

BIDEFORD TOOLS

MAKES MAGIC WITH MERLIN



With growth plans firmly in place, **Bideford Tools** turned to an experienced e-commerce and data management solution provider to help it get ready for a vibrant future...

Founded in the 1960s, Devon-based Bideford Tools has established itself as a supplier of cutting and hand tools as well as clamping systems, measuring equipment, abrasives and soldering and welding equipment. "Bideford Tools largely supplies factories," Troy CEO Paul Kilbride tells Torque Magazine. "We have vending solutions which dispense tools to customers on-site and we work mainly with blue chip businesses."

Two years ago, independent buying group Troy – headquartered 10 miles away in Barnstaple – bought Bideford Tools. The former owner Bill Cater stayed on as MD at Bideford, which was already a member of the Troy group.

The past couple of years have seen a number of milestones for Bideford Tools, not just thanks to the change in ownership, but also in the form of a leading e-commerce and data management system in the Tools sector, Merlin Business Software, which Bideford Tools originally implemented in 2013.

"Bideford Tools obviously had a choice to make on which provider to use," Kilbride explains. "Often there is a specialist in different industries. Merlin was found to be the best solution on offer and our experience and knowledge of them had been very positive."

It goes without saying that the more straightforward and manageable a system is, the better and Merlin scores well in this department, according to Bideford Tools: "It is very easy to use and there's also good support behind the system. The functionality of the software is fantastic too – it can do more than we will ever need it to."

Versatility was also a deciding factor, the Troy boss

explained: "Scalability is important to us as we look to grow the business in the years to come. We've seen the Merlin software working with larger businesses, so we know it will be fine for scaling up."

Ashley Jones, Merlin's Sales and Marketing Director commented: "We were delighted when Bideford Tools came on board as another user within the Troy Group as we knew from our considerable experience in the tools sector that it would be an excellent fit, and we were subsequently delighted when Paul Kilbride and the team at DHS Tools elected to expand Bideford Tools' Merlin system across their business too, within the United Tooling Solutions (UTS) Group.

"Having worked closely with Paul and his team at UTS, we've also been able to plan out a road map of the way in which the flexible optional modules in Merlin will be able to accommodate their planned growth. Solutions such as our Trade e-commerce tools, EDI solutions and Apps for Android will play an important part."

We asked Paul Kilbride about his thoughts on the newly released Merlin Analytics solution, providing crucial business intelligence. "Information is important, especially if you can get it at that higher overview level to really provide you with an insight into how the business is developing."

Merlin Analytics provides a dynamic management Dashboard tool as standard, which provides a real time "at-a-glance" view of the business and allows the user to drill down into the detail with a click of the mouse. Merlin Analytics, which is powered by Phocas Software, is also accessible to users on the move via tablets or smartphones, giving them

the information they need quickly and helping them to unlock opportunities in their data that they otherwise would not have known about.

"And it works straight out of the box," Kilbride adds.

So, would the company recommend Merlin Business Software to other similar businesses? "Yes, for sure," Kilbride says.

Bideford Tools plans to develop on the 15% growth it saw in 2017, planning to continue that upwards trend this year and beyond. Thanks to the behaviour of some national players, there are some interesting opportunities ahead for Bideford Tools this year and Paul Kilbride believes that, "the prospects are particularly strong this year."

The upcoming 12 months will also see Troy bring together a number of the businesses it has an interest in. "We have a stake in DHS Tools and Eurogrind Cutting Tool Solutions and they have all been brought together under the umbrella of United Tooling Solutions, as a subsidiary of Troy."

Merlin's software will no doubt assist in bringing together those experienced industrial distributors as United Tooling Solutions (UTS), to become one of the biggest industrial suppliers in the South West.

"We see growth of up to £25 million in the next three years."

Find out more at: www.bidefordtool.com and www.merlinbusinesssoftware.com

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