

Bowhill to Japan on ILF lean quest

Bowhill Engineering principal, Jeremy Hawkes is in Japan this month, learning about lean manufacturing at source, as an SA winner in the Industry Leaders Fund program.

Jeremy was one of 16 outstanding South Australian business people funded this year, a record crop since ILF began operating in 2010 with two grants funded. Under Jeremy's leadership, Bowhill Engineering – based in the town of the same name on the Murray River – has grown from a farm handyman venture to winning nationally competitive tenders for specialised steel projects. While Jeremy's success speaks for itself, he is conscious of gaps in his knowledge.

"Bowhill is a township of less than 100 people with rural hubs such as Murray Bridge and Mannum some 30 minutes' drive away. The local area school I attended until completing year 11 (Karoonda) delivered a caring and thorough education, but in retrospect the curriculum and general culture of the school and community was not tailored for business and certainly not manufacturing grounding," Jeremy says.

"The experiences I (mostly) enjoyed as a child have helped me to be a great leader from some aspects, eg. Tenacity, and strong faith is a trait I believe I have as a result of the experience of living in a farming family and community.

"The opportunity to visit a Mecca for lean operations and some of the most renowned companies in the world for lean thinking and implementation of efficient systems and processes will ingrain into my thought processes a completely new and improved way of looking at how things are done.

"Lean thinking is not isolated to manufacturing; I am sure I will discover the concept's ability to be relevant to most aspects of life. I look forward to the challenge of



Bowhill Engineering MD, Jeremy Hawkes

relating what I have learned on this trip to as many areas of my busy life as I possibly can."

Jeremy hopes to gain the ability and foresight to plan appropriately, based on significant experience, knowledge and research before launching into action, yet without procrastination.

"(The mission) will allow me to draw on a much larger reservoir of knowledge so that I can share with my team and increase the foresight of each plan that I am involved in," he says. "Great decisions are made when leaders find a way to make the unknown known, goals are set to succeed, not just survive.

"Great leaders are masters at execution. I am confident the human side of this experience will enable me to be a better leader through engaging people right throughout our organisation and the wider community.

"It will make a big difference in how I am able to influence people positively because I will have the sound

knowledge and bigger picture of the mechanics and intricacies of lean thinking and implementation. There is also an opportunity to influence the larger community by my association with groups such as the local collaboration through the Murraylands Fabrication Consortium and the larger scope of the SME gateway program which the principle has expressed interest in asking me to join the newly-formed board.

"By strengthening knowledge in this area I believe Bowhill's competitiveness on a global scale will be greatly improved, without the impost of massive capital expenditure. With competitiveness hopefully comes good work flows (which) will allow us to employ local people both directly and indirectly through associated suppliers and contractors."

CEO, Geoff Vogt says the ILF assessors were impressed by Jeremy's commitment to building his business knowledge, employment and the wider community.

"They were impressed by the highly entrepreneurial way he has gone about building the business, especially considering the competitive disadvantage of being located where he is," Geoff says. "They were highly impressed by his willingness to contribute to the community, to business organisations of the Murraylands and they believe his tour (of Japan) will have a significant multiplier effect."

Geoff says the number of grant applications this year was 25% up on the last, with the 56 applicants of very high quality, some 50 being worthy of awards in his opinion. ILF provides grants of up to \$50,000 to support the self-development plans of candidates who have potential to be industry leaders in South Australia.

Applications for the next round of ILF grants close on 30 May 2014.

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