

NEIL R. SMITH ESQ

Experienced manufacturing leader and consultant

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PROFILE

Senior manufacturing leader and consultant with over 30 years of experience running factories, building new operations, and leading international teams across Europe and Asia, with particular depth in China.

I work with organisations that need calm, experienced oversight to stabilise, improve and grow complex manufacturing operations, without adding permanent headcount prematurely. My focus is practical execution: clear objectives, disciplined implementation and measurable results.

FOCUS AREAS

Factory efficiency

Improving the performance of existing operations by aligning priorities, flows and planning:

- simplifying production flows and removing bottlenecks
- improving throughput without uncontrolled cost or overtime
- aligning demand, planning, purchasing and operations
- engaging teams around clear, measurable performance targets

Interim leadership cover

Stepping in when experienced leadership is needed quickly during transition, expansion or disruption:

- stabilising operations and providing direction
- restoring clarity of roles, cadence and accountability
- protecting customer service, margin and working capital
- preparing the ground for the permanent leadership solution

Strategic planning and execution

Translating intent into organised delivery:

- turning strategy into a small number of clear priorities
- sequencing initiatives sensibly to avoid overload
- setting up governance and reporting without bureaucracy
- keeping decisions grounded in operational reality

EXPERIENCE SNAPSHOT

- 30+ years in engineering, manufacturing and international management
- Managing Director and senior leadership roles across multiple China-based operations
- Senior positions within voestalpine Böhler Welding, voestalpine Wire Technology and ESAB, plus private-equity backed manufacturing businesses

- Proven record starting new plants, stabilising under-performing sites and leading teams through demanding change and growth
- Comfortable operating across cultures and time zones, particularly China and wider Asia-Pacific

APPROACH

My style is calm, direct and collaborative.

- I focus on a small number of important objectives, agreed clearly at the outset
- I work closely with existing leadership rather than “dropping in” a separate agenda
- Reporting is factual and unvarnished, with attention to delivery, risk and second-order consequences
- I am careful about handover, ensuring that progress is embedded rather than dependent on me personally

GEOGRAPHIC AVAILABILITY

Available for selected engagements globally, with a primary focus on China and Asia-Pacific, and regular work with European and UK stakeholders.

CONTACT

For an initial discussion:

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