

# E&S BUSINESS & FINANCE

A guide to Midlands commerce, industry and money matters

## Global week to encourage new business

A string of events are planned across the West Midlands from next Monday as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week.

As the Prime Minister calls on the nation's "doers and grafters" to deliver an "enterprise-led recovery", the events will aim to support budding entrepreneurs in developing skills and sharing best practice.

In Birmingham a Gaming & Digital Technology Day is being held at Birmingham Science Park Aston while events are taking place all week at University College Birmingham.

In Wolverhampton teams of Year 10 students will be taking part in the EBP Enterprise Challenge hoping to win a place in the Black Country regional final. On Tuesday the Black Country Chamber of Commerce is hosting the "Let us Drive You Mad" networking event at the Grand Western Connaught Hotel, on Tettenhall Road, from noon until 2pm.

The chamber is running another breakfast, at Walsall College on Thursday. For more information contact [Events@blackcountrychamber.co.uk](mailto:Events@blackcountrychamber.co.uk) or telephone 0845 872 4256.

Also in Walsall, the Mayor and Mayoress are hosting a black-tie entrepreneurial evening on Tuesday at the Mayor's Parlour. For more information email [cremy@hadens.co.uk](mailto:cremy@hadens.co.uk) or [palexander@westmidlandshouse.co.uk](mailto:palexander@westmidlandshouse.co.uk).

On Wednesday anyone thinking of starting a business is invited to the West Bromwich Central Library from 11am to 12.30pm for an event entitled: "Be Your Own Boss - Be Informed, Be Advised and Be Inspired".

Tom Bewick, chief executive of Enterprise UK, founders of Global Entrepreneurship Week, said: "We want to mobilise entrepreneurs across the UK, in every town and city. This is a critical time to help people develop their enterprise skills, confidence and help them realise their ambitions."

For more information of what is happening across the area, visit: [www.gew.org.uk/event\\_search](http://www.gew.org.uk/event_search)

## City firm on ICT shortlist

A Wolverhampton medical technology business is one of the finalists for a national award.

Medical Devices Technology International Limited (MDTi), working with Staffordshire University, is a finalist in the Best Knowledge Transfer category of the ICT Excellence Awards 2010.

The company, which employs six people at its head office in Victoria Passage, is on the shortlist for its work on ELAROS 24/7, an electronic Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms (LUTS) assessment and remote observation service.

MDTi presented its submission to a panel of judges and now awaits the unveiling of the winner on November 25 at the awards event at the National Motorcycle Museum near Solihull.



Michael Haley working on a ventilation duct for one of the capsules on the London Eye



The team at Quantum Moulding with, in the front row: Al-ison Rowbottom, Steve Galbraith and Peter Wooldridge



Quantum is making replacement panels as part of the refurbishment of the London Eye's capsules

# Quantum landmark capped by big wins

Report by SIMON PENFOLD

A fibreglass manufacturing firm in the heart of the Black Country has been celebrating reaching its quarter century with a string of high-profile contracts.

Work for some of the biggest names in entertainment and automotive engineering has helped see Quantum Mouldings through one of the roughest patches for UK industry since the last war.

Run by brothers Peter and Mark Wooldridge, it has maintained its turnover at around £1.5 million, despite the turbulence of the last two years.

Peter said: "Our emphasis has been on quality and customer service, and we believe that is what has seen us through. We have kept customers - some have been with us 10-15 years - although many have cut back on their orders during the recession. But we have made up for that by winning business from new clients."

At its 20,000 sq ft manufacturing site in Wollaston, Quantum makes fibreglass components for a wide range of customers: "We can do anything, and generally have over the years," said Peter.

"It sometimes takes an effort to keep focused on the areas we want to concentrate on - there's a huge range of work out there that we could handle if we wanted to."

### Injection

The current workload includes what the brothers believe is the biggest single piece of fibreglass moulding currently made in the UK from matched tooling - a six metre long trailer cover used to carry high-performance cars that is made in a single injection shot. Used to ferry cars on track days, the popularity of the trailer and its smaller sister have resulted in hundreds of orders for Quantum.

The 25-strong team at the Quantum Works, in Envile Street, also make air cleaner housings for the Ford V6 engines fitted to roadsters, body panels for telehandlers and the new Modex range of electric vehicles - made in Coventry - as well as pick-up truck canopies for Truckman.

This year has seen diversification for Quantum into the exciting world of theme parks and entertainment attractions. Quantum is currently supplying replacement panels for the 32 London Eye capsules as part of a £12.5 million refurbishment by owner Merlin Entertainments Group.



Putting the finishing touches to one of the big aerodynamic car transporter trailers at Quantum Works

The London Eye work is part of a rolling programme that has seen Quantum supply inner and outer panels for most of the capsule that isn't glass, from bearing covers to the roof and underbelly.

Quantum have also played a large part in the supply of GRP parts for this year's extension to Europe's largest themed attraction near Paris.

For Peter and Mark the constant demand for their work has confirmed the rightness of their decision, back in 2001, to sell off the kit-car arm that kicked off the business back in the 1980s.

"We started out almost by accident," said Mark, now 50 and the company's finance director. "Our younger brother Harvey and I bought a kit car that didn't go together and we thought we could do better."

Quantum Sport Cars officially launched in November 1985 and it became famous for its 2+2, H4 and Xtreme. But in 2001 after a decline in the kit car market the brothers sold the car business to a firm in Devon and concentrated on the mouldings operation.

Since then, Harvey has "retired" to Spain - he is still only 47 - while Mark and Peter, as managing director, have continued to build the business with the help of general manager Steve Galbraith, office manager Alison Rowbottom and the rest of the Quantum team.

"We have worked very hard to be as efficient as we can, to give customers the best quality and service," said Peter, now 44. "It is the only way to keep customers in the long term, and to win new ones. And we are still coming up with new products to offer them, such as 'flocking'."

This involves spraying 2mm lengths of nylon on to fibreglass, leaving a soft, fuzzy and waterproof covering. "We are using it to line the inside of body shells, but we are still looking into all the other uses it could have."

Although the brothers no longer make cars, they still have a toe in the water: making parts for one of their longest-serving customers, who in turn makes the most powerful - and expensive - kit car in the world.

## HAS YOUR FIRM GOT A STORY?

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