

Initially Yours Embroiderers Bristol

Motivating staff in a small company isn't easy when you're in a modestly-paid industry – but an embroidery and garment-printing firm is managing it with the help of Filton College.

Carole Lerway, a director of Initially Yours Embroiderers, says the college tutors and assessors have made a significant difference to the workforce by offering them free training that could transform their prospects.

"This industry tends to have quite a high proportion of people on or at just above the minimum wage," she says. "Because of that, we tend to take people who have no specific skills and train them to meet our own needs.

"We want to keep staff motivated and give them something positive as an added incentive to be at work other than just increasing their salary, so we're offering them the chance to take National Vocational Qualifications through Filton College. It's giving people with few qualifications something to put on their CV and is a real individual benefit to staff, irrespective of whether they choose to stay with us or not."

The machine room manager is taking a Team Leadership NVQ and five colleagues are doing Customer Service NVQs – and the company is already beginning to notice a difference.

"Taking an NVQ helps them realise what they're doing and why they should be doing it. They start to question what they do. People are beginning to think outside the box and look a little bit more at what they need to do to make things better. There are germs of that beginning to show. One member of staff has come back and rethought our sale-or-return system. It's an okay system but she has approached us and asked if we could do things a different way that would speed things up a bit."

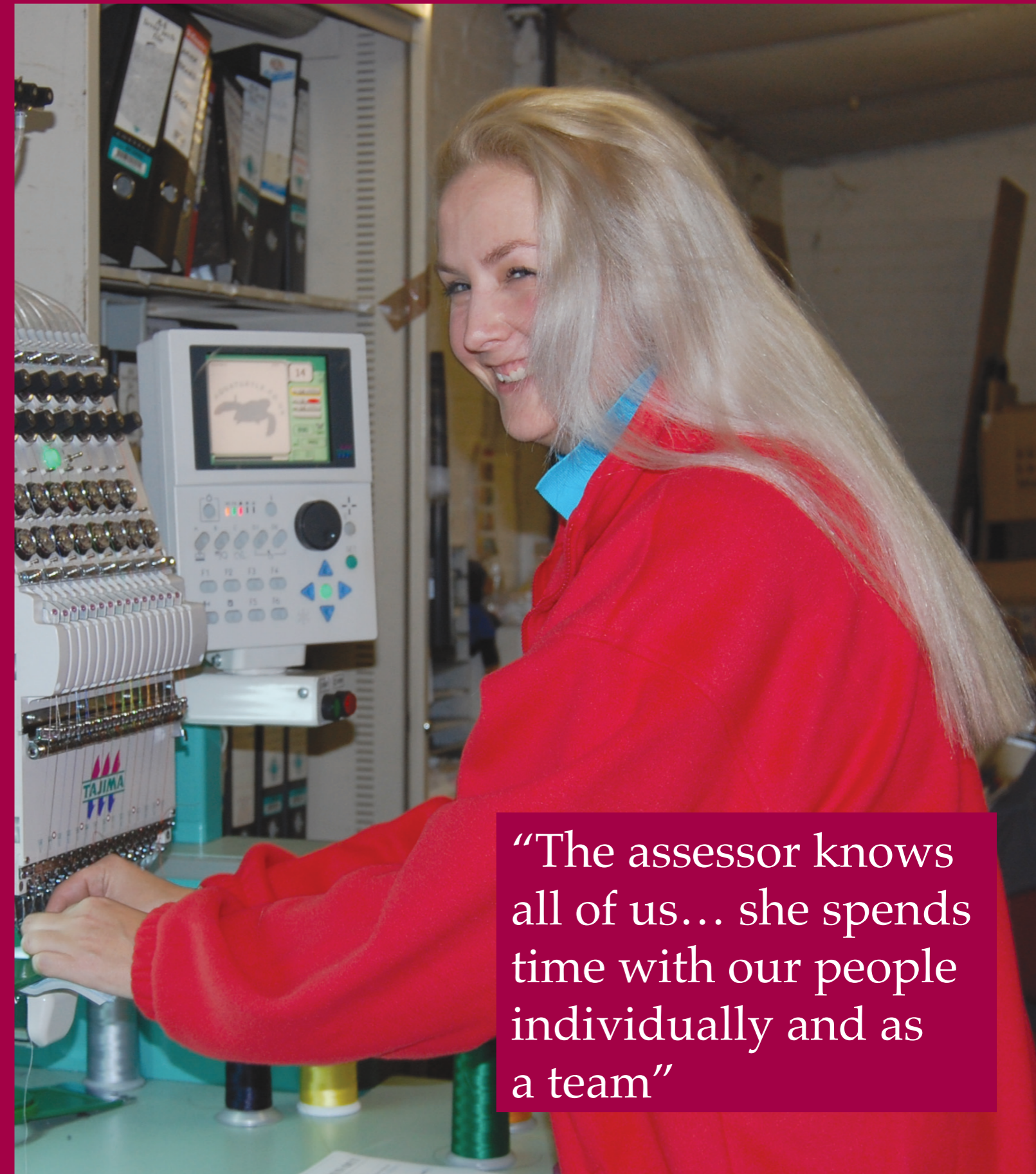
The company has two sites – a retail shop plus a showroom and production facility – and is thankful that Filton's people come to the workplace rather than insisting staff have to go to college to sit in a classroom.

"The college come to us," says Carole. "We couldn't have staff away from our sites to go to college. We allow our staff a couple of hours a week to do things in the working day and the rest they do at home. The college have been very good. The assessor knows all of us, there is continuity there, and she spends time with our people individually and as a team."

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With the cost of all the training covered by grants, making it effectively free for the company, Carole hopes it will encourage staff to stay and develop their roles.

"The business is growing year-on-year and we are going to go on in leaps and bounds," she adds. "There will always be room for people to extend what they do within the business as we like to grow our own people."



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