

Incremental teams up with Thales to receive rail first accreditation

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York-based tech pioneer Incremental and global leader in advanced technologies, Thales, have become the second UK recipients of the Institute of Collaborative Working's ISO 44003 Standard accreditation.

Awarded previously to only one other partnership across the globe, ISO 44003 is a European Standard that involves a structured approach to sharing resources, experience and skills.

Awarded to both companies involved, the standard's process is supported by a method of creating and delivering joint solutions to benefit an industry and is the first to be awarded in the rail industry. This is an evolution of ISO 44001's certification that demonstrates that the businesses' relationships and processes are in synergy, and as a result, are truly collaborative.

David Taylor, Account Director, Mainline Rail for Thales, comments: "We realised early in our working relationship with Incremental, that there is real synergy between our two companies, regardless of the fact that Thales is a major global brand, and Incremental is a small enterprise. The whole ethos the Incremental team has is very akin to our own. We like to get things done, efficiently and effectively, and we've established a high level of trust between our teams who are comfortable enough to challenge each other

and introduce new ways of working to deliver better, more cost-effective solutions to our rail customers.

“When I realised that there would be an opportunity to demonstrate collaborative working through the new IS44003 Standard, I instantly thought of Incremental. Our visions are aligned, and Incremental works in a very agile way, exactly how our Research and Development projects are managed. We enjoy working with the team, who are passionate and proactive, and this was the perfect opportunity to better both our organisations and create a blue print for not only the rail industry, but for how global organisations work with MSMEs across any sector.”

Following a relationship built over several years, including the creation and delivery of innovative, digital solutions such as FOAS (Fibre Optic Acoustic Sensing), Incremental and Thales can now showcase how they successfully collaborate to bring projects that create a better railway to fruition.

When the Institute of Collaborative Working announced the launch of ISO 44003 last September, David Taylor, Thales’ Mainline Rail Account Director, immediately responded to the appeal to run the pilot scheme with York’s Incremental. The two companies had already worked together on several projects, launching innovative data-driven location tracking software for the rail industry.

Incremental’s Co-founder and CEO, Dan Lee-Burnsall, was keen to work together on the scheme, designed to benefit Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through collaborative working, and would see Thales and Incremental as the first to achieve the standard in the UK.

He said: “We’ve been incredibly fortunate to be given the opportunity to work alongside the Thales team. They saw the potential in us from day one, and recognised we would be a worthy partner to create and deliver a number of projects, as well as the ISO 44003 scheme.

“We have both achieved successes in our fields and it feels like a natural partnership, with open and honest communication at its heart. The challenges SMEs face in the rail industry are widely known, a key one is being able to find the right people to speak to and get decisions made. Through our collaboration we have seen a real shift in the speed we can deliver projects thanks to the relationship we have with the Thales team.

“We have a joint respect for each other on both a personal and professional level, that through the accreditation of the ISO 44003 Standard, has developed into a mentoring role between us. We work so well together that we’re putting forward a joint team to carry out the 3 Peaks Challenge later this year!”

Following a certificate presentation at Incremental’s York office, John Osborne, Associate Director of the Institute for Collaborative Working, said: “The partnership between Incremental and Thales is a true reflection of collaboration at its best. The way the two companies work together to bring out the best in each other is something the Institute is delighted to endorse through its validation scheme based on the principles contained within the ISO 44003 Standard.

“As one of the first companies in the UK to receive the certificate, this demonstrates the commitment Thales and Incremental have shown to support the journey and progression of an SME, as well as Thales using the opportunity to reflect on the way it works and improve its own practices in the process. We’re

thrilled to award the teams the certificate and look forward to seeing how they take this even further forward in the future.”

Joint projects include the Automated Rail Geospatial Observation System, and the Fibre Optic Acoustic Sensing (FOAS) research and development, focused on use cases which include using the capability of Fibre Optic Telecoms infrastructure to cost effectively provide accurate train movement and position reporting, rail wheel and defects identification and trespass or trackside presence detection. Capabilities that will ultimately improve the reliability of both passenger and freight rail services delivery.

Photo credit: Incremental