

MADE SMARTER

LG Davis New horizons after increasing productivity

“ The new machinery will enable LG Davis to operate in a more fluid, seamless way and will make them more efficient. That, in turn, will benefit their business which is why Made Smarter is such a fantastic initiative for SMEs such as LG Davis because it gives them access to expert, independent advice that can have a real benefit in the short, medium and long term. ”



A specialist in printing, stationery and printed merchandise has improved its productivity and is exploring new markets after installing new machinery following a grant from Made Smarter.

LG Davis was started in 1962 as a printing business by Ron O'Donnell, the father of current Managing Director Liz Smith, and it has evolved over the years to increase its services, with a current turnover of £3 million.

Forty-six staff are employed at its 22,000 sq ft premises in Warstock Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, and the firm counts the NHS and UK Athletics among its customers.

The aim is to grow the company to a £5 million turnover in the next three to five years through continuous business improvement, looking at how the business can be streamlined and creating additional opportunities for new services while retaining its reputation for excellent customer service.

Through Made Smarter, the company has installed a state-of-the-art machine to increase capacity and create new opportunities for the business to grow.

Liz said: "It is vital that we invest in the business, in both people and equipment, to enable us to achieve our goals.

"The new machinery helps to keep the business moving forward and is vital if we are to continue to grow."

The Challenge

LG Davis wanted to streamline its plate-making process, which was carried out manually. They were using two machines which, although were offering a good service, were in need of updating if they were to grow the business further.

Liz said: "We were running two separate computers-to-plate systems – these are the devices that make the plates to go onto our printing presses and are an integral part of our production process.

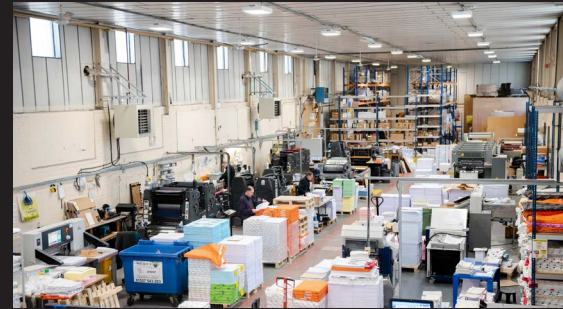
"Our violet laser plate-making system was outdated, and although semi-automatic, it was slow, still reliant on chemistry and running out of spares and consumables left us at risk of increased costs and downtime.

"Our thermal laser device was using up-to-date technology and was faster and chemistry-free but it was manual and was starting to get output errors.

"We also had to run two separate maintenance contracts. It was time to update the plate systems if we wanted to continue to grow the business while still maintaining our great levels of customer service and delivery as it was becoming clear the current system would not work as we grew."

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The firm's directors wanted to put in place an automatic plate-making machine. This would change how the company produced plates by automating the process and enabling a fast turnaround and increased output of plates with less manual intervention, reducing lead times and improving efficiency throughout the business.



Liz heard about Made Smarter and felt the programme would be hugely beneficial which led to Paul Sullivan, Industrial Digital technology Expert at Made Smarter for Birmingham, coming to visit the company to explain the benefits of the scheme and how he felt it would improve the business.

The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) – acting as one of Made Smarter's strategic partners in the West Midlands – also visited the business with Neill Smith compiling a digital report, detailing how they could make changes by introducing an automated machine.

The Solution

LG Davis successfully applied to Made Smarter for a 50 per cent match-funded grant of £10,000 towards a £20,000 Heidelberg Suprasetter S74 & MCL which contains four cassettes.

Liz said: "We did the research and found that we could purchase a device that was fully automated, chemistry-free and would improve our carbon footprint since we would be using one device instead of two.

"The new machine's maintenance costs were all inclusive for parts and cheaper, and we also managed to source a new supplier that gave us a slightly cheaper plate price which was on top of not needing to purchase chemistry, or dispose

of it anymore, to give us further savings as well as helping us maintain our ISO 14001 accreditation."

The Benefits

Installing the new device is enabling LG Davis to gain a competitive advantage in two key areas – a reduction in lead times and in price.

It is also improving the efficiency of the process flow throughout the business as the automated service is less labour intensive, freeing up more capacity for the business to grow and to achieve its future objectives.

Liz explained: "The new device gives us an increased output speed of 30 plates an hour at our largest plate size compared to 12 plates an hour on the previous systems, and this speed will be increased even more with smaller plate sizes.

"This has not only ramped up our production output but reduced our press downtime if a re-plate was required. It has also given us the ability to be able to produce orders on demand if required, helping us plan more efficiently and create spare capacity for the business to grow.

"The device is remotely monitored which means our supplier has complete visibility of any issues the device may be suffering and is able to react quickly to minimise any possible downtime.

"If the system does have any major faults, we can also manually feed into it so we should still be able to produce until the supplier arrives on-site to repair it.

"The device is fully automated and takes 100 plates of each of our four plate sizes, giving us the ability to be able to run up to 400 plates un-manned if required.

"There is no maintenance or service required by our operators because the only thing our operators have to do is load it with plates and take them off the back and to the presses when required.

"The device is connected with our existing workflow so there were no training requirements.

"All this has freed up more studio personnel to concentrate on the department's other requirements such as artwork, marketing, large format production, sublimation print and our online services."

The Future

Made Smarter's grant funding to implement the new machine has increased productivity and enabled LG Davis to be more competitive in its marketplace in turnaround times and cost.

Liz added: "We are really pleased to have joined the Made Smarter programme and the benefits are going to be felt for many years to come."