



# *A passion* for success

*TBM Consulting Group's Richard Holland believes the Best Factory Awards capture the excitement and passion surrounding manufacturing improvements, as Brian Wall reports*

The decision to sponsor the Best Factory Awards' Most Improved Plant Award 2008 was not a difficult one for TBM Consulting Group, says UK vice president Richard Holland (right). "We are continuing to be a part of this each year, with the same reasoning: I've been very impressed with how the Awards have been run and the wholehearted way in which manufacturing companies have embraced them."

Holland spent several years based in the US and has only been involved with the Awards since his return two years ago. "In that time, I've seen what a strong following and support they have attracted. Apart from all the positives around the awards themselves, and their encouragement of manufacturing excellence, the awards ceremony itself has clearly captured the excitement and the passion of people that something like this should have. And that's great."

He is also keen to support an event that generates enthusiasm about both the opportunities that exist in manufacturing and its future. "That reflects what we at TBM are trying to do: helping companies to see the potential out there, and getting them and their employees excited about that, too. It's fantastic to see everyone at the Awards showing their delight when they win. That's how it should be. We do encourage lots of celebration about the improvements that we ourselves are helping companies to make in their businesses, so I feel our association with the BFA is a great marriage. The two are just right together."

Holland also feels that any means of promoting people's thinking beyond the immediate concerns of trying to achieve the current year's budget is important. "If we can look beyond that short-term goal, and try to take the risk of being really good at what we do, then there is so much more to be achieved. Certainly, the companies that have been brave enough and 'gone for



it' deserve all of the applause and celebration that the Best Factory Awards bring to them."

And by that he means all of the Awards' entrants, not just the winners. "With the BFAs, they all win. Even those companies that don't achieve the breakthrough targets they've set themselves will probably still be 50% better off than where their financial year budgets were set. And that's the kind of thinking that TBM is trying to promote, too."

Holland wants to dispel the tendency to downplay UK manufacturing as an also-ran that is struggling to compete with the lower-cost economies. It doesn't do justice to the full picture, he argues. "In recent times, instead of seeing the manufacturing sector shrink, we've actually seen it hold its own, if not grow."

"Here at TBM, we have continued to blossom to the point where about 40% of our business is now in manufacturing, with processing, distribution and services

making up most of the balance. In other words, lean has now grown beyond traditional manufacturing. Having said that, we do have a strong allegiance to manufacturing and want to help UK manufacturing continue to do what it's done so well in the last few years, which is to maintain its competitiveness. The BFA is very much a manufacturing award seeking to do the same."

At the same time, Holland recognises the erosion of manufacturing that has taken place. "We seem to have changed into a country that has a lot more distribution than manufacturing. Yet I do still see companies that are not operating at the high-end, high-tech, level and they aren't being overwhelmed. It does mean, though, that companies must stick to the lean system and not try to buy their way out of trouble. If they can grow the business without adding people, equipment or more factory space, then all things are possible."

The businesses that haven't understood this – that have bought more equipment – have seen depreciation cut in to the point where a sharp knife has had to be taken to remove other costs. And that becomes a difficult equation to balance, says Holland. "One thing we push at TBM is the need to use lean to help grow the business, without increasing costs. Many companies, sadly, haven't managed to achieve this. Yes, it does require a longer-term view, but it's still the right way to go." ■



**TBM Consulting Group**  
**T: 01332 367378**  
**www.tbmcg.com**