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Unitrunk: Celebrating 60 years of excellence

Unitrunk, an internationally renowned and respected brand within the cable management industry, boasts an extensive depot network, two manufacturing sites, innovative product range and a global customer base. As the business celebrates its 60th anniversary, David Morrow, managing director and third generation business owner of the Unitrunk Group, talks about the journey from humble beginnings, to becoming an industry leading business setting new standards in cable management

Unitrunk was founded by my maternal grandfather, Jim Cairns, in 1961. He initially started the engineering company, as it was then, from his pretty rustic-looking shed in Dunmurry, Northern Ireland. The company, known then as Castlereagh Sheet Metal Company, specialised in fabrication, servicing local projects while building a strong reputation for quality products and "like family" service.

In 1970, the company moved to our current premises in Lisburn, combining production, storage and office space. Customers during that time included Kilroot Power Station and the now infamous DeLorean manufacturing site. In 1984, we developed a specialised division, manufacturing cable management systems, where we quickly established our niche and haven't looked back since.

We decided early on that we wanted to make our products accessible throughout the UK and Ireland and began establishing our network of depots and wholesale distributors. This network has been key to our success, business model and overall growth. Our first depots were located in Livingston and Manchester.

When my father, Marcus Morrow, joined the company as managing director in the late 1990s, the company changed its name to Unitrunk, reflecting its new direction. Dad strategically expanded our depot network over the years adding Harlow in 2000, a year which also saw our acquisition of Vantrunk in Warrington.

Vantrunk added an international element along with an enhanced product range to the already impressive cable management offering. He continued to spearhead a period of high growth for the company adding another six depot locations, establishing relationships with wholesaler electrical suppliers nationwide, as well as distribution partners all over the world during his time as managing director.

I also joined the business in the late 90s. I started out in the stores, where I got to know the products, production processes, delivery demands, and the people, many of whom had been working with the company since the early days. Over the years I moved through to the design team and then the sales department, before being appointed general manager and then managing director in 2019.

This early experience enabled me to gain a holistic view of the company, which I feel has, without a doubt, helped me in my current role to understand the needs of not only our customer, but our employees and the company as a whole.

Ingrained within every department at Unitrunk there is a consistent theme and a focus on innovation, arguably most prevalent within our product design department. As a business with an inherent pioneering culture, we continually strive to achieve more efficient means of producing high quality products by incorporating the latest technology into our production processes.

We first introduced robotics into our manufacturing facility in 2013 when we partnered with Queen's University Belfast to implement the robotic press brake. Today our Robotic Cell is near to producing its two millionth part, which has freed

up approximately 20,000 man hours for higher value tasks.

Our large Amada installation features the first TK part pickers built in Europe. Along with the integration of SigmaNest software, another first within the industry, this machine gives us complete flexibility in terms of scheduling and programming options.

With the capability to operate out of hours we easily meet the demands of our larger-scale, global customers and any time-sensitive projects, as well as building up our own stock holdings for expected peak periods across our depot network. We continue to investigate possible processes where automation can be introduced, including power press tending with collaborative robots, with more exciting times ahead.

“We've continually invested in our facilities, our products and our people”

To maintain our position as a global leader within the cable management industry, we've continually invested in our facilities, our products and our people. With continued growth plans ahead, we're committed to a more sustainable focus for the future.

We've already installed solar panels at our head office and manufacturing site in Lisburn, and plan to add solar panels throughout our depot network taking them 70% of the way to going off-grid. We transitioned to hybrid and fully electric vehicles for our sales team earlier this year, installed EV charging points at all Unitrunk Group locations and have switched to energy efficient lighting throughout the network as we work towards our NetZero production goals.

Looking ahead, after firmly establishing ourselves over the past 60 years, we still have so much more to offer.

2020/21 has been an amazing year for us in terms of realising our production capabilities and adaptability when overcoming the challenges of the pandemic, such as material shortages, and cost increases, staff shortages and an ever-changing directive on government legislation. During this time, we brought three new product ranges to market, added to our depot network with our latest facility located in Yorkshire, grew our team and developed new international partnerships.



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We are in the process of establishing our newly formed business, Vantrunk Inc. USA, which will see the Unitrunk Group having a permanent stateside presence, offering an extensive range of stocked cable management solutions, and greatly reducing lead times on time sensitive US based projects.

Following on from the exciting and successful launch of our Yorkshire depot in early 2020 we are currently assessing suitable locations to add to our GB distribution network, further expanding our reach and accessibility.

And finally, having achieved encouraging levels of sales in 2020 and 2021 year to date with current partners, we are actively seeking to grow our

partnership network in Europe and further afield, enabling customers across the globe to benefit from our innovative, time-saving cable management solutions and expertise.

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We invested time and money into enhanced product design so that our customers can save theirs onsite. We're proud that this dedication has

led to the Unitrunk brand becoming synonymous with innovation and saving time and money onsite, among electrical engineers, electrical contractors and the wider cable management industry.

I would attribute our success, in part, to maintaining the original family values instilled by my grandfather when he started the company all those years ago and reinforced by my father during his time leading the company.

We've partnered those values with a fantastic and growing team, modern technologies and a commitment to continuous improvement, both in the service we offer and the innovative products we design and will continue to do so for the next 60 years and beyond.