Norcott Technologies are a specialist electronic design and manufacturing company who have been supplying key electrical components to CERN since 2013.

Norcott were first introduced to CERN on a trade mission (UK@CERN) organised by the Department for International Trade (DIT) in conjunction with STFC. At UK@CERN Norcott were provided with a tailored programme of one-to-one meetings with key buyers at CERN giving them the opportunity to learn how to work with CERN and build relationships with key individuals. The size and scale of CERN surprised Norcott when they visited and they recognised the challenge of identifying suitable contacts and the importance of developing and maintaining relationships with key CERN staff. The contacts made during UK@CERN have been invaluable in Norcott’s success at CERN and have helped them to win contracts for the manufacture of prototypes and NPI builds; these contracts have totalled ~£215,000 since 2013.

Russ Magee, the Managing Director at Norcott Technologies said “The UK@CERN event has made it a lot easier to understand how contracts are awarded and make contacts with people at the facility, as it would be very daunting to go to CERN alone. Using UK@CERN is a long term strategy which can be challenging and is a massive learning curve for everyone involved, however when it comes off it is very rewarding.”

Andrea Boccardi, an expert in beam position measurement from CERN said “CERN BE-BI has worked with Norcott for the layout and prototyping work of one of our main digital board with tens of high speed lines and hundreds of mid speed connections. We were very pleased not only with the quality of the work but also with the fast feedbacks during the design phase. The project, also thanks to Norcott, was a success and the board became our standard back-end.”

Working with CERN has also helped Norcott to expand their customer base; using their previous work for CERN as a reference has allowed them to demonstrate their capability to other customers. For example, they used CERN as a reference when winning a contract with the University of Manchester for The Human Brain Project.
In December 2017, Norcott won a contract from CERN worth over £800,000 for the supply of 900 beam instrumentation electronic modules to fulfil new requirements for back-end processing electronics. These will be used to upgrade the injector beam instrumentation systems as part of the LIU project and the LHC beam loss monitoring system as part of the LHC consolidation project. For this tender Norcott will be responsible for the whole manufacturing process of the modules; from the initial design, to building a prototype, to manufacture. For previous contracts Norcott had only dealt with a small phase of the manufacturing process. Norcott’s Managing Director felt “that because we have had engineers from CERN come to visit Norcott and carry out tests on our machines they are able to see the high level of manufacturing that we are capable of. It is good to build a relationship up with them to gain their trust in our products, however this must be managed with a good know how of the tendering process to ensure that the bid price put in is competitive and fits their criteria”.

Although this latest contract is a significant win for Norcott, they are very pleased with the level of smaller contracts that they have gained from CERN. Over time these smaller contracts have given them insight into how to tender with the facility as well as what the engineers require, furthering their customer-client relationship which is vital when competing to win tenders at CERN.

Further information
STFC manages the UK subscription to CERN. UK membership of CERN gives our physicists and engineers access to the experiments and allows UK industry to bid for contracts and UK nationals to compete for jobs and research positions at CERN.

STFC funds a number of large international science facilities besides CERN. The STFC Business Opportunities team works to increase the return that the UK gets from tenders and contracts at these facilities by providing free assistance to UK companies and helping them to access tenders at these facilities.

The international laboratories include: CERN in Geneva, Switzerland; ESO in Garching, Germany; ESS in Lund, Sweden; SKA in the UK, South Africa and Australia; European X-FEL in Hamburg, Germany; the ESRF and the ILL in Grenoble, France; and FAIR in Darmstadt, Germany. We are not involved in contract opportunities for our national facilities.

If you would like to be alerted to upcoming tender opportunities or to hear about events to connect with the facilities please register with us.

Russ Magee, Managing Director at Norcott Technologies (Credit: Norcott)