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MX awards offer firms free advice

COMPANIES in Ellesmere Port and across the North West could get the chance to win more than £20,000 of free business advice.

But they have to hurry if they want to enter the Manufacturing Excellence (MX) Awards 2009 – there's a deadline of January 30.

Participants will receive a free benchmark and consultation from the UK's top industry experts.

Offering support to the manufacturing sector during a recession is vital and MX, organised by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMEchE), is the only benchmarking event of its kind that offers this kind of free and impartial advice from an elite panel of business experts.

A recent report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), a global professional services firm

and a partner of MX, shows how the manufacturing industry is likely to be affected in the US over the next year, which could have a knock-on effect on the UK.

PwC interviewed 50 industrial manufacturing executives at the start of the third quarter in 2008 and found that a massive 38% are projecting zero or negative growth already. The growth rate was predicted as 2.8%, a figure well below last year's 6.5%.

The company also discovered that a huge 40% planned to reduce their workforce over the next year in contrast to only 12% in 2007.

Other industry statistics indicate that UK output is expected to fall by 5% after a 1.3% slide this year and domestic orders are currently said to be the weakest since 2001.

The motor vehicles sector has

been hit the hardest, with a weak output predicted to drop by 10.4% next year.

David Barrett, IMechE regional manager for the North West, said: "There is no doubt that the manufacturing industry has already been deeply affected by the recession and is in great need of a boost.

"By entering MX09, businesses that are feeling the pinch of the economic downturn will receive £20,000 worth of free expert advice. It's an opportunity to improve their business and in the current climate there is no excuse not to sign up – they have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

■ The deadline for entry for MX09 is January 30. Contact Hazel Morgan on 020 7304 6859 or email h_morgan@imeche.org for details.

