities and build awareness – and that is a major part of our offering – but the deep level of support our community provides also makes a difference.

She continues: "We provide a space for sharing knowledge and experience, and create deeper connections across the whole engineering and manufacturing sector in the North East.

"For instance, if members share tips on best manufacturing practice, they may be able to increase operational efficiency, which can in turn reduce their energy use and make their

companies more productive.

"Businesses may also be able to strengthen their local supply chains by engaging with EMN: this can enable them to decrease turnaround times or access critical capabilities and components more effectively.

"And EMN serves the entire engineering and manufacturing community. That means we help all the people who make organisations succeed. Many individuals within businesses – from maintenance personnel to HR, R&D to marketing – can draw on insight and connections."

EMN members benefit from an extensive events programme. The organisation runs an HR Forum lead by recruitment specialist Jackson Hogg; a regular Engineering and Manufacturing Marketers' Meet Up lead by B2B marketing specialist Horizon Works; and the University of Sunderland's North East Maintenance Forum is operated in

partnership with EMN.

The network is also working alongside the Women's Engineering Society Tyne Tees Branch to deliver regular networking events for women in engineering, and runs a Business Leaders Peer Group, where business leaders can address and resolve issues and learn new skills.

These events are complemented by the personal touch from the EMN team, who can help members who need advice – or indeed require a quick solution to a pressing problem – to tap into the network's 'hive mind'.

"You're not afraid to just pick up the phone to the EMN team, or send an email to them and say, 'can anyone help?'," explains Dawn Flynn, Director of Gateshead-based B2B Injection Moulding Ltd, which manufactures thermo plastic injection moulded components and associated product assembly. "You know that someone in the EMN membership is going to be able to help you."

For Richard Egginton, Operations Director at Peterlee-based Sotech, which manufactures engineered metal rainscreen cladding and architectural fabrications, EMN's Peer Group sessions have made a significant difference. He explains: They provide a perfect platform for highlighting real problems and real ideas," he says, "They make you realise that other engineering and manufacturing companies face similar challenges to you." He adds: "British industry can be insular. Through EMN, barriers are broken down. It provides a safe place where people can open up."

As well as providing close support to businesses, EMN has also sparked new collaborations. SMS Tech, for instance, was born in 2021 following a chat at EMCON between Smart Manufacturing Solutions



(SMS), an outsourced service provider for the automotive, locomotive and aerospace manufacturing sectors, and digital transformation specialists Fit Factory.

At EMCON, SMS was able to discuss its expertise in solutions for 'shop floor' operations face to face with Fit Factory in the exhibitor area. The relationship between the two companies flourished and SMS Tech was launched. The company now provides a digital solution to operational areas management, and has already won major contracts across the aerospace, automotive and healthcare sectors.

"EMCON 2021 was crucial for us," says Peter Williams, CEO of SMS Tech and Director of Quality Assurance at SMS. "We go to as many EMN events as possible and have built some great relationships for both SMS and SMS Tech." David Land, Chairman of EMN concludes: "Through EMN, people working in engineering and manufacturing businesses, across all roles, can access impartial peer to peer advice, build new relationships, find new

opportunities, improve performance and gain more market exposure for their companies."



For more information about EMN and how to join, visit <https://emn.org.uk/>

“Our events programme, the EMCON show and our ongoing work on behalf of our members, all contribute to creating a stronger engineering and manufacturing community in North East England, and to building a better future for our region.”

