

## Fibretech – languages come first in recruitment process

*Around 80% of Fibretech's turnover is in export sales, and the Pinxton-based manufacturer of custom-made metallic fibres has firm ideas about the importance of languages in the drive for overseas business.*

### **Language capabilities win business**

Fibretech is a comparatively small company, with an annual turnover of around £2.5m and only 25 employees. Its range of markets, however is impressive: it considers the EU as its home market, but sells its products, mainly for the refractory industry, to countries as far afield as South Africa, Australia, Japan, Korea, India and Iran.

Peter Rooney is the company's MD for the site at Pinxton, near Nottingham. He is in no doubt about the importance of languages for the company's profitability. "We like to make it as easy as possible for our customers to do business with us," he remarks. "Our people are the key to the organisation's success: customers see the person first, not the company, and they often decide whether or not to do business with a company on this basis. Our language skills mean customers can communicate more easily with us; they feel more relaxed. I know for a fact that we have won and retained business because of our language capabilities."

### **Long-term rapport is essential**

For Peter Rooney and his team, relationship-building is critical. Most of their business comes from repeat customers, and establishing long-term rapport is a key element of the marketing strategy. "Languages mean that we have the ability to be proactive in finding new customers or distributors," Peter explains. "Customers don't just land on our doorstep: this is a competitive market and speaking the customer's language can often give us a competitive edge. We find in particular that when we are exhibiting at trade fairs, potential clients appreciate our ability to converse in their mother tongue."

The number of languages spoken within a comparatively small organisation is impressive. Peter Rooney himself is a graduate in French and German; John Kynaston, who is sales manager, also speaks these two languages. In addition, there are native speakers of Italian, French and Portuguese on the team, and a German student will join Fibretech for a six-week placement in spring 2005.

### **Language skills come first in recruitment**

Despite such evident success from making languages a key strand in the company's sales and marketing strategy, staff are not sitting on their laurels. The French and Portuguese members of the sales team are working on improving their German, while Peter Rooney himself has recently signed up to a course of intensive Japanese training – testimony to their belief that investment in languages pays significant dividends in the business world

<p><b>Contacts</b></p> <p><b>Fibretech</b> <a href="http://www.fibretech.com">www.fibretech.com</a></p>	<p><b>Regional Language Network East Midlands</b> helps East Midlands companies access more international trade opportunities by breaking down language and cultural barriers. The RLN offers a central point of contact for information and support on international communications, and provides valuable commercial information through events, newsletters and briefings.</p> <p><b>RLN East Midlands, UK Trade and Investment, International Trade Centre, Innovation House, Riverside Park, Raynesway, Derby, DE21 7BF.</b></p> <p>Tel: 01332 826432   <a href="http://www.rln-eastmidlands.com">www.rln-eastmidlands.com</a></p>
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