

Case Study - Camtech PCB Design Services Ltd

Haverhill based Camtech PCB Design are used to being the "backroom boys". They design Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs), the thin boards containing electronic components and electrical circuits that pow

The majority of the work carried out by Camtech is subject to very stringent confidentiality agreements.

Camtech's contribution to the products they work on can impact the speed at which an innovation moves from a concept to being available in the marketplace. For clients working at the cutting edge of their industry reliability and speed are of the essence.

Camtech had explored the R & D tax Credit initiative previously but believed they were not eligible. On contacting Fiscale they soon established that a change to the criteria by HMRC some years ago now meant they "ticked all the boxes". A successful claim was submitted and a sizeable cheque received from HMRC. The directors of Camtech are certainly very happy to have made the acquaintance of the team from Fiscale!

The background

Camtech PCB Design specialise in producing complex printed circuit boards (PCBs) for use in consumer and industrial electronics applications. Established in 2003 they have built a core of loyal clients in the Silicon Fen, the cluster of over 1500 science and technology based businesses in the Cambridge area. The PCBs that Camtech design for their hi-tech customers are complex high speed logic and radio frequency boards built to recognised electronics industry standards. Their clients demand "right first time, on time" solutions as they seek to reduce the timeframe between the design phase and the roll out to market.

Camtech PCBs can be found in a range of high profile products including the 'duo Fertility' advanced Fertility Monitor made by Cambridge Temperature Concepts; the heart rate and respiratory monitor produced by Hidalgo and used by skydiver Felix Baumgartner in his record breaking supersonic parachute jump and the range of cloud based home monitoring products developed by alertMe.

The challenge

Camtech work quietly away in the background designing complex PCBs for highly confidential projects. Proudly watching from the wings as, in the fullness of time, another life enhancing innovation makes the headlines for their client.

Camtech harness their extensive knowledge of electronics and their intellectual property to design the simplest, timeliest cost effective solutions. The aim is to design a PCB that will technologically advance the product it is going into.

Camtech has built a strong reputation as a trusted partner. Their clients know they have the expertise and experience to deliver a "right first time, on time" PCB solution. It is this capability to push the boundaries of PCB design that brings clients back to Camtech project after project. Their intellectual property in the design of complex PCBs is the biggest asset the company possesses; it is invaluable.

The solution

David Allen, director of Camtech PCB Design was keen to find out if the company were eligible for R&D Tax Credits having looked at the scheme previously and thinking that they did not satisfy the criteria. Although he had heard of Fiscale, before making contact with them David wanted to ensure he would be dealing with a bonafide company. He spoke to his accountant, Paul Donno from 1 Accounts Online, who reassured him that Fiscale were already gaining a reputation for achieving results and had a 100% success rate.

David called Fiscale and after a brief conversation a meeting was arranged to explore whether there was a basis for a claim.

The first meeting with Fiscale's Technical Director, Stephen Bunting, took around two hours. During this time David explained the type of projects that Camtech worked with and the impact that their PCBs had on the end product. Stephen confirmed that Camtech were eligible to make a claim. He explained to David the information that would be required to support the claim.

David spent around three days pulling the information together, looking at the projects that had been undertaken and detailing what had been done. The delicate issue of client confidentiality was managed through the exchange of Non-disclosure agreements with Fiscale and by Camtech talking to their clients and explaining the process they were undertaking.

Once the information had been collated it was sent over to Stephen to produce the draft report which, once approved by Camtech, would be submitted to HMRC. David spent around an hour reading and making a few minor tweaks to the report which was then signed off and sent to HMRC by Fiscale.

The results

The time frame between David making contact with Fiscale and receiving a positive response to the claim from HMRC took less than six weeks. David received a phone call from Fiscale to advise that the claim had been successful around 2-3 weeks after the final report was submitted, the cheque arrived a couple of days later. David was delighted with the outcome and the extra funds into his business!

"The R&D Tax Credit scheme for small and medium sized businesses has been around for a long time. I remember looking into it a number of years ago and reaching the conclusion that the projects we undertook for clients didn't qualify as Camtech didn't retain the rights to the intellectual property for the PCBs we designed.

I am so pleased that I decided to investigate our eligibility for R&D Tax Credits again but this time using the expertise of specialist R & D Tax Credit advisors.

My phone call to Fiscale certainly paid off. They advised that at the end of 2009 there had been a change to the criteria that HMRC used to determine whether a company qualified for Tax Credit. It was no longer necessary to own the intellectual property arising from a project.

Fiscale unravelled the complexity of R&D Tax Credits and made the whole process very simple and straightforward. It did take some of my time to go through the projects that we have worked on over the past few years however from the clear direction from Fiscale I knew exactly what I was looking for. Needless to say the cheque we received from the HMRC generated a very favourable return on investment for my time! I was surprised at how quickly it all went through. We are looking forward to

continuing to work with Fiscale and maximising the benefits available from the R&D Tax Credit scheme. We know that working with them is going to save us a lot of money."

David Allen, MD of Camtech PCB Design Services

The conclusion

The relationship between Fiscale and Camtech will continue with Fiscale guiding the company through the complexities of the R&D Tax Credit system. Future projects will be closely monitored to ensure that the investment in R&D is documented and that Camtech benefit fully from the R&D Tax Credit scheme.

The income received from the Tax Credit has been earmarked for investment into a 'next generation' Electronics Design Automation (EDA) package that will help position Camtech at the cutting edge of their market. The team from Camtech are currently evaluating the software to establish if it aligns with their operation and whether it will deliver the promised business benefits. It seems appropriate that funding from an R&D Tax Credit will potentially be used to finance further innovation, allowing Camtech to stay ahead in their highly competitive and fast moving industry.