



L&A Pressure Welding began in 1981 in Revesby, NSW, and is a heavy industrial business reinventing itself by looking to the latest technologies and approaches.

The company's core business is in creating custom-made industrial assets for energy, chemical and water sectors. They are key in delivering essential services though largely invisible to the public. Its 3,800 square metre site has designed and produced critical items such as pressure vessels, gas lines and heat exchangers for big-name, big project clients, including city and regional councils, Woodside, Shell, Caltex and Orica.

In 2012, the company began to see signs it needed to redefine itself, recalls David Fox, L&A's General Manager, who joined in 2006.

**“What are we going to do? We cannot keep doing this.’ The fact that the owner is getting older, the succession thing had to happen, and how do we address that?”**

he recalls of what led up to a period of intense soul-searching in 2016.

‘And to the family, the legacy of the business is really important. L&A owner Louie really loves the people who work here. They are like family.’

Industries beyond oil and gas, such as defence and co-generation, were identified as opportunities. The company also realised increasing management capability, processes and technology was vital. Another major challenge is the difficulty of attracting young workers to a company based on a traditional skill: welding.

An expo at Knox Grammar with Lincoln Electric in 2017 pointed the way. A virtual reality welding installation grabbed kids' attention, and showed that as well as being important for future competitiveness, digital 3D technologies can provide an instant hook in starting conversations.

According to a brief from the company, the future will require blending skills of 'mechanical design, fabrication & welding trade activities with value adding technology across automation, sensors, software, communications and machine learning' to continue as an employer of tomorrow's workers. The company distilled its 'why?' into 'inspiring jobs for future generations'.

While engaging with local schools and universities, the company has been investing in digitising areas such as product lifecycle management, product management, and its welding supply chain.

A new level of professionalism has also brought greater accountability and transparency, helping create a team mentality rather than a classic SME mentality with top-down micromanagement.

Fox and the leadership team have met as many people from the academic, entrepreneurial and industry skills perspectives as possible, and learning what we didn't know. Inspiration for modernising the business has come from sources as diverse as educational space data company Cuberider,

Western Sydney University Launchpad, and design thinking experts.

**“I think if you want to succeed, you look beyond yourself you need to be out there, and make the business more mature,”** offers Fox.

The company's 'soul-searching' journey roughly coincided with a decision to join the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre, which Fox says aligns neatly with L&A's vision.

‘We were excited about what they were proposing; I guess it was where we thought manufacturing always could be, and that it could be an exciting place to be,’ says Fox.

**“They really put energy into the conversation. They are doing a lot of heavy lifting for us, they talk a lot of sense, their reports are really helpful in developing strategies. It makes massive sense to us having been through this journey about ‘this is all we did, this is what we could do, this is how it could be attractive.’ They are on the right page, they are thinking like us, so we should work with them.”**



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**David Fox**, General Manager