

ADVANCING UK AEROSPACE, DEFENCE, SECURITY & SPACE SOLUTIONS WORLDWIDE

ADVANCE

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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF



Professor Peter Hines

Marcella Nethersole speaks to the founder of the SA Partners consultancy.

What does SA Partners do?

For 25 years we have pioneered delivering sustainable improvement in many business sectors.

Initially, our focus was on supply chain development and improvement within SMEs to achieve performance requirements set by inward investment companies attracted into Wales and the UK.

Over the years, led by successful experiences and research, our portfolio of clients and service offerings has changed considerably.

Today we deliver more than 5,000 consulting days each year to around 150 clients in the UK, the EU and the rest of the world.

We are committed to our vision of 'together, the power to improve' and our mission of transforming our customers' organisations, enabling them to maximise their effectiveness and people potential.

Our services include consulting, training, leadership development and coaching in the areas of sustainable business or continuous improvement, Shingo training, and enterprise excellence.

Our head office is in Wales but we also have offices in Ireland, the US, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East.

How did you come to establish the company?

I set up SA Partners in 1993 while I was still active in the Lean Enterprise Research Centre (LERC) at Cardiff University. My role as director of LERC enabled me to network with many highly influential figures in the burgeoning 'lean' community of the time, and to participate in a number of innovative and leading-edge research programmes.

I was particularly focused on how to sustain 'lean', understanding the cultural and behavioural challenges, and how to draw the lessons from the early adoption in automotive into other sectors.

The foundation of SA Partners allowed me to achieve this and play an active and practical role in working directly with businesses on their sustainable improvement journeys.

What sort of companies do you help?

We work with the full range of clients – single site, multi-site, supply chains, head office and multi-nationals.

Our consulting team is equally at ease in the boardroom or on the shop-floor and we have developed offers across all key business processes – strategy formation and deployment, new product development and introduction, MRO, order fulfilment, people development, supply chain, sales acquisition, plant and technology and continuous improvement.

Sectors include aerospace and defence – where we are currently working with three of the largest defence companies in the UK, plus others in Europe and Australia.



What makes your service a success?

Understanding the first 'lean' principle and meeting it – customer value.

We invest in building strong relationships with our clients so that we can understand what their aspirations and challenges are and really customise our work to help them. Also, we learn from our experiences across a broad range of clients and sectors, continuously improving what we do and our services for clients.

Our people are all experienced, time-served leaders from roles in organisations. They know about the pressures of 'the day job' and can advise empathetically on change strategies and their application.

We also know from our academic research what differentiates the really excellent businesses – they focus much more on deploying strategy meaningfully to their teams, developing effective, engaging and systematic improvement systems to drive performance, building a culture of excellence by defining and deploying meaningful behavioural standards.

What does it mean to be a member of ADS?

We joined the ADS group in January 2016. Before that we had been involved in the SC21 initiative some years ago. We recognised that, as our portfolio of clients in the aerospace and defence sector strengthened, we needed to be part of that important, strategic, influential business-to-business network.

Since joining, we have attended a number of informative, networking events where we get the latest news on the sector, Brexit and the productivity challenge.

We also 'follow' ADS and *ADS Advance* on social media and share their knowledge and insights through our considerable digital network.

What does your typical day involve?

There's never a typical day but there are some outstanding organisations in the world and I have had the pleasure of working, researching and writing with many of their teams.

I also run educational programmes for senior leaders, hosted by some of the best organisations in Europe, to help leaders get up close to those outstanding businesses and learn what makes their performance so different.

I also advise the Welsh Government on the 'improving efficiency board'.