

SDO CONNECT

Insights, opportunities and connections to accelerate SME growth.

- Discovery Report
- Outsourced BD Support
- Event Support
- Associates Services



Recap of the Month

As we wrapped up the year with Christmas celebrations and welcomed the New Year, it's been a month marked by strong progress and exciting developments across the team. We officially launched our new podcast, Advance To Contract, a series created to support SMEs navigating the realities of winning work in the defence sector. The podcast is designed to offer practical insight and honest guidance at every stage of the journey. Our first episode, "The Gatekeepers and the Gate," is now live, and we're excited to build on these conversations in the months ahead. We also introduced SDO Informs, a new blog

series sharing defence industry insights, sector updates, and practical guidance for SMEs. The first blog has been published, with more to follow soon. December gave us a chance to come together at our Christmas party, where we reflected on our achievements in 2025 and looked ahead to 2026 with real excitement and ambition. It was also a month of growth for our team. We welcomed Parokshee Jainwal as our new Junior Account Manager, strengthening our accounts team. Internally, we celebrated well-deserved promotions, with Tom stepping into the role of Senior Account Manager and Lydia being promoted to Marketing and Communications Manager. A strong close to the year and an energising start to the next - we're looking forward to what 2026 will bring.

Events

This month, we continued to strengthen our presence across key industry events and partnerships. We were proud to sponsor the inaugural Western Regional Defence & Security Cluster meeting, marking an important step in supporting collaboration across the region. Our CEO, Stu Olden, spoke about the continued growth of the Defence community and reinforced our commitment to championing innovative engineering and technology SMEs as they navigate

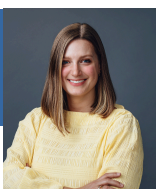
opportunities within the sector. We also attended the Motorsport Industry Association festive coffee morning, where we promoted the Motorsport to Defence initiative. The event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with businesses transferring expertise from this technology-driven sector into defence, highlighting the strong crossover between motorsport innovation and defence capability. 2026 is set to be a busy year for events - keep an eye out for event support updates coming soon.



Client News

We partnered with HORIBA MIRA to support the development of a Midlands Defence-Technology park at their Nuneaton site. We successfully delivered Phase 1 of the programme, developing a robust business case roadmap, facilitating a high-level stakeholder workshop, and providing clear, actionable recommendations to inform Phase 2. This work represented a key milestone in establishing a collaborative defence and technology hub in the region.

Meet the Associate: Poppy Johnson



Poppy is a senior business professional with experience in consulting and industry, including automotive, aerospace, and defence. Formerly Chief of Staff to an aerospace CEO, she is now building the UK's leading Chief of Staff "destination", offering coaching, consulting, and community for the growing corporate Chief of Staff cohort. Poppy also undertakes selective consulting in automotive and aerospace to maintain hands-on expertise.

Poppy's Tip: Aside from finding a systematic way to learn the acronyms, don't be intimidated by the many industry "lifers" who may have deeper expertise in certain areas. In my experience, the industry is welcoming and open to perspectives from other domains, provided the right safety standards and culture are respected.

Poppy's Fun Fact: This year was the first time in my 40 years that I watched (supposedly classic Christmas movie) Die Hard!