

Educating the next generation

A partnership between a technology company and a tertiary education provider in Canberra will be schooling up the next generation of Australian apprentices.

BY NINA HENDY

The Canberra Institute of Technology was in the market for a major technology upgrade at its Fyshwick Trades Skills Centre, but wasn't sure which company would be able to meet its needs. Steven McMahon, a teacher of metal fabrication trades from the education facility says it was his job to source a CNC plasma cutter machine for the centre that represented value for money.

McMahon began the search by trawling through internet sites, not really sure of the best supplier to use. He says he wanted to make sure the Institute was looked after not only in terms of price but also after-sales service given it's an education centre, explaining machine breakdowns would hinder classes.

"It's our belief that if you're not keeping up with technology as an education provider, then you're not keeping ahead. I searched across the country to see what was available, and came across Queensland-based Advanced Robotic Technology (ART) and another company, based in New South Wales," Mr McMahon says. "I went down to ART and spent two and a half hours with them, and was rapt with their presentation. The other machine I saw with the other company was more expensive, and the sales person was nowhere near as friendly as the guys at ART. The machine was Australian-made as well, so that was a bonus."

Mr McMahon says he made the decision to purchase the new release Smart 4000 CNC plasma cutter from ART, forking out \$55,000 for a CNC machine after securing a discount. The machine normally retails for \$70,000.

He says around 100 students a year will learn to operate the machine using computer aided drawings (CAD) to create various designs, in preparation for their chosen careers. The Canberra Institute of Technology offers competency-based training, meaning the course length varies depending on how quickly a student is able to learn.



Around 100 students a year will learn to operate the ART plasma cutter at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Photo: CIT

"Our students make everything from steel fireplaces, trailers, tool cabinets and other projects drawn using CAD technology, which can then be uploaded into the CNC plasma cutter. After they leave here they go off to do everything from become a foreman, work in air conditioning or general manufacturing, and each of these industries uses a CNC cutter, which means we're preparing them for whatever path they choose to take."

Relationship beyond sales

Mr McMahon says the relationship between ART and the Institute looks likely to extend well beyond the handover of the cheque. McMahon has offered to show any manufacturers located in Canberra interested in purchasing the machine a look at the Institute's, which will save them a trip to Queensland.

"It's the least I could do. The service and after-sales support we've received has been brilliant, which was very important to us. We needed to know we could call out if we needed help." Mr McMahon believes the Institute will be able to use the machine for at least four decades.

ART, which is an international supplier of quality and state of the art router and plasma CNC profile machines, believes educational facilities can greatly value from having state of the art machinery for students to learn on. ART spokesman Rod Brown says the company's machines have enabled manufacturers to make huge increases in their productivity, with ship and boat builders, cabinet makers, sheet metal workers, steel fabricators, plastic engineering and others to have benefited from its products.

"Because ART deals directly with the customer, we're able to maintain constant communication with the end user. Customer feedback is one of the vital links that keep ART in front of the crowd. Many of the features included in our current line of machinery have origins dating back to customer suggestions." 

Advanced Robotic Technology Pty Ltd
www.advancedrobotic.com

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