

DA Techs Setting the wheels in motion for a digital future

A Chorley-based alloy wheel refurbishment specialist has won a major nationwide contract by upgrading machinery and IT architecture using support and advice from Made Smarter.

DA Techs was launched in 2017 by Jamie Baxter and Phil Barnard who saw the potential to offer a mobile repair service to car dealerships, which allowed them to turn around vehicles to prospective buyers quickly and to a high standard.

For its first two years the business focused on customers in the North West and expanded rapidly.

Now, DA Techs wants to upgrade its machinery after securing its first nationwide contract. The business is looking to increase capacity and create an IT architecture to capture data for analysis to identify opportunities for growth and improvement.

"There's no denying that we won a three-year contract with a national client on the back of our partnership with Made Smarter and our plans for the future," Jamie Baxter said. "It has kick-started an exciting period of growth for us that could see us surpass £1M turnover next year, which is a phenomenal achievement for us."

The Challenge

When a job comes into DA Techs, key information relating to the wheel and customer is handwritten onto a T-card which follows the wheel around the workshop through the different processes.

When the wheel is complete this data is transferred onto various spreadsheets, which are linked to accountancy software.

With the scale of growth DA Techs is undergoing, it needed a more streamlined and accurate system.

"When we started, our rudimentary system worked for the number of wheels we were processing," Jamie explained. "But such manual systems risk inaccuracy and misunderstanding. It was also difficult to aggregate and scrutinise.

"We've had such rapid growth that we've outgrown our processes. Our future plans include a more efficient and intuitive system that monitors where we are up to and gives us a macro view of what our business is doing and where the pinch points are.

"We want a digital system that captures the data we create and presents it back to us so we can improve process scheduling, machine availability, team allocation and job completion time."

The Solution

The project has two main elements. New machinery - an additional lathe and stripping facility - will enable DA Techs to meet its growing capacity demands. Meanwhile, a new IT architecture will digitise its entire process.

DA Techs is creating a bespoke software solution which will capture all the pertinent data connected with the customer, the wheel, the workforce, and the machinery.

Wheels will be assigned a digital T-card, while employees will get a digital identifier which will connect into the machine they are using and send all the data to the cloud.

The IT solution will then display the workflow across the entire workshop on a software platform accessible remotely on any device in real-time.

Jamie said: "This software will be able to track everything from the start, from when the order comes in, to when it is back with the customer.

"I will be able to look at my tablet before I even get into the work and know exactly what is scheduled for the day so all I have to do is decide who is going to do it."

The Benefits

Having oversight of process flow paths means DA Techs can capture accurate data of how long it takes certain wheels to be refurbished. Timestamping the wheels at various checkpoints will also provide insights about the cycle times and machine tool utilisation.

Meanwhile, data about the operator's output and efficiency will aid training and development.

DA Techs believes the adoption of new technology means it can expand its capacity of refurbishing 22 wheels per day to around 35, which represents an increase of 55%.

Over time, algorithms will be able to analyse the historical data to interpret trends. These analytical tools will be able to draw attention to problems enabling continuous improvement.

"This new system will take away the mystery of data and give the management team quality



information to help understand exactly where to focus our energies to grow the business," Jamie said.

The Future

To service its new national client, DA Techs is designing a remote 'pod' workshop inside former shipping container that will enable the wheel refurbishments to take place on-site.

Once the data architecture is established in its Chorley HQ, phase two of its digital strategy will involve mobilising the new software into the pods and vans, increasing its oversight and data analysis capability.

"Big data is the true blue-sky thinking as to where businesses can grow," Phil Barnard added. "Made Smarter has given us access to leading edge software developers who are helping us realise our ambitions for this company."



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