



MADE IN BRITAIN



A WILMAT survey into attitudes towards UK manufactured equipment



FORWARD



Teresa Hands
Managing Director
Wilmat Ltd

For many years now there has been a popular view that British manufacturing is but a shadow of its former self, and it's true that heavy industry no longer employs the vast numbers it once did. As a proportion of the national economy the sector has also declined but simple statistics fail to tell the full story.

For example, contrary to popular belief, the UK remains one of Europe's leading motor manufacturers with some of the most efficient plants in the world. Other areas of British manufacturing also continue to flourish, particularly those operating in niche markets or providing bespoke services.

At Wilmat we've seen renewed interest in our own range of materials handling equipment. Despite a difficult economic climate we've seen a steady increase in business, culminating in record sales figures at the end of 2012. The reasons for this may be manifold, although we have the distinct impression that there's a resurgence in interest in British-made goods. In fact we believe there's a growing belief they offer superior build quality and better value for money in the long term than rival products from overseas.

What's more, many businesses have found that it's much easier to communicate with a business that can be found closer to home, particularly when they need a tailor made solution to their unique requirements. A shorter supply chain also has distinct environmental benefits as well as greater security.

Our survey aims to test this view, and I'm sure you'll find the results of our research an interesting read, particularly if you're unsure what 'Made in Britain' really stands for.

CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Survey highlights
- Methodology
- Conclusions
- About Wilmat



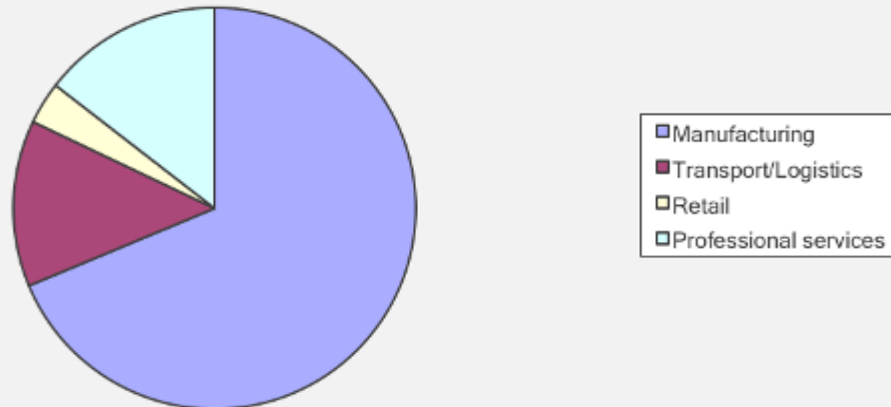
INTRODUCTION

In spring 2013, Wilmat undertook a programme of business research, designed to investigate attitudes towards supply chain management and local sourcing amongst senior managers involved in an area vital to the UK economy - materials handling.

A clear and unequivocal picture emerged of a strong preference amongst decision makers for bespoke design and Made in Britain – *but for reasons which might be seen as surprising.*

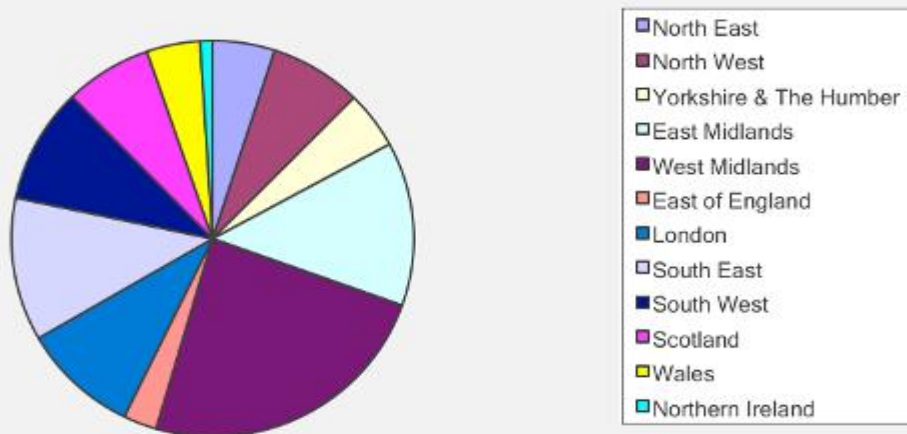
A total of 316 organisations participated in the research, providing a robust sample covering resellers and end users, with over two thirds of responses coming from companies with over 100 employees, primarily in the manufacturing and logistics sectors.

What is the main sector in which your organisation operates? Select one



Respondents were split approximately 60% senior management (manager or director) and 40% technical specialist, and over 60% believed they had an extensive knowledge of materials handling. So the views recorded were mainly those of senior people in larger companies, confident in their understanding of the issues.

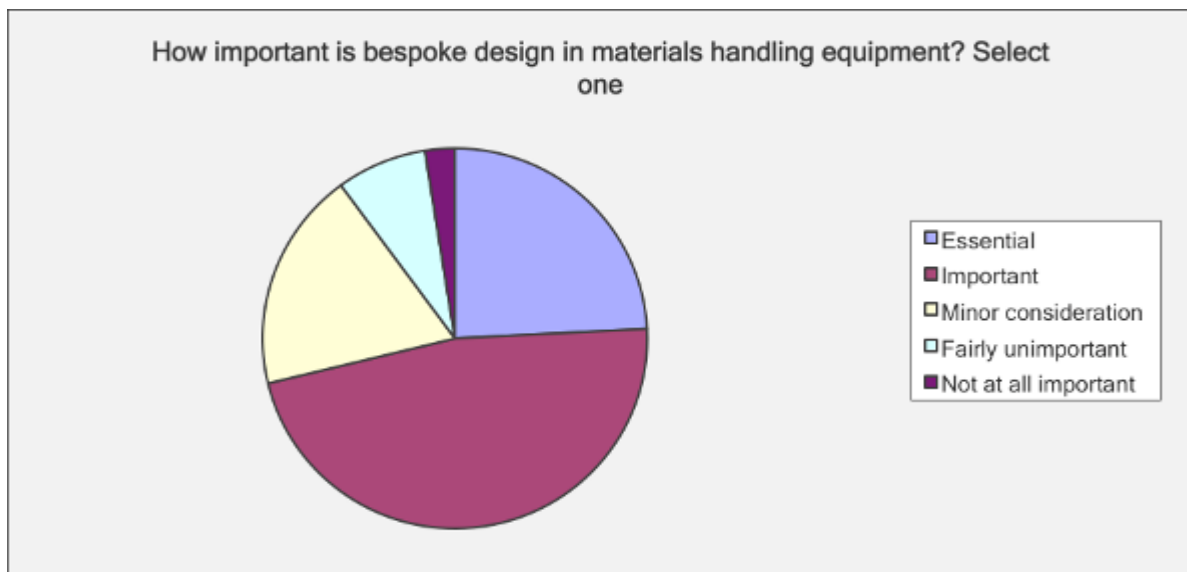
Where is your organisation head quartered? Select one area from the menu



- Breakdown of regions where respondents are based.

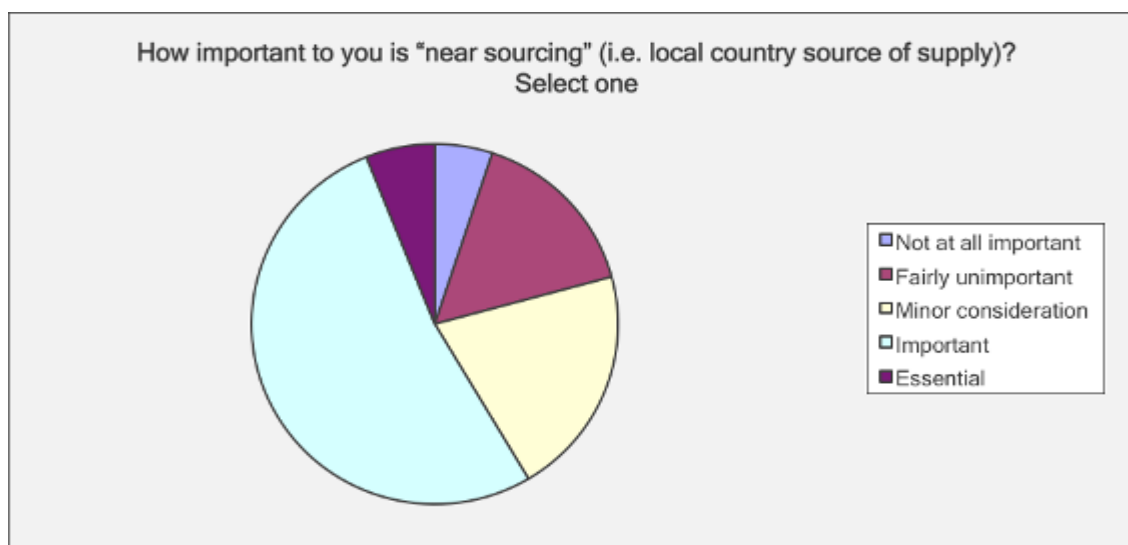
SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

It is clear from the research that they attach great importance to bespoke design in materials handling equipment; a tiny 2.5% said it was “not at all important”, by contrast a dominant 47% said it was important, and 24% (nearly one in four) went further, saying bespoke design was “*vital*.”



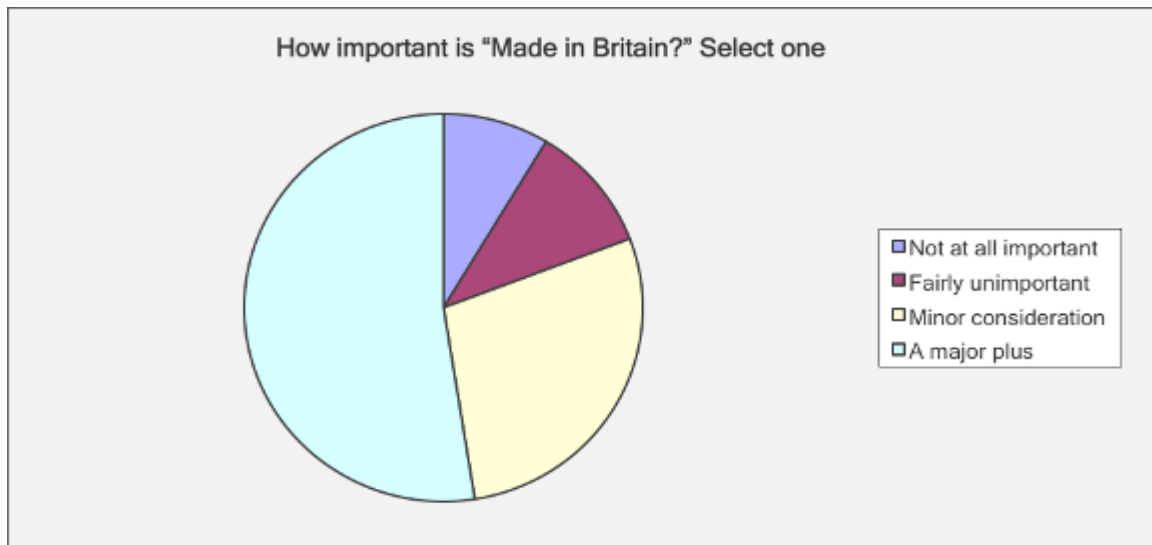
So does the importance of bespoke design mean respondents feel materials handling equipment must be available through local sourcing?

Only 6% regarded it as essential – but just over half (52%) regarded it as important - and a further 21% regarded it as a consideration; which means over three quarters in total expressed a preference for local sourcing.



Do decision makers attach real importance to materials handling equipment being “Made in Britain”?

The answer is a clear “yes”: a large majority do: less than one in ten thought “Made In Britain” was not at all important, compared with over half for whom it was a major plus.



As “Made in Britain” clearly *is* important, is this because of reasons of patriotism and support for the local economy? Certainly this is a real factor: it was a major plus for a large majority (47% of respondents) and essential for nearly 12%. Only 4%, a tiny minority, felt “Made in Britain” is not at all important.

But it’s certainly not *all* about support for the local economy. Further questioning probed which attributes were associated with “Designed and made in Britain” when thinking about engineering / manufacturing.

Why is Made in Britain important?

Interestingly, the most highly rated attribute associated with designed and made in Britain was “compliance with relevant regulations”, closely followed by “quality manufacture to exact tolerances” and “traceability of components / reliable provenance”.

All of these are issues related to product quality, with service issues like “shorter leaner supply chain” and “quicker delivery” being important - but not quite so fundamental. Being price competitive was an attribute associated with designed and made in Britain, but much less strongly associated than quality attributes.



The statistical outcomes of the research tell a clear story; and are supported by insights with more emotive character and attitudinal intensity coming from direct quotes...

When asked, what qualities or attributes, (good or bad) does the phrase “Designed and made in Britain” evoke? Some of the answers included:

“Designed and made in Britain suggests British industry is still alive and kicking.”

“Expensive but usually good quality.”

“The phrase would definitely make me consider assessing a product probably ahead of something outside the UK, but it would not indicate any particular standard or quality. I would only know that once a product was assessed.”

“Definitely quality and dependability. Products made in the UK are now trusted more than say 5 years ago. Feels good to support British manufacturing particularly if it is local.”

“The idea of made in Britain invokes good quality, good workmanship and the standard other countries benchmark against us. Sometimes the cost of such high quality needs to be offset against whether the item is just fit for purpose.”

“Gives me confidence that it is well made.”

Although some respondents did express negative comments, these only represented a small percentage of those who completed the survey. In fact, the only real barrier to buying British expressed by a significant number of respondents was cost.

Experiences of buying from overseas

When asked to comment on experiences of buying materials handling goods from overseas, typical answers included:

- Patchy at best
- Quality is usually good but aftersales maintenance and support can be a real problem
- Service of equipment is an issue
- Low cost, low quality, long lead times
- Some equipment is OK but not all are reliable

However, not all responses were negative, but the answers given suggest higher levels of satisfaction when equipment is sourced from a UK manufacturer.

METHODOLOGY

A link to the survey questions (hosted by Survey Monkey) was sent to a database of around 4,000 Wilmats contacts, including customers and suppliers.

The survey generated 316 responses, a response rate of around 9%. Entry into a draw for a free Kindle Fire HD was offered as an incentive for taking part.

A copy of the survey questions, together with a breakdown of the answers can be found at the end of this report.



CONCLUSIONS

The survey suggests a strong inclination, particularly within the materials handling sector, to buy British whenever possible.

Although patriotism is a factor, the decision to purchase equipment 'Made in Britain' is usually made on sound business grounds, with key considerations being quality, accountability and aftersales support.

The availability of spare parts and security of supply were other frequent considerations amongst those who took part in the survey.

As a result, it would be reasonable to suggest that UK manufacturers need to start marketing to their strengths. The survey suggests that other UK manufacturers should consider placing greater emphasis on promoting their products to the home market, rather than concentrating their sales efforts overseas.

It is clear there remains a strong demand at home for quality UK manufacturing, providing an ideal opportunity for growth whilst demand in markets such as Europe and the US remain subdued.

We now know British businesses are prepared to back British products, its up to British manufacturers to make the most of this resurgence of interest for all things Made in Britain!

ABOUT WILMAT

Wilmat Limited designs and manufactures bespoke, pedestrian-operated materials handling equipment for clients across a wide range of sectors.

Clients use its consultancy service to find cost effective solutions to their materials handling problems. All bespoke products are manufactured in the UK at Wilmat's factory in Birmingham.

Products include industrial fork lifts, tow tractors, scissor lift tables, stackers, pallet trucks, prime movers, cranes, mould / die handlers, platform trucks.

Clients include major companies such as BMW, Ford, Caterpillar, BT, Siemens, Schneider, London Midland and Southern Railways, KP Foods and Aga.

Wilmat Limited provides its clients with a full after sales and maintenance service through its Servicing Division. All service engineers are employed by Wilmat to ensure exemplary service and increased operational life for its manufactured products.

Wilmat can also fulfil its client's day-to-day materials handling needs through its catalogue service for standard materials handling and lifting equipment products.

The company's headquarters is in Steward Street, Birmingham.

Media Contact

Sue Tupling
Changeworks Communications Ltd
T: 01785 247588
M: 07411 178380
E: sue@changeworkscom.co.uk

Company Contact

Teresa Hands, Managing Director
Wilmat Handling
T: 0121 4547514
E: thands@wilmat-handling.co.uk