

Watt to do

Voltage optimisation company powerPerfactor's new academy aims to bring a host of educational benefits – and persuade decision-makers to invest in the firm's technology too. **Michael Pullan** reports

People always tell me that the technology sells itself," says Angus Robertson, CEO of voltage optimisation company powerPerfactor. "But it actually takes a lot of time, effort and skill."

His comments come as he launches the powerPerfactor Academy, which he hopes will instil staff, clients, partners and installers with the confidence to persuade customers and decision-makers to commit to the company's technology.

The Academy is responsible for training new starters (the company has grown from 14 to 100 people in little more than three years), the company's partner organisations and its installation partners. For new starters, the training is intense. Account managers undergo six weeks of training on everything from the physics behind the Voltage Power Optimisation (VPO) technology to the frequently asked questions that they are likely to

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come across from sceptical energy managers.

"Our technology sits in a critical part of a building on the mains incoming supply, so requires a huge level of trust," says Robertson. "For energy managers, FMs or those with responsibility for sustainability, it is vital that the technology they recommend is robust enough for the job.

"This is especially pertinent for sensitive sites like hospitals, prisons and data centres where outages could risk lives, security and profits – quickly consuming the financial benefits of installing the technology in the

first place. As one FM said to me, 'if I save the company cash and a few tonnes of carbon I get a pat on the back. If the building goes down, I get the sack'."

The Academy also oversees around four master classes a year, for existing and potential clients looking for more information ahead of a business-case pitch to their managers. A series of regional masterclasses began in late 2010 and were well attended. "Our technology has a 100% reliability record. It is this record that has afforded many businesses the confidence to take us in to buildings where there is zero tolerance for failure. The Academy allows advocates within a potential client to reassure nervous managers that the technology is safe," said Robertson.

The company has a similarly thorough training schedule in place for the team of 15 installation partners authorised to install the technology. Each installation partner must achieve minimum standards even to be considered by powerPerfactor as befits its technology. Individual team members from the installation partner attend a bespoke training course, before being awarded 'approved contractor' status and a powerPerfactor identity card which they must carry at all times.

The quality of their installations is inspected regularly and assessed on an ongoing basis, while all contractors have received formal training in working in substations and best practice electrical engineering.

With VPO suitable for around 90% of UK businesses, the training programme looks set to extend as the company extends into new sectors and new partnership opportunities are explored. The training programme itself is modularised to allow tailoring for individual partners or requirements. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach, because that would not



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ensure the highest standards are maintained.

Energy efficiency measures are essential for businesses facing up to their sustainability challenge. Simplifying the decision-making process for energy managers and CSR teams faced with an abundance of options will come as welcome relief.

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