Strathclyde Business School established the Babcock International Group (BIG) Academy to provide a specially tailored executive learning programme to enhance the leadership, strategic planning and commercial skills of Babcock’s senior executives and managers.

**The company’s objective**

Babcock International Group plc (Babcock Group), a FTSE-250 company, is the UK’s leading engineering support services company with over 27,000 staff.

The Babcock Group delivers critical asset support to diverse sectors including defence, energy, transport and telecommunications. Due to this diversity, and the rapid growth of the Babcock Group (revenue increased from £377.9m in 2003 to £3bn in 2010) there was no company-wide structure that allowed strategic objectives to be communicated effectively and best practice to be shared. To achieve its strategic objectives, the company needed to improve senior staff development and embed company-wide structures for effective communication, share best practice and establish a common identity and a ‘one business’ approach across divisions.

**The University’s response**

The BIG Academy was conceived in partnership with senior academics from Strathclyde Business School (SBS). The initial focus was on Strategy, Finance, Managing People in Organisations, Change and Project Management. These are areas where SBS has demonstrated exceptional levels of expertise. In addition, the School’s international teaching networks enabled it to source the appropriate academics and practitioners to contribute to the resolution of the organisation’s strategic issues.

The programme was introduced in 2005 and more than 600 managers from across Babcock Group have participated. The programme is designed to introduce a Babcock ‘corporate approach’ to a number of key operational areas.

**The learning experience**

The BIG Academy has three main learning platforms. First, there is the Senior Managers’ Programme – Part 1 where members of the leadership population attend three-day courses in Strategy, Finance, Change and Project Management.

Second, there is the Senior Managers’ Programme – Part 2 where members of the leadership population attend three-day courses on Strategic Business Winning and Operational Performance Improvement.

Third, there is the Babcock Leaders Programme for those identified with further leadership potential who attend three-day courses in Finance, Project Management and Managing People in Organisations.

“The projects on which we work are, by their very nature, long term and if we are to compete effectively in a global market place in future years, we need to take responsibility now for ensuring that have the best engineering brains we can.”

Archie Bethel CBE, Divisional Chief Executive, Marine & Technology Division, Babcock International Group plc
Each programme is taught using mixed methods of delivery, including lectures, case study work, simulations and role play. In each programme, particular emphasis is placed on giving participants a common language and a common understanding of the principles and concepts.

**Successful outcomes**
The BIG Academy has become quickly embedded into the culture of the Babcock Group. The company has noted several benefits to its business which, they believe, are reflected in improvements to bottom-line performance of the Babcock Group.

The senior teams in each of the company’s divisions now have a common toolset and knowledge that has helped shape the Babcock Group’s corporate strategy, as well as the strategic planning process itself. Cross-fertilisation of management personnel and knowledge has facilitated successful project teams that span the Group’s divisions. An example of this new mechanism for collaboration has resulted in the Royal School of Military Engineering contract – the first contract won jointly by two business units (Defence and Infrastructure) in the company’s history.

As the Babcock Group has expanded rapidly over the past five years, many people have joined the business. The Academy has allowed them to meet, network with each other and understand the talents, strengths and good practices of each division.

In April 2011 we established the Neil Grant Secondment Scheme, a two-way secondment agreement that enables staff from both the Babcock Group and Strathclyde University to expand their knowledge and skills by spending time in another environment.

SBS has further deepened engagement with the Babcock Group through MBA students, MSc students and research staff undertaking practical projects in strategic management, project management and performance management systems as well as additional knowledge exchange activities, such as consultancy contracts.

Broadening engagement with the Babcock Group to other parts of the University has resulted in technical continuing professional development and research links being established with engineering and science. This broadening of the engagement is aligned to Strathclyde’s Technology and Innovation Centre’s aims to work in partnership with companies to address their major challenges using multidisciplinary academic teams combining strengths in engineering, science, business and the social sciences.

**How we can help your organisation**

If you are interested in establishing an executive education programme for your organisation, please contact:

Sandy Wilson
Head of Executive Education
Strathclyde Business School
alexander.j.wilson@strath.ac.uk, 0141 553 6015

Strathclyde’s Research and Knowledge Exchange Services team support the University’s knowledge exchange activities in a variety of ways. If you would like to take advantage of the University’s research and knowledge, please contact:

Linda Wallace
Strategic R&KE Development Manager
linda.wallace@strath.ac.uk 0141 548 2774

Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
University of Strathclyde
Level 3, Graham Hills Building
50 George Street
Glasgow G1 1QE

www.strath.ac.uk/businessorganisations
rkes@strath.ac.uk 0141 548 3707

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**The partnership has been so successful that we are now collaborating very closely to address new challenges in their businesses through the design and development of bespoke Babcock case-studies.**

Sandy Wilson, Head of Executive Education, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde