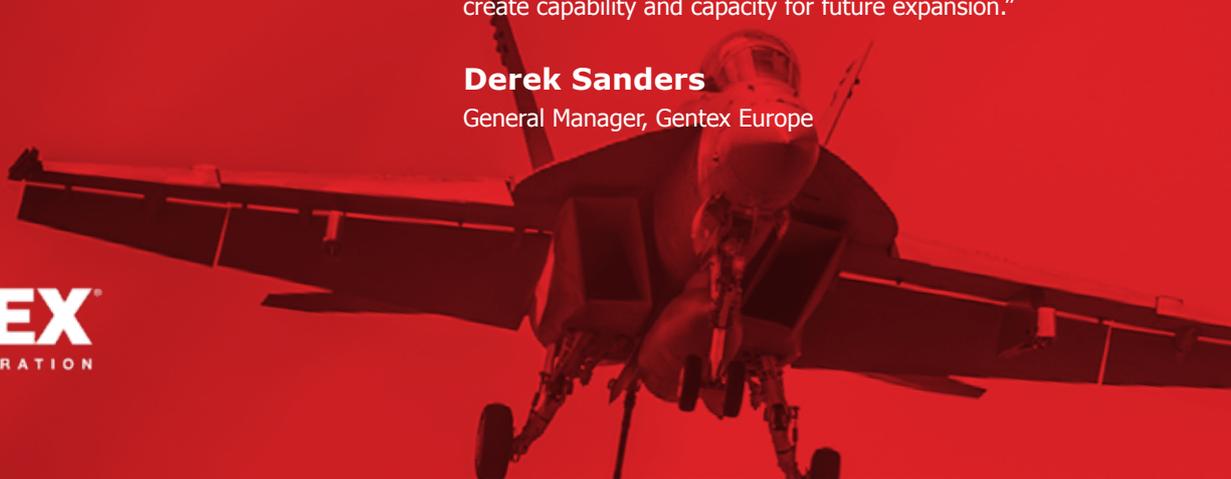


# People Focus to Double Turnover

“We would like to continue working with Sharing in Growth. The programme has enabled us to invest in our team, to increase output and turnover and, at the same time, to create capability and capacity for future expansion.”

**Derek Sanders**  
General Manager, Gentex Europe

**GENTEX**  
CORPORATION

## The Background

Gentex Europe provide specialist helmets, respiratory, hearing and eye protection, and advanced communication products to the aerospace, industrial, defence, and emergency services sectors. A wholly-owned subsidiary of the US-based Gentex Corporation, Gentex Europe are responsible for the design, engineering, and on-site product servicing.

With a design facility in Letchworth, England and a factory in Stranraer, Scotland, the company employs approximately 150 highly skilled people. Their average service is 15 years, some having worked at the company for more than 40 years.



## Challenges

**Due to Stranraer’s remoteness, Gentex have to develop talent in-house, but employee engagement has declined in recent years. The work environment was based on control and relied on historic working practices which included shift allowances, paid breaks, guaranteed overtime, and a shop floor that was very disjointed in terms of equality.**

In 2016, Gentex were still turning over £12m but sales and profits had dropped and they were struggling to fulfil requirements, such as on their highly prestigious Joint Strike Fighter helmets.

So Gentex Europe joined the Sharing in Growth (SiG) programme to transform their leadership, culture and employee engagement, technical and business processes, and reduce costs.

## The Solution

To grow profitably and sustainably, Gentex needed to focus on their people. They needed Sharing in Growth's help to make the productivity and supply chain improvements which could fund investment in their people.

A new development strategy introduced core principles of continuous improvement and respect for people. Staff were trained in lean principles and given clear goals and targets, with lean management promoting shared responsibility and shared leadership.

By implementing SiG's lighthouse cell initiative on the shop floor, Gentex Europe managed to greatly improve employee engagement, particularly around recognition and sense of purpose. A lighthouse cell creates best practice that can be rolled out across the organisation. For example, the company cleared over 100m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace and used it initially for the 2018 Christmas party to highlight their readiness and capacity for further growth to Gentex Corporation.

Gentex also aimed to create a strategically aligned supply chain through a win/win offer to key suppliers. By increasing

their business by commodity grouping, they reduced the overall supplier numbers. With Sharing in Growth's support, the company has implemented and improved processes to facilitate new product introduction.

In 2016, Gentex Europe would have struggled to access the required expertise to continue delivering cutting edge designs but, through Sharing in Growth's partners and business management tools, the company has been able to create advanced products such as the new PureFlo 3000, an innovative and unique all-in-one respiratory, head, face, eye and hearing protection system.

The Sharing in Growth business transformation meant that Gentex were able to fund the required changes in people policies including paying a real living wage, a revamped pension scheme and pay scales to recognise people's skills, loyalty, and experience. This ultimately increased base pay across the board; the total amount paid into monthly salaries rose by approximately £250k from 2018 to 2019 - effectively paid for by SiG-supported improvements.

**In 2018, Gentex Europe achieved a £15.4m turnover – the highest in the company's history – and projects a £17.1m turnover in 2019, with the aim of doubling their turnover and profit by 2021.**

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#### Lead Time Reduction

A six-week turnaround on one product from design sketches to the concept that was presented to the customer.



#### Cycle Times 40% Reduction



#### Build Time on PureFlo 3000

Reduced by 23 minutes – down from 57 minutes – and have almost doubled the build capacity.



By providing experts from leading institutions such as Cambridge University and the National Physical Laboratory, SiG has supported Gentex's reputation as a centre for manufacturing excellence within the Gentex Group.