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MANUFACTURING **exec**

Building the *Westfield* Brand

With a reputation for building high quality vehicles, Exec examines how Westfield Sports Cars is utilizing design excellence and improved efficiency to build brand loyalty



IMPROVED EFFICIENCY + DESIGN EXCELLENCE





Building the Westfield Brand

With one of the largest owners' clubs in the UK, Westfield Sports Cars is a company with a reputation for building high quality vehicles. Lucy Mowatt finds out more



The Lotus XI is a car renowned as much for its appearance and performance as for the fact that Stirling Moss drove it to victory at Le Mans in 1956. When Westfield Sports Cars began manufacturing a replica of the car in 1982 the company immediately gained a reputation for building high performance sports cars and kits, becoming a company with a loyal customer base.

However, reproduction ceased in 1986 and by 2006 the company was in need of new focus and new blood. As such, Westfield was taken over by Potenza Sports Cars, a company founded by Potenza group with the vision of developing eco-friendly sports cars. Julian Turner, MD, says: "We put investment in, we turn the

company round, grow it and acquire other businesses to consolidate the industry, but we always remain involved with the company." Since the acquisition, Potenza has invested in tooling, vehicles and training, transforming its profitability, following the model established by other Potenza companies. In December 2007 Potenza Sports Cars acquired another car company, GTMCars. The sales and marketing, manufacturing, stores function and technical support were integrated into Westfield in three weeks. The 40-year-old company has three fantastic models which Potenza Sports Cars hope will add value to its expanding portfolio.

As part of improving the skills of its 42 employees the company has developed

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a personal review scheme. "We set clear objectives and help employees achieve their potential by involvement and investment in their training," Turner explains.

IMPROVED EFFICIENCY

Employees are also offered day release to visit and learn from other companies within the Potenza group. "They can go into many different businesses and ask them if they are having similar problems...We obviously invite them into Westfield as well because we want to hear what they have to say about us, so it works both ways," Turner elaborates.

Employees from the chairman to the cleaner were also involved with the first

companywide training project to take place at Westfield in 25 years. This was focused on lean manufacturing and quality improvement which will develop the operations of the business. "We've turned the factory around 180 degrees, literally, because it wasn't in a proper flow process," Turner says. It has also meant that output is perfect first time. Mr Turner explains: "Before we were doing a lot of reworking of cars and it takes up a lot of time, management and obviously employees [to put it right]." In consequence, the company intends to achieve ISO accreditation within the next 18 months.

"We do actually offer work experience and apprenticeships throughout the



year,” he says. These schemes are offered in association with two local colleges and allow students to spend a rigorous structured week with Westfield as part of their degree, where they gain experience in various areas of the business and are then appropriately assessed. This is in addition to factory tours for schools and businesses, which raise public awareness of the company.

“The thing is that skills for the future are nonexistent. We’re really struggling to get welders that can work on chassis and build cars,” Turner says. As with many manufacturers within the UK, Westfield

Sports Cars are doing all they can to encourage young people to get involved with the industry and “raise awareness of how exciting [Westfield] is.”

DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Raising its profile further, at January’s Auto Sport Show, Westfield opened a design competition. News of the contest to design an electric car has spread throughout the globe, and Turner says that he has been approached by schools and universities in Australia, Sweden, Holland, Belgium and Japan. “I was quite shocked,” he says. “I couldn’t put the phone down for four days



after the press release.”

Explaining the motivation behind the competition, he says: “Throughout the UK there are a lot of problems with noise, particularly from race cars and tracks and also with the pollution and emissions that they kick out.” Electric cars are quieter and more environmentally friendly. The company is also looking at reducing its carbon footprint while continuing to recycle vehicle parts in some of its cars and all of its waste, including batteries.

In the interest of cutting down the company’s environmental impact, Westfield Sports Cars also sources its materials and

parts domestically. “I’d say 99 percent of our materials are sourced within the UK, which is quite unique. 65 percent of that is acquired from the Midlands. We are very heavily dependent on local businesses and they are dependent on us,” Turner says. In order to nurture these relationships, Westfield has been encouraging its suppliers to become involved with lean manufacturing too, in order to keep costs low and therefore maintain “a good, honest and open working partnership”.

OWNERS CLUB

With almost 10,000 Westfield owners



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around the world, the manufacturer has the one the largest owners clubs in the UK. "In the UK alone there are 2000 to 3000 owners and they get together in different areas of the country all the time and hold events," Turner says.

When asked what it is that makes Westfield's sports cars so popular he responds: "Because of three things: no ABS; no air conditioning and the fact that they run on pure adrenaline!" He says that the UK has a real passion for motor racing and many modern cars have so many electrical features that drivers often feel

as though they are not really driving. The difference with a Westfield is that "you can actually feel the car; it talks to you all the time and gives you feedback. It's a part of you and an extension of you and the most important thing is the wind in your face, you really feel every part of the driving experience." 99 percent of the people that test drive Westfield's cars end up placing an order, which is an impressive take-up.

Westfield is continuously working to develop new lines and improve its cars, in response to customer feedback. The company's engineering department spends



60 percent of its time working on R&D, while the remainder is used improving existing models and manufacturing processes. The AeroRace was launched in December 2007, while the 40 TR track car equipped with a Honda engine was launched in January 2008. In response to demand, Westfield Sports Cars has also reintroduced the manufacturing of replica cars, having received ten demands a day for the return of the Westfield XI in 2004 – a reproduction of the Lotus driven by Stirling Moss in Le Mans 1956, which will secure an even larger loyal following. ■



Company at a glance

Westfield Sports Cars was set up in 1982 building replica cars, such as the Westfield XI

Potenza Sports Cars bought the company in 2006 with the plan to develop eco-friendly sports cars

The company has 42 employees and a high level of staff retention. Potenza has a strong focus on developing its people in order to achieve their full potential

Westfield Sports Cars has the biggest owners club following in the UK

Westfield intends to launch new sports cars onto the market and its engineering department spends 60 percent of its time on R&D activities

www.westfield-sportscars.co.uk

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