

IMI Institute of the Motor Industry

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### A strategic partner

IMI are the global automotive professional body, a heritage organisation that have been operating for over 100 years. The business has evolved into many key areas, as of today they are a professional body, sector skills council, an awarding organisation and an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO).

IMI deliver 20 different apprenticeships standards and are currently engaged with over 8,000 apprentices across 150 training partners in the UK. Additionally, there are over 80,000 individuals in the IMI membership community, with over 600 centres delivering IMI accredited training across the world, with over 500k learners supported over the last decade. Activities at the IMI are focused towards developing and improving individuals' skills and career prospects in the automotive sector worldwide, with the company objective of supporting professionalisation of the sector, growing and retaining talent within the automotive sector, from youth to senior management.

Mark is Head of Membership Products & Services at the IMI, responsible for overall compliance, quality, product development, digital solutions, and head of end-point assessment activities. With the introduction of end-point assessment in the apprenticeship reforms, Mark's activities centred towards ensuring the IMI were the first choice EPAO in the automotive industry, to match up with their awarding body activities in the sector.

Essentially, IMI were looking for a partner to 'manage and maintain their EPA activities, with the ability to co-ordinate the high volume of complexities for assessments such as scheduling, managing booking and managing conflicts of interests, while maintaining their strong brand reputation.' Mark was a driving force on the purchase of Smart EPA (SEPA)

*“We used a number of different systems which did small bits of what we needed but nothing in its entirety. We began work with a previous supplier but never got operational, costing significant labour and time, it could not manage the complexities involved and was not flexible enough. After working with another supplier and failing to make progress in the direction needed, this was when I stumbled across the Smart EPA (SEPA) platform as a possibility, following a number of discussions and demonstrations.”*

### KEY RESULTS

- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Clean & easy to understand user interface
- ✓ Easy to manage the complexities and complications of the intricate apprenticeship standards needs
- ✓ An agile system
- ✓ Reporting that drives the business needs forward.

IMI were looking for simplicity, flexibility, and usability. A straight-forward solution that was flexible enough to cope with the large broad ranging customer base of the IMI.

*"We were looking for something relatively straight forward to engage with, particularly across a large ranging customer base, for example, we could be dealing with a small centre which see half a dozen of apprentices a year, compared to massive organisations who could deal with thousands of apprentices across many different programmes and customer bases in a year."*

Early conversations between IMI & Smart Apprentices evidenced that the Smart EPA platform worked for what they were looking for, with open conversation for further developments to be flexible and to evolve. Working with Smart Apprentices forged a two-way strategic relationship between involved parties, which is what IMI strive for in all their partnerships.

After discovering SEPA's capabilities it became a clear choice for a number of reasons:

*"SEPA was identified as a solution which could manage the complexities and complications of intricate apprenticeships standards as needed in the automotive industry. For example, some standards require two full days of practical assessment, sometimes needing multiple assessors and other support staff, or some needing employer/sector engagement in professional discussions."*

It was essential for IMI to have system which is agile and easily adaptable to flexibilities in end point assessment, for example, the latest COVID flexibilities and changes of assessment plans.

In addition, SEPA empowers management with robust reporting and data.

*"It is important to have the right access and levels of reporting to be able to drive business requirements forward"*

After making the decision to invest in SEPA and to transition from the multitude of previous systems used within the business, an internal team at IMI was formed to work on the project, with support from Smart Apprentices throughout the implementation and beyond.

*"With regards to how the implementation worked, we had a dedicated Account Manager meeting with us weekly and went through the plans for implementation and escalated any issues accordingly when things were slower than needed. In the main, we have regular contact points and reviews with account managers at SEPA, looking at future developments and updates."*

IMI face challenges due to the complexities and evolution of automotive assessments as they are very different to the usual practices in other sectors, especially during the pandemic. With Smart EPA's tools such as Smart Rooms, this has enabled remote activities to be conducted seamlessly with a reduction in travel.

*"Throughout the last year it has been extremely tough for a lot of people having to work from home etc. We have been fully operational throughout the lockdowns. On one of the routes we offer, we had the EQAP in (The body who regulate the standard), who said IMI were one of the only organisations which is still running apprentices through their assessments (whether furloughed or not) which allowed the learners progress to be continued."*

*We also do a number of remote activities, and the fact that they can be hosted through SEPA (Smart rooms) and then tagged and uploaded automatically against the learners record is a huge positive."*

IMI continue to discover operational benefits using SEPA, used across the team, enabling a single source of truth. IMI aim to roll-out SEPA across all IMI approved centres nationwide.

*"Everyone at IMI gets on with the system really well. Particularly the EPA booking & co-ordination team it's what they are on all day, every day. Assessors are uploading their evidence as part of their assessment. It has been a big transition; we went from having to store results somewhere else to now being in the system. We do a lot of remote activities through smart rooms too. Operationally, the assessors, assessment co-ordination team and management team, will all be referring to information that is extracted from SEPA all the time, for example, data for reports."*

For other end-point assessment organisations thinking about a technology platform to manage their assessments, Mark recommends not only engaging with a supplier, but engaging with existing current users of the platform to understand the impact on resource and how things could be bespoke or updated. This would be key to understanding if it is what you are looking for and help to influence your decision.

### About the author

**Name:** Mark Armitage

**Position:** Head of Membership Products and Services

**Organisation:** IMI

For other end-point assessment organisations thinking about a technology Mark Armitage holds accountability for the Membership Products and Services Department, and as a member of the Senior Management Team at IMI he contributes to the strategic direction of the IMI, the board, and partners. Additionally, Mark's responsibility covers regulatory compliance activities, quality assurance, product development (including digital solutions and head of end-point assessment activities).

Mark is an automotive & education expert, working in the sector throughout his entire life and has been within automotive education for 20+ years. Mark has been at the IMI for 6 years, driving forward the company's objectives of supporting the professionalisation of the sector, enabling careers and growing & retaining talent from youth right up to senior management.



**Smart Apprentices.** We promote personalised life-long learning through an integrated smart digital platform that's transforming the delivery of apprenticeships & traineeships for education & training providers across the UK.



**Smart Assessor:** an e-portfolio that manages the full apprenticeship life-cycle



**Smart VLE:** enhances functional skills learning with customisable online assessments



**Smart Applicants:** enables apprentices & trainees showcase themselves to employers



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