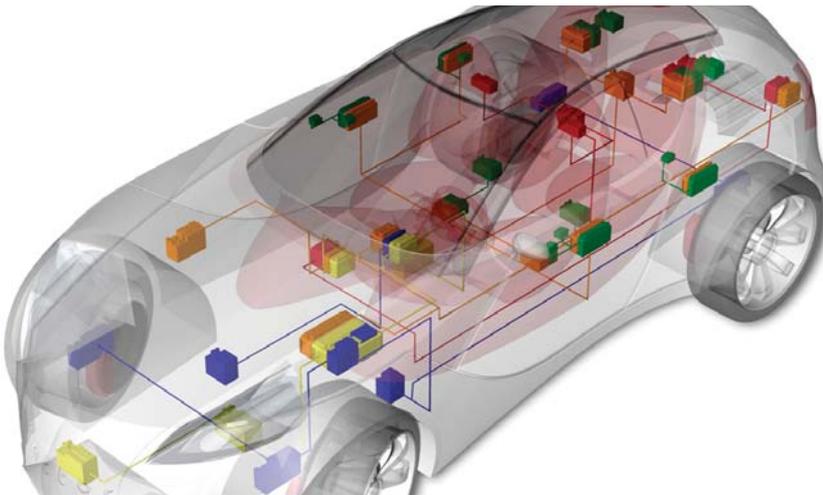


Driven to succeed

When German company Vector Informatik was planning to set up a presence in the UK, UK Trade & Investment and regional development agency Advantage West Midlands helped to smooth the way



FAST FACTS

Company: Vector UK Ltd

Country: Germany

Industry: Automotive/ ICT

Website: www.vector.com

These days, all cars are computerised to some extent. Features such as lighting, ABS brakes, entertainment systems, seats, satellite navigation and central locking are all connected via a computer network. Founded in Germany in 1988, Vector Informatik GmbH provides original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and suppliers of automotive and related industries a range of tools, software components and services for creating embedded systems such as these.

Traditional values of innovation, fairness, honesty and loyalty have ensured the company's growth on an international scale. In 1997, the company opened up in the US, followed by Japan in 1998, France and Sweden in 2002, Korea in 2007 and most recently, the UK along with offices in India and China in 2009.

"Our focus is on development, not production," says Uwe Gerlinger, Managing Director of Vector UK Ltd. "As such, we look for opportunities wherever the development side of the automotive industry is going on. We work with

customers around the world from our base in Stuttgart. But, if there is enough potential revenue for us to justify opening a local presence, that's what we do."

Going solo

For over 15 years, Vector had a long standing relationship with a distributor based in Manchester, through whom the company worked with the likes of Jaguar, Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Ford and Aston Martin.

Business was strong, and the company had been considering whether to set up on its own in the UK. So, when the distributor decided to move in another direction, this was the final push Vector needed.

"We wanted to bring our whole range to the UK," says Uwe. "It's already a challenge to sell our off-the-shelf products through a distributor. But, when it comes to selling our tailored products, with embedded components that are bespoke for a specific OEM, we need to do this in person. This way, we can build strong customer relationships, and provide a better service."

Support systems

As plans for the new UK facility progressed, Vector contacted the British Embassy in Germany, who put the company in touch with UK Trade & Investment. Vector was already in touch with local solicitors in the UK, but was looking for some extra support.

"The help we received from UK Trade & Investment and AWM made the process much quicker and easier than we could have managed on our own"

UK Trade & Investment was able to help by giving advice on the different considerations Vector should bear in mind, such as how Companies House works, the number of shares to issue, basic employment law and how to vary an employment contract.

UK Trade & Investment also gave Vector an overview of the UK by region, including details of which business areas are prominent in different areas, average salaries and unemployment levels.

UK Trade & Investment then introduced the company to regional development agency Advantage West Midlands (AWM), for more specific advice about that region. AWM set up appointments for Vector with local estate agents helping the company to find its new premises, and also directed Uwe to sources of government funding to help with the move.

“Our plans for the UK were very customer-driven,” says Uwe.

“We don’t have many customers in Scotland or Wales, and only a few in Ireland. So, we focused on where in England we had our biggest customers, and areas with a good transport network, both for getting around the UK and back to Germany. Solihull in the West Midlands ticked all the right boxes. It allows us to avoid the congestion of a central business district, but still has an excellent motorway

network nearby in Birmingham, and good transport systems. The help we received from UK Trade & Investment and AWM made the process much quicker and easier than we could have managed on our own.”

Up and running

Vector UK Ltd. was up and running on 1 January 2009. Given the difficult economic climate at that time, the company had to re-evaluate its initial targets, but business picked up after the first quarter as clients found time for discussions and began to order again.

Vector approached companies in the UK with whom it already had relationships in other countries, such as General Electric and Airbus.

“Initially, we focused on introducing more of our product range to existing customers, and reaching out to new teams within companies that we already have history with,” says Uwe. “We also found that where we had already worked with a company outside of the UK, the UK teams would be happy to rely on the experience of their colleagues to and give us a chance. We are growing slowly but surely, and are now looking to hire more staff to help us achieve our target of tripling our UK business in the next five years.”

Setting up your company in the UK

Deciding where to locate your international business is one of the biggest decisions you’ll make and can be daunting. UK Trade & Investment helps businesses coming to the UK with every aspect of setting up their new operations.

As the UK Government’s inward investment agency, it’s our job to know the UK’s strengths and where investment opportunities exist.

This means we can help your company to do all the research you need to make an informed decision, and then get up and running as quickly as possible.

UK Trade & Investment can also help you to build key contacts; choose your location; set up your new office and grow your business internationally.

For more information visit: www.ukti.gov.uk

Sector Focus

- The UK automotive industry is an integral part of the UK’s advanced engineering sector and testimony to the UK’s legacy as a world-class manufacturing base
- It is one of the five major automotive manufacturing countries in Europe, with over 5000 companies active in the sector
- Automotive is the UK’s No 1 manufactured export. In 2009, 76 per cent of cars and 73 per cent of commercial vehicles that were made in the UK were exported
- The automotive sector in the UK attracts significant levels of foreign direct investment – 2008/09 saw 86 successful FDI projects.

For further information please visit www.ukti.gov.uk



UK Trade & Investment is the government organisation that helps UK-based companies succeed in the global economy.

We also help overseas companies bring their high quality investment to the UK’s dynamic economy – acknowledged as Europe’s best place from which to succeed in global business.

UK Trade & Investment offers expertise and contacts through its extensive network of specialists in the UK, and in British embassies and other diplomatic offices around the world. We provide companies with the tools they require to be competitive on the world stage.

Hit the world running ^{UK}