

Press Release

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Thorn Lighting crowned Britain's Best Factory

Thorn's Spennymoor factory near Durham has been named Factory of the Year for 2009 at the Best Factory Awards (BFA) run by Cranfield School of Management in partnership with the magazine Works Management.

The modern purpose-built lighting factory also scooped the Best Electronics & Electrical Plant and Best People Management awards and was highly commended for the Innovation award.

Factory visits to 54 short-listed production plants were made over the summer months and Dr Marek Szwejcowski, Director of the BFA, said that Thorn stood out for its attention to quality, cost and delivery. "Its factory is extremely customer focused and its performance has been so good that it is bringing products back to the UK from overseas plants. The factory has been designed for fast material flow, which has brought immense saving in terms of time and money. The company also made good use of Lean Six Sigma tools which involved production workers in the development of improvements which significantly increased the factory's productivity and delivery performance.

"The company has invested heavily in its staff's technical skills and equipment to keep ahead of competition. Employee multi-skilling is the norm at the factory, with many employees being able to make any product in the range. Half its operators are on flexible contracts, which allow it to match labour to the peaks in customer demand."

Works Management magazine said: "This plant should be an inspiration to all. Its management of people and processes is peerless, and it has continuous improvement and innovation built into its DNA. An all-round dazzling performer."

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Terry Carmichael, the factory's Operation Director, said: "We are delighted to have won the Best Factory Award as it acknowledges the team's sustained efforts, not only in moving to the new site in 45 days without dropping an order, but in not deviating from their goal of continuously improving. It also emphasises the importance of people and providing them with the right internal systems and infrastructure. This gives us competitive edge to achieve the standards of performance and customer satisfaction that benefits everyone concerned with Thorn."

The Best Factory Awards, now in their 18th year, celebrate UK manufacturing excellence. Other companies competing for the awards at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, Hyde Park, London on Friday 18 September included: Rexam, Carl Zeiss SMT, Kidde Products and R. Twinings & Co.

Selection of the category winners consists of two stages. The first stage is based on an anonymous audit questionnaire from which a short-list is produced. The short-listed plants are then visited in depth by a team of assessors and journalists.

The Awards are sponsored by Barclays Commercial, DAK Consulting, The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing, Siemens, TBM Consulting and Unite the Union.

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Photo Caption

Pictured after the ceremony are: (left to right) Adrian Ratcliffe, Materials Manager; Julie Finn, Track Feeder; Hugh King, PR & Ad Manager; Peter Wigley, Lean Sigma Black Belt; Gary Dennis, Technician; John Hartles, National Contractor Manager; Bev Kay, Track Feeder; Marcus Jayne, Team Leader Goods Outwards and Terry Carmichael, Operations Director.

Thorn Spennymoor in numbers

1 – light fitting made every 3 seconds
10 - Six Sigma Black Belts
42 - percentage gain in material handling costs
95 – percentage of waste recycled
2,500 - luminaire bodies produced every day in the WEMO metalwork centre
7,289 - different types of fluorescent fittings and attachments (louvres) made
14001 - certified to the environmental management standard ISO 14001
40,000 - size of factory in sq m

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