

# Mastering agility

**The world of grinding and honing has a proud heritage and long history, but Martin Elliott of Delapena argues that those most likely to succeed in today's global market will be those that can combine that weight of experience with agility and responsiveness.**



Few companies have a track record longer than Delapena and it would be easy to believe that the expertise contained in those that lead the grinding and honing industry would be powerful enough in itself to secure a strong future. However, it is necessary to be awake to the moving markets and agile enough to capitalise upon them.

One example of this was the dramatic shift in the oil and gas market last year, which had a shockingly quick and widescale impact on the engineering industry. Contracts were shelved, timescales extended, work deferred and any business supplying this sector had to be quick to shift focus and redirect capacity. It felt like the pipeline was turned off overnight and demand disappeared.

Thanks to the way Delapena is structured and funded, it was easy to redirect development and production to another sector just as quickly as the market moved.

This underlines the need to continuously be innovating, not only in developing new products, new processes, new applications but also innovating in how the business responds to customer demand.

'Futurology' is the study of what's possible, probable or preferred and this

focus is essential in the grinding and honing industry. Based on a mixture of this intelligence and intuition, the Delapena Group has grown continuously through challenging economic times and now benefits from a broad capability that provides stability, yet with the energy and agility to respond to changing customer needs.

Today the business has three distinct, yet complementary divisions: grinding and abrasives, honing and oils. Beyond a wide range of technically-advanced machines, plus tooling, fixtures, abrasives, oils and other consumables that optimise performance, Delapena also offers services that include subcontract honing, process engineering and tooling refurbishment. This means that the business can add value in a number of ways which provide that all-important agility.

Part of Delapena Group's strategy for building strength and scope is its strategic relationships, particularly an exclusive sales and marketing agreement with Engis, a global leader in the design and manufacture of superabrasive finishing systems. This affords much wider international scope and creates knowledge sharing that adds strength to both parties. It also complements the Delapena low to medium volume capability with the high volume machines from Engis, so dramatically expands what can be offered. This creates a pathway for customers, from subcontract honing, to machines for prototyping and low volume, right up to continuous process.

The support offered to customers helps them to develop and grow, with expert application and process advice along the way to add value to the deal. While it is important to have a broad capability, it is also essential to have sufficient focus to ensure that the business is light on its feet.



Delapena Group specialises specifically in improving finishes in the bore or on the shaft. By mastering one discipline and bringing together a choice in approach, it is possible to build unmatched expertise, yet stay agile enough to adapt to what's required.

Adapting is imperative in our 'VUCA' (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world of dynamic markets. The strongest and most successful will be those businesses that can marry decades of expertise with flexibility in application, i.e. the best of the old with the best of the new. It isn't now enough to maintain the status quo. Businesses of the future cannot expect to stick to their routine and for things to hold steady. Those businesses that can embrace this new reality will move ahead of the competition.

Based in Cheltenham and part of the Delapena Group, Delapena Honing Equipment is an innovator in the design and manufacture of high precision honing machines. The company has an impressive heritage that spans over 85 years. Today the company is recognised as a master in the grinding and honing market, operating internationally to offer complete solutions that include a range of technically advanced machines, plus the tooling, fixtures, abrasives and other consumables that optimise their performance.

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