



Ken Smart

Advisor / Non-Executive Director / Consultant in the Manufacturing SME sector

CONTACT DETAILS

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SKILLS

- Business strategy
- Performance improvement
- Transformation
- Change management
- Manufacturing strategy
- Automotive
- Engineering

EDUCATION

University of Warwick

Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration

Member, Institution of Engineering & Technology

Chartered Engineer

Loughborough University of Technology

Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Production Engineering and Management

Ennis & Co were delighted to welcome Ken Smart as an Associate of the company in November 2021.

Ken brings with him a wealth of manufacturing and engineering professionalism and knowledge, following an impressive career, most recently as part of the CEO's top team at McLaren Automotive, with a track record in creating new high performing factories and strategies sprinkled throughout his working life. During Ken's time fulfilling several Managing Director roles, he has also turned around business performance within aerospace and defence SMEs – to add to his list of accolades. Ken also brings with him vast experience within management consultancy, predominantly within the manufacturing arena, and has added tangible value within interim and advisory roles.

Whilst Ken has been taking a brief hiatus from leading strategy development and business planning –where McLaren are transforming the next generation of supercars as we know them – we took some time to get to know how Ken has built his career and how he looks to utilise his experience for the future.

On engineering a sound career...

"I have always been interested in engineering, yet my fascination always stemmed from how to make something, rather than the product itself", explained Ken. "So, I decided to study production engineering at university – but I always took an interest in what makes people tick – so I coupled this with management."

Ken discovered during this journey that people were always the "focus" and found the management side of his learning much more interesting. "Throughout my early career, I found I was able to engender positive change – a persuasive nature yet not in an aggressive sense," explained Ken. "This left me in good stead to start my consulting journey – which I began at PA Consulting Group. It was here that I worked extensively with British Aerospace, at specific request from the client, to assist with implementation – a request that was repeated at Rolls-Royce Motor Cars. The latter included implementing the manufacturing strategy – delivering a new factory layout and facilities for assembly of the Silver Seraph and Bentley Arnage models."

On leading from the front...

"People know that they can bring me on board, and I will deliver. There is something in my nature that people do not feel threatened by but will stand alongside me on my vision. For me, from an operational

perspective, it is about using data and logic to inform decision making –not just listening to who is the most senior or who shouts loudest. This was always the goal from my point of view, not operating as a dictator."

"I wear my heart on my sleeve and people understand that I am honest and trustworthy. However, from a consulting point of view, I have the ability to analyse a situation, focus down on what needs to be done and lead people to do this."

On turning projects around...

"An important contributor to project turnaround, of course aside from strong P&L responsibility, is ensuring you have the right people in place, and if change is required... then you must make it so. Some of the most stressful periods of my working life have seen making redundancies, yet this is countered by the satisfaction from creating a strong top team. This must comprise capable individuals who work well together."

"To some extent my leadership style is a reflection of myself –it comes back to logic, persuasion and treating people with decency but not being afraid to expect a lot from them."

On winning some and losing some...

As Vice President Global Operations, Ken directed the opening of a new factory in Mexico and transferred roles from both France and the UK generating significant savings. "Yet there were some aspects of my career that were not smooth sailing. When asked by a defence contractor to turn their business around, as they were losing a fortune, I worked to secure major contracts with the Saudi and Indian Airforces ... yet this simply wasn't enough. I presented the numbers to the board and recommended selling the business and closing down operations."

"Striking the right balance between minimising financial losses, and incentivising employees to fulfil supply contracts in an orderly way, required difficult judgments – retaining the best employees until we needed them to leave proved difficult and sensitive, but contracts were fulfilled, and the business closed with minimum liability."

"Yet further challenge came with the asset sale having to be put to the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA), which was a rare experience. I had to convince them that this was in the UK's best interest, but we were met with an initial "no" – yet after months of data preparation, negotiation and painful weekly meetings, this was turned around and we won our case at the final formal CMA review."

On building a legacy...

"My career has been founded on strong business relationships. Whilst consulting at both British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, I was specifically asked to lead the extensive phase 2 implementation of the aircraft and car assembly strategies identified in the respective phase 1s. And then, in the case of Rolls-Royce, was invited to join the company full time as Head of Car Assembly. Some 20 years later, that Rolls-Royce relationship surfaced again when I was invited to take up the exciting role of Project Director for establishing the Composites Technology Centre (MCTC) at McLaren Automotive."

"MCTC in Sheffield is a brand-new facility employing ground-breaking processes creating the carbon fibre MonoCells (tubs) for the new McLaren Artura, and future models. In the McLaren team, I worked alongside the best engineer I have ever come across. With his guidance and my leadership, we proved the processes could work, we specified the factory and its unique machinery, managed the build and machinery installation, and it's now in full production. We needed the momentum to transition my role and sense of ownership – so I left this role to my successor, becoming Executive Director of Business Strategy for McLaren Automotive for several key reasons. Firstly, to create a more robust business strategy for a young company. Secondly, with COVID-19 creating a serious rift, we had to create a new business plan from scratch, which thus led to a new COVID-influenced- strategy. And thirdly, we explored alternatives in the product portfolio, which needed extensive background studies surrounding automotive trends and commercial feasibility."

On the future...

Ken brings coveted knowledge and insight to Ennis & Co, particularly surrounding the aerospace and automotive arenas. His broad experience within exciting automotive and aerospace brands, coupled with the industry and academia insight from his Chairmanship of the Composites Leadership Forum, has provided him with incredible insight. This encompasses cultural sensitivity within the world of automotive, and expertise in future roadmap requirements as we head towards a more sustainable innovative future – which aligns perfectly with Ennis & Co's passion for this very topic.

Ken now operates on an advisory or NED basis in his own right, for Smart Directing Ltd. If you would like to find out how Ken can bring value to your business, please contact: smart.directing@gmail.com