



# Quarterly Newsletter March 2005

## Chairman's Update

Dear Member,

This is my first note to you as Chairman of the MWTF.

It is a privilege to be Chairman of MWTF until the end of 2006, taking over from our founder, Peter Mathews CMG.

Peter has become President and is just as supportive of all we do as he has ever been, I am delighted to say.

There's a lot of work to do, but that's because the Management Board is building a bigger, better, more joined-up Forum that is more representative of members' needs.

This year we have already formed alliances with the European Information Centre (see page 2), the Regional Languages Network/CILT and the Coventry International Trade Forum, (further details to follow) to bring you more independent and expert advice, support and networking opportunities from a central point.

We have also been listening to members' views about what MWTF should really be: a forum for World Trade - import as well as export!

I represented the Forum in Poland recently (at no cost to MWTF, I hasten to add) and am hopeful that members will benefit from import and export links being formed as a result.

Furthermore, in future our events programme will offer more for the well-seasoned importers and exporters amongst you as well as those new to international trade. Finally, I urge and encourage you to make more use of the website - if only to network with fellow members and talk international trade.

Yours faithfully

**Steve Swinden**  
MWTF Chairman

## Exporter of the Year

February 11th saw the third West Midlands International Trade Dinner & Awards.

The Event took place at the Hyatt Regency in Birmingham and was attended by over 150 businesses from across the West Midlands.

As last year, the MWTF gave companies the opportunity to nominate themselves for our 'Exporter of the Year' Award. Finalists in this category were Valve Train Components in Lichfield, Forensic Pathways in Tamworth, Tansun Ltd in West Bromwich and Tiger AG in Hartlebury.

The winning company was Valve Train Components. The company manufacture precision components for the global automotive industry focusing on engine and gearbox components.

Sales Director, Gary Brereton said "Valve Train Components are totally committed to International Trade and as such we were extremely honoured to win such a prestigious award.

When we decided to enter VTC as a nominee, it enabled us to outline the fundamental principals which makes International Trade so important to our business.

Our local International Trade Team and MWTF offer a focal point for SME's such as ourselves, to tap into the wealth of knowledge and advice which is readily available across the region.

The MWTF Exporter of the Year Award is a significant milestone for everyone at VTC, and as such will assist us greatly with the marketing of our organisation on a global basis."

## More help to find way into Europe

Companies in the West Midlands now have better access to European support services than ever before.

It's all because 10 organisations are working together as the Local Co-operation project, an initiative funded by the European Commission.

The idea is to boost the level of assistance and advice available by making sure each

partner can guide companies to the most relevant source of information, if they are unable to deal with the enquiry themselves.

And a website - [www.signpost-westmidlands.co.uk](http://www.signpost-westmidlands.co.uk) - acts as a gateway to the European services on offer in the region.

A wide range of services are available to companies including lobbying at local, national and

European level, general and specialist business information, technology transfer, export advice, assisting companies to recruit workers in Europe, and advice on EU legislation.

For further information on the Local Co-operation project contact the European Information Centre on 0121 455 0268.



(Left to Right)  
**Gary Brereton—Sales Director of Valve Train Components and Steve Swinden, MWTF Chairman**

## Breaking the 'funding gap'

**James Walton** discusses how businesses in the Midlands can gain maximum advantage, while avoiding the pitfalls, when trading internationally.

The growth of international trade is being facilitated by better and faster communications allowing businesses to become more visible to each other, no matter where they are domiciled. Yet the potential pitfalls of trading internationally are there to be seen. Different languages, cultures, business and legal practices make even experienced and battle-hardened entrepreneurs nervous about trading internationally.

However, many of today's successful businesses point to a move into international trade as *the* key factor that enabled them to break into the big time. The commercial opportunities from breaking into new markets coupled with the advantages gained from procuring raw materials and sometimes superior product from cheaper overseas

sources, lead to greater profits being earned in the business.

Businesses are increasingly expecting their banks to offer solutions that assist in managing their overseas development. Managing the trading terms agreed with overseas partners and the efficient handling of foreign exchange are just some of the issues being handled by banks looking to support their customers.

In an ideal world any global trader will want its day-to-day international trading transactions to be as simple as its domestic ones. It requires financial support, the ability to optimise cashflow and cash positions, plus help in mitigating a variety of risks. Across all of these there is the need to do this as cost effectively and efficiently as possible, gaining access to appropriate and timely information and advice.

Managing cash flow remains a key driver for all businesses. It is a simple fact of life that businesses tend to get paid for

their products or services some time after they have had to pay their own suppliers. With international trade, the time between paying and being paid can be stretched enormously by factors such as distance, shipping, Customs delays and the requirement of overseas suppliers to be paid up front or on despatch.

RBS offers its customers tailored options for bridging this 'funding gap' and most recently has developed a more integrated approach through the launch of its 'Trade Cycle Finance' solution. This seamless offering provides a combination of Letter of Credit, loans and invoice finance, collection and credit cover facilities covering key points within the trading cycle to enable businesses to manage cash flows proactively and gain maximum benefits from its supply chain.



**James Walton is Business Development Manager for International Trade at The Royal Bank of Scotland**

## MWTF members have access to new services

Midlands World Trade Forum Members now have access to the services offered by the European Information Centre (EIC).

The EIC is based within Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, and is part of a European Commission Network that has been designed to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to obtain information about the EU.

Birmingham EIC can help with a wide variety of enquiries that relate to EU legislation, the CE mark, EU Enlargement etc. With direct links to the European Commission in Brussels, and a network of more than 250 EICs in Europe, they are able to provide assistance to help you trade in Europe.

If the EIC cannot help with an enquiry, then we can put companies in touch with other EU networks in the region.

The EIC's services include; Business Partner Search Service, Trading in

Europe, EU Enlargement, EU legislation, Interactive Policy Making, Events.

MWTF members have the opportunity to benefit from a discounted rate on the EIC's Business Partner Search Service.

This service aims to offer companies who are looking to find new markets in Europe using a trade intermediary such as an agent or distributor.

The search is done through the vast network of EICs located in over 30 countries across Europe.

The EIC will supply you with a client profile form to fill in so they can obtain as much information about your company as possible. This form is then dispatched to EIC's in the country or countries of your choice who will then advertise it within their regions. Interested companies are asked to contact you direct.

This service is available to MWTF members for £35.00 + VAT (this includes all countries where you wish



to advertise your company and usually costs non-MWTF members £45 + VAT).

For more information, please contact Cathy Davies or Chris Pye on 0121 455 0268, or email: [c.pye@birminghamchamber.org.uk](mailto:c.pye@birminghamchamber.org.uk) or [c.davies@birminghamchamber.org.uk](mailto:c.davies@birminghamchamber.org.uk)  
k  
With your details, a profile will then be sent to you.

## New look to Passport Website

The website for the West Midlands Passport to Export programme gets a new look this month. As well as outlining the activities and the help the Passport programme can provide to new exporters, the site will also have a secure area where companies can book onto events and keep up to date on future training and workshop opportunities.

For more information on the Passport to Export programme visit the website at [www.passportwm.co.uk](http://www.passportwm.co.uk).

## New Members this quarter

- Abacus Applications *Solar heating and hot water systems*
- AIESEC West Midlands *Overseas student placements in local Businesses.*
- Alphatec International Ltd *Personal Safety Equipment*
- Bax Global *Transport & Logistics Company*
- Better Tasting Snack Foods *Snack Food Manufacturer*
- Birmingham Plating Company Ltd *Metal Finishers*
- C Robathan & Sons Ltd *Silversmith*
- Caparo Precision Tubes Ltd *Steel tube manufacturer and manipulator*
- Crystal with a Twist *Specialists in Lead Crystal Airtwist stemware.*
- Fabdec Limited *Farm milk cooling tanks, milking equipment*
- Hobsons Brewery & Co Ltd *Brewery*
- Jena Rotary Technology Ltd *Replacement Components for Machine Tools*
- John F White Limited *Furniture Manufacturer*
- LA Husbands Ltd *Manufacture & installer of service lifts*
- Mail Order 2000 *Branded Merchandise*
- Mangar International *Manufacturer of products for the elderly and disabled.*
- RAF Company Services Limited *Company Formation Agent*
- Raxcrest Valves Ltd *Suppliers of pressure independent flow control valves*
- Revelations *Specialist in Church Furniture*
- Robertson Geologging Ltd *Borehole Logging Systems and Services*
- Sovereign Star Trade Finance Limited *medium-term (2-5 year) export finance for £50k-£2million for purchasing eligible UK goods and services.*
- Ultra Electronics PMES *Electronic equipment for the defence and rail traction power markets.*

## Can you communicate with your customers?

Recent research has predicted that businesses will never develop the sort of customer relationships necessary to sustain export markets until they are ready and able to work in the language of the customer.

As most West Midlands companies are not fluent in another language, they may find it hard to expand upon their International Strategy.

The RLN (Regional Language Network) provides and information service and contact point for businesses, individuals and language professionals.

The RLN offer free, practical advice on how to improve language and cultural skills and signposting to language services, courses and jobs.

The Export Communications Review, one of the RLN's services, involves an in-depth discussion with a communications consultant, who will then prepare a report, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of current communications, considering

written, verbal, personal, promotional and electronic interactions.

The report will include practical recommendations to help you communicate more effectively and suggest those organisations or companies who can provide the solutions. An indication of costs and whether financial assistance is available will enable you to draw up outline budgets.

The MWTF fully support the RLN and encourage members to try learning new languages.

Tony Hotchkiss, MWTF Board Member, says: "One of the key elements of winning business is language. So often the first port of call is USA, after all we speak the same language. We may speak the same language but often our words have different meanings in commercial negotiations. There is also the distance and distribution issue to be considered.

So what is wrong with mainland Europe? In many ways our cultural

Visit [www.mwtf.org.uk](http://www.mwtf.org.uk) for latest International News from the BBC

## Forthcoming Seminars & Events

### Birmingham International Airport Networking Event

10.05.05, Birmingham International Airport  
(18.30—20.30 hrs)

An event looking at the forthcoming plans for the Airport and the opportunity to network with fellow members.

### Trade & Investment with Slovakia

27.04.05, Venue TBC

A seminar looking at the trading and investment opportunities with Slovakia.

### Networking for Export Success

17.06.05, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce  
(13.00—16.00 hrs)

An exhibition focussing on doing business with each Continent alongside workshops focussing on various Industry Sectors.



The Midlands World Trade Forum is sponsored by The Royal Bank of Scotland and the UK Trade & Investment Passport to Export Programme

Held back because you don't speak the language? Visit [www.rln-westmidlands.com](http://www.rln-westmidlands.com) for further information and assistance