

# MADE SMARTER

## Innovative engineering business taking the next step

A cutting-edge advanced engineering business based in Warwickshire has praised Made Smarter West Midlands' Leadership and Management Programme for helping the next stage of its growth.

Daniela Gonzalez, is the CEO and MD of BARO Vehicles. The venture was invited to set-up in the UK by the Department for International Trade and in 2015 became the first private company to start an autonomous vehicle project at MIRA Technology Park in Nuneaton.

The first research and development laboratory was established at MIRA. Subsequently, the company expanded its operations by inaugurating a new facility equipped with an in-house electrical assembly line.

This assembly line is dedicated to producing critical components for the development of automated vehicles.

Innovate EDGE suggested Daniela participate in the Made Smarter West Midlands Leadership and Management Programme, and she found it to be extremely beneficial.

She said: "The programme was about leading and managing digital change, how you create the cultural changes and embed them into your day-to-day operations by getting staff to buy into the changes.

"My mission is to seek investment opportunities, drive product development, and forge strategic partnerships aligned with our vision."

### The Challenge

Made Smarter West Midlands' first Leadership and Management Programme was run in partnership with Coventry University at its Simulation Centre.

Daniela said, like many small business owners, she didn't have the time to research training courses which would benefit her business or keep up-to-date with the kind of support that was available.

"One of the key aspects for small companies like us is business connections," she said. "The Made Smarter family offers a very good background of different types of support to make partnerships and have access to workshops and mentoring as well as specialist leadership and management programmes.

"These are really important to make you sit back and think about your methodologies particularly after the pandemic because they can just be theories.

"I decided I wanted to refresh as a manager because I knew about concepts and methodology but there is often little time to reflect about it and the Made Smarter programme offered the space to reflect on our activities and build the foundation for the vision of the company."

### The Solution

Daniela attended the Leadership and Management Programme which helps owners or senior managers from manufacturing and engineering businesses transition towards adopting digital technologies and to discover new and innovative ways of developing and managing their people.

The usual cost to attend the course is £2,500, but this is reduced to only £500 per delegate for those businesses registered with Made Smarter West Midlands. The next course, which is now taking registrations, will take place in Dudley from December 2023.

It includes up to 30 hours of learning to help owners transform their businesses, enhance value creation, create efficiencies and engage their employees to deliver better results through leadership skills training.

"We decided to install a CRM system to organise our sales activities and start the integration for the storage part to unify all our systems on one platform," Daniela said.

Sarah Gambrall, Project Manager for Made Smarter West Midlands said: "The Leadership and Management Programme provides a blend of face-to-face training, self-learning and roundtable discussions.

"The wide range of topics that the course covers provide owners and senior managers with the skills they need to effectively embrace digital technology for their business and help their staff to become familiar with new systems, which Daniela found really useful."

### The Benefits

Daniela said one of the key benefits of the programme was the in-person and virtual discussions they had with the course leaders and fellow businesses because, as an MD, she rarely sought advice from high-level consultants.

She said: "We spoke about similar problems we have dealt with and the problem in changing work practices and implementing new tools in a team, which is very important.

"To manage very talented people when you have many Lionel Messis – the superstar footballer – you need to implement new ways of working carefully to transition to a new era.

"It is very important to get everyone's buy-in otherwise the processes you are introducing won't be as effective."

### The Future

BARO Vehicles is at the forefront of providing cutting-edge AI systems for the safety of automated vehicles. The company recently achieved a significant milestone by winning an Innovate UK Grant. The successful application was completed last year during the programme, with valuable guidance from the programme advisors.

Daniela said: "Innovation requires investment and our key challenge is looking for potential investors but we feel more confident now.

"With the improvement in the processes we have in place suggested during the Made Smarter programme, we have expanded our goals and core values of the company.

"We have made a little shift in the way we express ourselves in our marketing, which will help us to deliver a new way of showcasing our innovation.

"We have international ambitions to grow beyond the Midlands. We are looking to grow our presence in North America because we have a customer from the USA that's developing a prototype with us but they are looking to manufacture the product in the USA.

"Our idea is to become a technology partner not just at the prototype stage but further along the process and for that reason we need to have a presence in Canada or the USA.

"One of the key benefits of having a small business in the Midlands is the importance of business support.

"Often, we are busy running our businesses and we don't realise the Government support that is available, which is why it has been fantastic to connect with Made Smarter.

"The Made Smarter family offers different aspects which are important to running a business such as inclusion, diversity and, as a woman entrepreneur, the value of building networks that you can turn to for advice and support when considering pitches to showcase solutions for investors, customers and partners."

To find out about the next Made Smarter West Midlands Leadership and Management Programme, please email [madesmarter@cwgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:madesmarter@cwgrowthhub.co.uk)

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From left – Dr Richard Tomlins from Coventry University with Daniela Gonzalez from BARO Vehicles

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CASE STUDY