



Best of British

Charcroft's distribution and manufacturing site in Llanwrtyd Wells



UK distributors offer direct benefits



Director, Charcroft Electronics, Debbie Rowland

Working with a UK distributor, rather than the UK branch of a global distributor, can reap benefits for customers that require a faster more flexible service, says director of Charcroft Electronics, Debbie Rowland

The concept of thinking globally, acting locally, has been the mantra of global corporations in the electronics industry for decades. But does it matter to UK original equipment manufacturers and contract electronics manufacturers if they are working with the UK branch of a global distribution network, or a UK-based distributor?

The diminishing number of UK-based distributors could be seen as proof that the local specialist's days are numbered. So many UK specialists have been swallowed by the global distribution networks that the scenario is now familiar; the global company identifies a potential market, such as a geographical territory or a niche technology, scouts around for a successful local specialist and acquires it. The specialist continues to service a UK customer base, but as part of a global corporation.

In theory, the company is both local and global, but there are crucial differences between a UK-based company and one which is owned and controlled by a global corporation: notably speed and focus.

Fast decisions

As a franchised UK-based distributor, Charcroft's chains of command are short. The senior managers and directors are easily accessible to the sales and technical teams as well as to the warehouse, manufacturing and customer-service teams. This means that top-level management is immersed in the day-to-day running of the business and decisions can be taken faster and with more flexibility.

This speed and flexibility provide a direct benefit to customers. For example, it can take just 24 hours for a bespoke customer-specific

programme to be implemented to enable the use of a customer's own internal part numbers on all paperwork. There is also the flexibility to appoint customers a designated supplier quality representative to personally check and sign-off all orders before despatch, or to have same-day despatch and delivery from UK-held inventory.

Fast decisions and on-site manufacturing also enable a fast response to problems encountered sourcing obsolete passive components. Buying the manufacturing rights to legacy ceramic and silver mica capacitors and foil resistors has enabled Charcroft to maintain continuity of supply for many key customers. The manufacturing team can also combine standard passive components from the franchised line card with custom value-added services such as dipping or encapsulation to provide additional protection against harsh operating environments.

Local focus

Of course, the most important difference between a UK branch office and a UK-based distributor is focus. A dedicated focus on UK customers and markets enables sales and technical teams to be closer to customers, both geographically and in developing deeper knowledge-led partnerships.

Using a specialist UK-based distributor will certainly not suit everyone, but for OEMs and CEMs whose products demand the highest level of product and market knowledge, a UK-based specialist distributor can offer tangible benefits.

www.charcroft.com