

An Irish SME's perspective on how engaging with NSAI has helped them scale internationally

“The AVBB scheme gave us an important foundation to grow on as a company. It meant we had a reputable name and could add to the markets, bring on new products and really grow significantly.”

THERESE MALANAPHY, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS, M-TEC ENGINEERING



NSAI

Building the foundation for international success

An interview with Therese Malanaphy, Finance Director at M-Tec Engineering



Until 2020, the Malanaphy family was known for its mushroom farm in Swalinbar, Co. Cavan. Along with that core focus, Danny Malanaphy and son Adrian had a side gig refurbishing second-hand farm machinery as Malanaphy Machinery.

When farmers came to them looking for general purpose and livestock trailers, Adrian realised there were no dealerships to be found. He saw an opportunity, and the father-son team began manufacturing trailers, rebranding their company as M-Tec Engineering. Ensuring its products have the right approvals and compliance in place has been critical to M-Tec's significant success.

Award-winning innovation and rapid growth

Since its launch, M-Tec has moved quickly to continue meeting the needs of farmers and of its growing base of commercial and domestic customers.

At the 2022 National Ploughing Championships, Adrian heard stories of injuries in livestock trailers. He got straight to work on a solution, and the moveable safety bar he designed won the Agricultural Safety Award from Enterprise Ireland at the next year's championships.

M-Tec now employs more than 20 people, including Adrian's siblings Theresa and Noeleen in Ireland, and Patrick in Australia. They sell a dozen types of

trailers in Ireland, the UK and Australia, and will soon be selling in Europe.

Competitive from the get-go

Finance and Operations Director Therese knew from the outset the most important thing she could do to support M-Tec's growth was to secure type approval which is legally required if dealers wish to distribute trailers within the Republic of Ireland.

If dealers sell non-typed-approved vehicles, there can be major financial penalties and potential fines from a Market Surveillance Authority.

"I'd done so much research into type approval on trailers," recalls Therese. "It was really important to make sure from the get-go we were sending trailers that were type approved, because it would make us more competitive. And that's how we started our relationship with NSAI. I reached out to them maybe a month after the business changed to M-Tec Engineering, and the rest is history."

Quality processes for quality trailers

NSAI is the Irish Type Approval Authority, responsible for European Whole Vehicle Type Approval (ECWVTA), National Type Approval (NSSTA) and Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA). NSAI offers these services through its Automotive Certification division, which is at the forefront of safety and environmental legislative drafting at EU level.

The division has approved over 80,000 automotive products globally, including some of the most technically advanced supercars, hypercars and motorbikes in the world.

For a vehicle manufacturer to apply for either NSSTA or IVA, they must first take part in NSAI's Approved Vehicle Body Builder (AVBB) scheme. AVBB certification is designed to allow manufacturers access to the Irish market – and provide a starting point to European certification.



Therese explains, *"It was good to be involved with AVBB early on – it was the first time I was introduced to what a quality manual is. Every manufacturing business should have one. I remember thinking, 'Where do I start with a quality manual?' That's where the NSAI came into it."*

"What I value about the AVBB is that it's not just a box-ticking exercise, but something that helped shape how we do business. It has everything to do with your production processes from start to finish, and it has improved the quality of our trailers. AVBB really hit on key things that when you're starting a company you probably never think of, like a process for a product recall. That was very helpful."

On to NSSTA and beyond

Once M-Tec became an Approved Vehicle Body Builder, it applied for NSSTA. This allows M-Tec to do vehicle checks itself — instead of taking each trailer to an Approved Test Centre (ATC) — and create its own certificates of conformity (COCs) and vehicle identification numbers (VINs).

"It's much better, obviously, for a scaling company. There are still companies that use IVA that are producing maybe one to five units a week, but our volume is very high, so the business model just wouldn't work with IVA; it has to be NSSTA."

Having put in the work for AVBB and NSSTA, Therese was well positioned to apply for other standards and certifications that would help M-Tec grow into an international business. She started with ISO 9001, an internationally recognised standard for quality management systems.

"After we got our AVBB and our NSSTA, I went for certification to ISO 9001. I was able to use the fundamentals of what we'd done in the AVBB manual and transfer those. The auditor couldn't believe how much overlap there was between our quality manual and ISO 9001."

"I know some companies have been trying to get certification to ISO 9001 for years. When you have your AVBB under NSAI, it becomes much simpler, because you're already at such a high standard."

Approvals for selling beyond Ireland soon followed. Therese explains: *"Having certification to ISO 9001 was crucial for getting our UK approval as well as our Australian approvals."*

Europe is the next frontier, and M-Tec is ready. Therese received M-Tec's E5 COC clearance through the Swedish approval authority and expects to be "fully European" within a couple months.

Words of wisdom

Therese's advice for a company at the start of the certification process? Think big.

"It's not a sprint. It's a marathon. When you're doing your AVBB and completing your quality manual, don't think of your company within the next one or two years — think a bit bigger, think of the next five to 10 years. Make sure you are going in with a vision and a strategic plan of where you want to be. And that's more or less it."

M-Tec.ie

+ To find out more about our work in the Automotive sector, please visit NSAI.ie/certification/automotive/

