

## The Globetrotter: PhD Candidate Torbjørn Netland's year abroad

35 and still counting! The figure is the number of Volvo factories that PhD Candidate Torbjørn Netland visited world-wide during 2012. “For me, this meaningful globetrotting started with the Ideal Factory project in the CRI Norman partner Volvo Aero in Kongsberg” (now GKN Aerospace), he explains.

The purpose of the doctoral research and the factory visits is to identify successful ways to implement production improvement programmes. Specifically, Netland is studying how companies can increase productivity by developing and deploying company-specific production systems (XPSs)—like for example the Volvo Production System (VPS) in the global Volvo Group.

The research project shaped up during Netland's one-year research visit to Washington DC, USA. Awarded with the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship, Netland was invited by Professor Kasra Ferdows to join McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University from August 2011 to August 2012. “I started visiting a handful of Volvo factories in Pennsylvania and Virginia, and from there it just took off”.



*Photo: Torbjørn Netland travels the world to study Volvo's global implementation of the VPS. Here in front of a Volvo FH Truck Globetrotter in Durban, South Africa. Photo: Marshall Nyoni, Volvo AB.*

At present, he has personally witnessed how factories in Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Poland, France, Spain, USA, Brazil, India, China, Japan and South Africa all deal with the same challenge: to successfully implement the same production improvement programme—the VPS.

The final conclusions from Netland's research will soon become available as his PhD project completes at the end of 2013. Tentative results have already been presented at the CRI Norman work shop in Moss in January 2013, and a few papers are accessible in peer-reviewed academic journals. “We have much to learn from the Swedes when it comes to manufacturing”, Netland admits. “Volvo's sincerity and endurance when it comes to streamlining their organisation and make it fit for competing in the future is exemplary. My research has established a clear positive effect of implementing the VPS on plant performance.”

