



Spotlight on ...

Technology Supplies Ltd

This is the first in a series of articles where we hope to give the companies that work with design and technology education in whatever way the opportunity to give some of the interesting background as to who they are and how they support D&T in schools. This issue we are featuring Technology Supplies Ltd.

How does Technology Supplies work for Design and Technology in Schools?

Technology Supplies Ltd is the leading supplier of design and technology products to schools and colleges throughout the United Kingdom. We offer an extensive product range of eleven thousand line items through our red 'Design & Technology' and 'Everything Art' catalogues and our web site (www.technologysupplies.co.uk). Our Customer Services team is backed up by a strong Technical Help team in order to provide teachers with a first class sales and product information service. Another very important element of our business is our Projects Division where we specify, design and install design and technology workshops throughout the United Kingdom and abroad. The whole organisation is geared and dedicated to providing a high level of customer service. This

is reinforced by our Company Mission Statement, 'To provide schools and colleges with a comprehensive range of quality products, services and equipment to meet their requirements. To do so at a competitive price with a level of service that ensures complete customer satisfaction. We acknowledge the commitment and loyalty of all employees in achieving our goals'.





How did Technology Supplies Ltd start up?

Two design and technology 'heads of department' teachers, Michael Roberts and Roger Weeks, founded the Company in rural Shropshire in 1986. They realised at that time that there was no specialist supplier of design and technology products and equipment and they took the bold decision to leave the teaching profession to set up Technology Supplies Ltd in order to fill the gap in the market. The Company started with four employees and has grown significantly over the past twenty-three years and now employs seventy-five dedicated staff (including ex D&T teachers) with an impressive turnover of £14 million. The Company was sold in 2005 and is now part of the Wall Family Enterprise Group based in Madison, Wisconsin. The Group strongly believes in autonomous management enabling Technology Supplies to continually invest in new systems and product ranges to further enhance customer service levels and to meet the demands of curriculum changes. 'Respect' and 'integrity' are the key watchwords that run through the philosophy of the Group. We believe in treating every customer, supplier and employee the way we wish to be treated.

How has the Company evolved over the years?

Technology Supplies Ltd started as a catalogue based distributor of design and technology products. This remains the backbone of the organisation. The Science catalogue was added in 1998 and the Art catalogue in 2000. We were the first company to introduce laser cutters into schools in 2001. A major milestone was the creation of the Projects Division in 2002. This has been the fastest growing arm of the business and now presents over 50% of the turnover of the Company. Our Workshop Solutions catalogue carries a vast range of the

latest machinery, equipment and furniture available for new workshops. We have been heavily involved in designing and installing design and technology workshops under the auspices of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme. More recently we have installed similar workshops in Europe and the Middle East. We have also set up partnerships with overseas education resellers around the world for the supply of design and technology products and equipment. We have recently released our new 2009/10 D&T catalogue with seventy additional pages of new products including a 'vocational' products section.

Our rebranded and restyled 2009/10 Art catalogue 'Everything Art' was launched at the Education Show in March last year.

What is your best line or most popular service?

We offer a very extensive product range from very small electronic components through to much larger items such as lathes, drilling machines and work benches. Some of our best selling product lines by value are Laser cutters, vacuum forming machines and machine tools i.e. band-facers, band-saws floor/bench mounted drills etc. The top selling products in terms of quantity are batteries, clock movements & hands, electronic switches, DC motors and aprons. We remain one of the largest suppliers of Laser cutters and 3D printers into schools and colleges where we offer a full range of quality machines with a superb technical support and back up service. We also offer our customers financing and trade in options to make it easier to fund the purchase of these relatively high value products. The rate of growth of our Projects Division has been phenomenal and last year we installed over two-hundred and thirty design and technology workshops, this compares to a figure of one-hundred and ten in 2006. The Company has close business relationships with key local suppliers providing quality products and equipment including Boxford, C.R. Clarke, Denford, EMIR, Flamefast, Grafityp, Hegner UK, RJH Morrisflex, Specialist Woodworking, Walton Designs and Warco.



If you are a corporate member and would like to feature in the 'Spotlight On...' series then please contact the Editor of D&T Practice Neil Whitton at: Neil@data.org.uk

How does Technology Supplies Ltd interact with D&T teachers?

We exhibit at fifteen different exhibitions, shows and seminars throughout the year. The largest exhibitions being the D&T and Education Show at the NEC and the BETT Show at the Olympia. These exhibitions provide a great opportunity to interact with D&T teachers and to promote our product ranges. We have regular teacher workshops where we invite teachers to comment on our current catalogues and product offering and to make recommendations for potential new product ranges and changes to the catalogues. We provide onsite laser cutter demonstrations and we also visit schools regularly to discuss our product ranges with teachers. Closer teacher interaction is seen as a vital part of our business.

Our design and technology catalogue is successful because of the technical support via telephone and our web site. All our most experienced frontline staff, managers and directors support the technical line and answer wide ranging questions e.g. which particular glue is suitable for use on acrylics, which replacement band-saw blade suits a particular machine and advice on HSE regulations concerning extraction equipment. We take the view that if you assist the customer to make the correct choice, whether it is a spare part or a simple glue applicator worth 50p, he or she will return time and time again providing the product is delivered quickly and efficiently. Without this support many products would simply fail to sell off the page.

See the range of products and services offered by Technology Supplies Ltd at: www.technologysupplies.co.uk

How do you feel D&T is changing in your area of the subject?

There appears to be more innovative curriculum planning going on at Key Stage 3 with schools doing more varied projects and there is a greater variety of courses being offered at Key Stage 4 all of which need a wider range of resources. The introduction of the new Vocational Diplomas will enable Technology Supplies to provide schools with a unique product offering dedicated to this important area. Schools continue to be enthusiastic about using laser cutters in creative ways and some schools are showing a lot of interest in 3D printers.

Where do you see the subject going?

In most schools D&T remains one of the most popular subjects with students and it is still a relatively new and vitally important subject. There is no doubt that D&T as a subject will continue to adapt and evolve over the coming years. The critical point is that Technology Supplies Ltd will as always continue to stay very close to future developments and curriculum changes in order to provide our customers with the latest innovative products as well as the highest quality services and equipment.

*Gordon Campbell, Managing Director,
Technology Supplies Ltd*