

## Growing the talent pool of UK automotive leaders

*An innovative new training programme is increasing the management talent pool in the automotive industry, driving up skills in critical manufacturing leadership positions - which play a vital role in boosting productivity and competitiveness.*

*Pioneered by BMW and Jaguar Land Rover on behalf of the Automotive Industrial Partnership, the ProLead training programme is primarily aimed at existing managers in first line leadership positions, but can also benefit new talent.*

ProLead combines existing qualifications and tailors them to provide automotive leaders with in depth management and technical knowledge. It has been developed using best practice from the worldwide operations of UK based car manufacturers.

The programme leads to a higher level qualification and includes theoretical and practical training in leadership and technical management.

Dr Simon Farrall, Head of Apprentice and Associate Training at BMW has been leading the project which has had excellent feedback from participants and is delivering impressive results on the shop floor.

Dr Farrall said: "The training is aimed at first line disciplinary manufacturing leaders who have formal responsibility for around 50-60 people. It is a big job but those in the role have often had little or no formalised training until now.

"Yet this is a critical management level – it is the first position where the buck stops with them. It is a broad job – strategic, people skills plus the minute by minute



responsibility for what is going on in their area of the shop floor. They need the tools and confidence to make decisions and improve the performance of their team."

ProLead is partly modelled on the German well established and highly valued Meister qualification, which is a pre-requisite for anyone entering this role in Germany. This generates a talent pool of future leaders well-prepared for promotions as they arise.

BMW and Jaguar Land Rover are working together to ensure it becomes a standard qualification and more than 100 of their managers are among the first cohort on ProLead training courses.





Each participant is assessed to establish any specific learning support required and to agree their individual learning path.

The programme takes between 6 and 40 weeks to complete, depending on the individual's learning path. The average duration is 22 weeks plus on the job time for the NVQ.

Formal training is delivered in the classroom, supported by the completion of assignments and overall competence is confirmed by an NVQ level 4 qualification attained by evidence gathered on the job.

While one or two of the modules are automotive specific, the skills it teaches can be applied in other industrial sectors. The aim is to turn it into a Higher Apprenticeship programme.

"We have already seen a significant increase in motivation," said Dr Farrall. "People are enthused by what they are learning. It is about training the existing workforce but also demonstrating much clearer career and progression paths to apprentices that join the industry," said Dr Farrall "and this in turn can help us develop a talent pool for UK industry."

BMW and JLR anticipate putting hundreds of people through the programme over the next few years with the challenge to increase uptake across other businesses in the automotive and other industrial sectors.

Steve Barden, a Process Leader at BMW, who has successfully completed the Institute of Leadership and Management part of the programme said:

*"The management and leadership elements of ProLead deepened my understanding of my own leadership behaviour and have enabled me to work much more effectively with my people as I am now able to understand the relative strengths that each member brings to our team. I'm really looking forward to building on this throughout the programme."*

The Automotive Industrial Partnership was established in 2014, bringing together automotive companies and supported by government to ensure the UK's automotive sector has the pipeline of skills talent it needs now and for the future.

Jon West, HR Director for Manufacturing at Jaguar Land Rover said:

*"We have had a very positive response from the delegates who are currently on the ProLead programme. When we reviewed the training, delegates told us that it's filling the gaps in their knowledge and explaining some of the science behind the daily tasks that they do in plant. As a result they feel that it will help them to improve their job performance, achieve targets but also made them feel more engaged with the business."*

*"ProLead has provided us with a great foundation to help up-skill our Production Leaders. We are now actively reviewing how we can further enhance this training and reach a much broader population so the benefits can be more widely felt."*

The employers driving the Automotive Industrial Partnership include Bentley, BMW, Ford, GKN, Honda, Jaguar Land Rover, Nissan, Toyota and Vauxhall.

Employer-led skills organisation Semta, industry trade association the SMMT and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills are also supporting the Partnership.

**For more information on ProLead  
and the Automotive Industrial  
Partnership visit**

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