

Servowatch

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case study



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Steve Smith,
Managing Director

INVEST
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Essex County Council

Servowatch

innovation in global marine automation

Servowatch, is a global technology leader in marine automation and control systems with an international reputation for expertise in electronic integration, including navigation and communication systems. The company, which is based at Tollesbury in Essex, has been setting the standard for the industry since 1975 and has grown to more than 60 employees, with a turnover of some £6 million.

The company's key customers in the UK include the Ministry of Defence and the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI). It is currently supplying a complete vessel management system called SIMS to the latest of the RNLI's all-weather deep sea boats, the 15 metre TAMAR class vessel. Innovation has been an important factor in winning and maintaining business in this demanding sector. As Managing Director Steve Smith explains, "We have been responsible for ground-breaking technology in the marine surveillance and camera tracking field, and we have won a number of innovation awards for our superior technology and software. These include the prestigious Lloyds List Award and an Essex Business Excellence Award 2009 for Innovation."

Steve Smith believes that the company's continuing flow of technical breakthroughs is a tribute to the quality of the engineering and electronics skills in the county. "We have a very strong team of development and software engineers and we are pleased that there is a good pool of such resources in the central Essex area. We have also found that there are many younger people leaving school and further education with skills and enthusiasm which we can build on for the future. We have a number of in-house training programs as well as apprenticeships and day release education programmes in partnership with local colleges."

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Steve Smith, Managing Director

Servowatch's product development programme has also benefitted from the support of Essex County Council's Essex Innovation Programme. "We received invaluable assistance to seek out and apply for grant funding to enhance our innovation processes as well as assistance with our training programmes," says Steve Smith.

Essex has proved a good base for the company's operations, as Steve Smith explains,

"We have found Essex to be very cost-effective to house our main operations and Tollesbury's riverside location is very attractive from an environmental perspective. We find also that our local area has many support industries that can provide us with a good selection of services such as metalworking and machining, painting and finishing which we do not handle in-house."

The county's location is also important to Servowatch's international business, according to Steve Smith. "A large proportion of our products

and services are exported to clients overseas including Navies in many countries such as USA, New Zealand, India and many more. We also have a satellite office in the USA to channel our services into North America."

While much of the engineering design and product supply is derived from its base in Tollesbury, Servowatch engineering and service teams face a heavy travel schedule to support the global customer base. "Road, rail and air links are excellent," says Steve Smith. "London Stansted Airport provides connections to our main international destinations, particularly in southern Europe where we serve our Superyacht customers."



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Tel: 01245 702480 **Email:** contact@investessex.co.uk **www.investessex.co.uk**

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