

APPLIED NUTRITION FLEXING ITS MANUFACTURING MUSCLE

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Applied Nutrition designs, formulates, manufactures and distributes sports nutrition products all over the world.

Based in Knowsley, it started life in 2014 as a retailer, outsourcing its production process to manufacturers abroad.

Logistical issues and currency fluctuations inspired the business to start making its own products, resulting in turnover doubling year-on-year.

However, its bold ambitions to become a market leader in the booming £1bn sports nutrition sector is being stifled by its reliance on manual and archaic systems.

Now with the help from Made Smarter it has set its sights on a fully digital production process.

THE CHALLENGE

For some of its best-selling products, Applied Nutrition has a manual process involving up to seven staff filling containers with capsules, soft gels and tablets.

Unable to keep up with demand, the business has been forced to look to sub-contractors to fulfil orders.

Thomas Ryder, Managing Director, said using subcontractors is preventing the company from focusing on its range of new

products – a key growth area for the business.

“After substantial growth we still find ourselves using paper-based and manual production systems,” he said. “In terms of modern manufacturing we are dinosaurs and recognise the need to be more efficient and stop suppressing our productivity.”

“We’ve got new products we want to launch but we are being slowed down by old systems.”

THE SOLUTION

Working with Made Smarter, Applied Nutrition has identified digital technologies such as robotics and process control automation, data and systems integration, and analytics, as solutions to some of its challenges.

Key to the project is a match-funded packaging line with sensors and robotic arm picks designed to automate the process of making, counting and packing capsules, soft gels and tablets.

The system will be integrated with a new cloud-based stock control and inventory management, autonomously updating it with all packaging and raw material taken out of stock for production.

THE BENEFITS

The new packaging line will increase productivity dramatically, boosting the bottling rate from five per minute to 40.

With the capability to record various settings and parameters for different products, it will make the process 100% more efficient.

The new system will also improve and simplify traceability by eliminating the labour-intensive manual paper-based batch recording process.

Thomas said increased capacity will enable Applied Nutrition to ramp up production.

“It’s impossible to overstate what a difference this will make to our business,” he said.

“When Made Smarter agreed to match-fund this machine, we knew we had to use the opportunity to invest in other machines to connect to it. Quite simply without that support we would not have done it.”



The investment will also up-skill staff to specialised machine operators and create seven new jobs, taking its headcount to 30.

There are plans to almost double that to 50 over the next year.

The region is also set to benefit with a £650,853 boost to GVA over the next three years.

THE FUTURE

With turnover expected to hit £10m next year, Applied Nutrition is committed to the journey of becoming fully digital.

“We still do a lot manually,” Thomas said. “We can’t transform overnight, we have to take small steps. But we have big plans for Applied Nutrition.”

“The landscape has shifted in this sector. It’s not just about sportsmen or athletes, our products are for anyone active or health conscious. It’s a billion-pound market and we want to be a market leader.”

