

# Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

This Partnership received financial support from the **Knowledge Transfer Partnerships programme (KTP)**. KTP aims to help businesses and organisations to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills that reside within the UK Knowledge Base. KTP is funded by the Technology Strategy Board along with the other government funding organisations.

These Partnerships involve combining the knowledge and expertise of an academic institution, such as the University of Plymouth, with the appointment of a talented graduate who works within the business or organisation on a strategic project. Visit [www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)

## inFINITY and Beyond

*"It is my view that the KTP we embarked on with Charlie and the University of Plymouth has been highly effective. We have not only got an innovative market leading product, but also a very detailed overall understanding of the market, which will be instrumental in the company's strategy, for the development of other products within this sector during the coming years."*

*Ian Coates, Design & Engineering Director at Zoefitig*

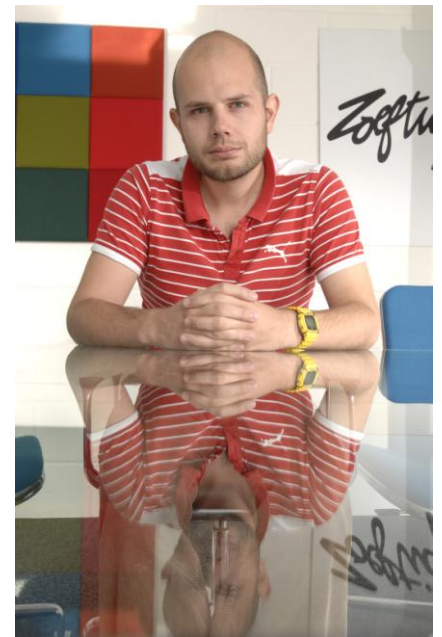


North Cornwall's Zoefitig Ltd are reaping the benefits of taking part in a two-year KTP. Zoefitig have been designing and manufacturing a wide range of stylish, robust and durable contemporary furniture products for the contract market for over 40 years. Zoefitig designs and assembles seating and table products at their Bude site, with much of the sub-component manufacture being outsourced from local suppliers within the South West. Their product range includes seating for passenger facilities such as airports, rail and bus terminals, and leisure industry furniture for bar, restaurant and café interiors. Since the purchase of the

company five years ago, the new owners have been consolidating the business, implementing new working practices that have resulted in them winning a number of recent major contracts to supply airport terminal seating upgrades for the UK and overseas market. This sustained growth and commercial success has been recognised locally with the recent award for *Best Exporter 2009* at the Cornish Business Awards and nationally and internationally with a Queens Award for *Enterprise in International Trade*. [www.zoefitig.com](http://www.zoefitig.com)

Building on their successes, Zoefitig turned to the University of Plymouth's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships team to help them source new expertise in advanced materials such as polymers and composites for component and structural design. With the appointment of BA (Hons) Furniture Design and Craftmanship graduate, Charlie Fowler in January 2007 and with the support of academic experts, Dr David Grieve and Dr John Summerscales from the School of Engineering, research was carried out into the latest developments in materials, processing and manufacturing in determining possible solutions and techniques for new product development. A design brief and detailed product specification was formulated to allow greater flexibility in various configurations of passenger terminal seating arrangements to meet customer requirements appropriate for today's rapidly expanding airport market. So far indications are that the project will lead to an increase in sales of 25%. The new product range inFINITE has enhanced the company's reputation amongst existing clients, attracted new clients, and has ensured a firm platform for future growth. This KTP Project has since been independently assessed by the Government and awarded a Certificate of Excellence.

**Charlie Fowler, Design and Product Manager, Zoefitig Ltd**



To consolidate its competitive position, Zoefitig have just embarked on a second KTP with the University of Plymouth. The latest KTP will focus on embedding a new product development methodology whilst designing a highly configurable auditoria seating solution, allowing access to a new market sector. Charlie, who has been retained by Zoefitig as their Design and Product Manager will take the position of Company Supervisor for the new KTP, and will be supervising new KTP Associate Luke White.

## THE BENEFITS OF THIS KTP PARTNERSHIP

### To the Company:

- Development of an innovative new product resulting in international interest and an increase in sales by 25%
- Improvements in project planning, organisation and training due to exposure to the KTP model
- Movement from a reactive to a research/innovation led company
- Increased knowledge of new materials and associated manufacturing techniques
- Larger range of industrial contacts, specifiers and material suppliers
- New knowledge of testing techniques and the design of an in-house rig to assess structural integrity
- Enhanced knowledge of 3D Computer Aided Design (CAD) and the interpretation of analysis data derived from 3D models
- A greater understanding of rapid prototyping and its effective use
- Training in sales presentation and effective sales techniques
- Faster overall manufacture
- Reduced production costs and greater efficiency
- Rejuvenated brand image
- Ability to react quickly to orders
- Second KTP commenced July 2009
- Awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise: International Trade 2009
- Awarded the Knowledge Transfer Partnership of the Year Award at the university's Vice-Chancellor Enterprise Awards 2009

### To the University:

- Increased knowledge of polymer materials and developments in injection moulding
- Use of sophisticated Computer Aided Engineering (CAE) equipment on a real industrial project to analyse structure, produce rapid prototypes and train Zoefitg personnel in Computer Controlled Manufacture
- Application of knowledge in design, materials and Finite Element Analysis (FEA) to solve a real industrial problem
- Associate is registered for an MPhil which once completed will be a benefit to the university's research agenda
- Ongoing relationship with Zoefitg including a second KTP
- Direct contribution to the University's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) activities
- Company Supervisor presented at the KTP Regional Seminar 2007 and to the KTP Management Board 2009
- Potential for the development of undergraduate projects based on this KTP

### To the Associate:

- Experience of running and managing a detailed and demanding project, which would have taken additional years to complete without the support of the KTP structure
- Being responsible for a project which was key to the company's competitiveness and future business growth
- Being a major driver in the implementation of a program of research and development which has turned the company into a market innovator and leader
- Gaining invaluable commercial experience
- Permanent position as a Design and Product Manager with Zoefitg
- Substantial training in CAD software and the use of CAE techniques
- Produced a poster display for the KTP South West Regional Seminar in November 2007, and presented at the 2008 KTP Regional seminar

***"From my personal perspective the project has not only had a massive impact on developing my skills and knowledge as a designer, but also my ability to run and manage a very long and challenging project. I believe that without the overall support of the KTP system and structure I would have required a number of additional years working in industry before I could successfully complete, (to the level that I have) such a detailed and demanding project."***

**Charlie Fowler, Design and Product Manager, Zoefitg Ltd**

### **For further information about Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and other University services contact:**

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**Visit: [www.plymouth.ac.uk/enterprise](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/enterprise) and [www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)**

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