



## VT Shipbuilding

VT Shipbuilding, part of VT Group, employs 900 people: of these, 400 are skilled and semi-skilled craft workers involved with the building of vessels such as aircraft carriers for the MoD.

In 2002 the shipyard relocated from its 10 year old site, at Southampton, to a new state of the art facility in Portsmouth. For the new facility to be successful and productive it was essential that staff were flexible and able to adapt to new ways of working. The organisation was also facing a number of sector specific issues related to skills shortages and the prospect of losing a significant proportion of its skilled staff to retirement over the next few years.

VT Shipbuilding, keen to ensure that they have the infrastructure in place to train and retain sufficient people to meet the increasing needs of the sector, worked in close partnership with the trade unions, the local Learning and Skills Council and Eastleigh College to secure funding for a workplace learning centre. The Company supplied the facility and equipped it with twelve computers, desks and chairs. The learning centre delivers literacy, numeracy and IT training using mainly PC-based methods, which allow training to be personalised. Trainers individually assess each learner before training begins using an online diagnostic assessment tool.

VT have had great success in engaging staff and managers in essential skills training. One key factor in this programme has been the support from the 10 Union Learning Representatives who developed a Learning Agreement providing 50% paid release for employees to attend courses which was signed by the Managing Director, VT Shipbuilding and the ULF Project Manager. The new agreement provides full paid release for basic literacy and numeracy courses from April 2006. Union Learning Reps are able to speak to colleagues about what training is available and so reduce any stigma and create a confidential learning environment. By providing popular IT courses it has also been easy to identify those who need further essential skills support.

- Over 300 employees have been engaged with learning at the centre.
- 116 employees have attended basic literacy and numeracy courses and 81 have taken the National Test at level 1 & 2 in numeracy and literacy.
- Over the period the centre has been opened accident rate has been reduced by 46%, sickness absence reduced by 32% and productivity up by 20%.

**“This is not a luxury but essential. If we don’t focus on improving essential skills and developing everyone in the organisation we will fail as a business.” Paul Lester, CEO**