



New developments on the way from Lincad

An Interview with Peter Copplestone Operations Manager

Q. Could you start by telling us something about your role at Lincad?

My job title is Operations Manager and I've been in the role for about 6 years. With a number of managers reporting to me, I'm responsible for overseeing the engineering, production and QA functions. I'm also very involved in supporting our sales activities.

Q. Did you join Lincad in your present role?

No, not at all, I started with Lincad 20 years ago, working initially on battery repairs. From there, I worked my way up through the company, gaining an overview of all the company's different departments.

Q. You mentioned earlier that there was a sales element to your role. Does that mean you work directly with customers?

Yes, about 50% of my time is spent working with customers and the other half is spent working internally, making sure everything is running smoothly from day to day. So I have a significant input into most of our client relationships, including most of the UK primes. Part of that involves being at the exhibitions we attend. For example, I was in Paris last year at Eurosatory and that gave me the opportunity to meet a range of European contacts and clients that it simply wouldn't be practical to visit on an individual basis.

Q. Are you involved in the product development process?

Within Lincad, R&D is carried out by our Engineering Department for which I have overall responsibility. So, yes, I'm involved in ensuring that we are coming up with cutting edge designs and also that those designs can be produced efficiently. Importantly I also work very closely with our customers throughout the entire process to make certain that whatever we're developing is going to precisely meet their requirements.

Q. Your largest client is the UK MOD. What can you tell us about the lithium ion batteries you have been producing for them?

That's a very good example of what I've just been talking about. We've been supplying the MOD with lithium batteries for about 15 years but we're continually evolving our products, using the very latest developments in cell technology from all of the world's leading lithium cell producers. Whilst I'm not an engineer, I do have an input into product design and remain involved right through to product trials at MOD sites, if necessary, to ensure that we deliver what the MOD wants and needs.

Q. How do you view the future for lithium ion batteries in the defence sector?

Although new chemistries are being developed, lithium ion technology continues to improve and it's likely to be the key technology for the foreseeable future. Indeed, approximately 90% of our business is now lithium-based. With our LIPS (lithium-ion power system) batteries, we've been able to deliver ever greater energy densities – in other words, better power-to-weight ratios – and that means soldiers in the field have less to

carry. Going forward, the drive for smaller, lighter, more powerful batteries that have a reduced need for recharging will continue. But there are challenges – as energy densities increase, so too do the safety considerations. A battery may look like an inert box but there can be a phenomenal amount of energy stored in that box. So safety is a top priority for us when we're developing new products.

Q. And what about the future for Lincad more generally?

I think it's important to say that Lincad will always be primarily an MOD and military-focused company. That will remain our core business. However, we will continue to work with specialist commercial companies where they have a need for high power in a safe format – such as the battery we designed for Northrop Grumman to power the CUTLASS remotely operated vehicle used for bomb disposal.

Within that context, there are a number of important developments coming through and we will certainly be a part of those. For example, the integration of wearable technologies and energy harvesting, including solar charging, will largely be driven by battery technology and design. And we will continue to work closely with cell manufacturers, testing the latest products and where applicable introducing them into new products.

Indeed, we're looking forward to exhibiting at DSEI 2015 in September where we'll be showcasing some of our brand new products.

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