

How a Manchester clothing maker tripled in size and created 20 jobs

A sustainable clothing manufacturer has tripled its turnover and workforce, creating 20 jobs in two years after embarking on a digital transformation journey with Made Smarter North West.

Manchester-based WAWWA has invested £120,000 in two technology projects, backed by £60,000 in Made Smarter grants, while modernising its factory, developing its digital leadership and creating a long-term roadmap for growth.

Charlie Pyatt, Production Manager at WAWWA, said: "Technology has been a big part of the journey, but that's only one piece of it. Made Smarter gave us the time and support to step back, understand the business better and focus on the changes that would have the biggest impact."

"It's helped us become better leaders, build relationships with other manufacturers and experts, and given us a roadmap that's still shaping where we go next."

The Challenge

Founded in 2015 with a mission to prove high-quality clothing can be manufactured responsibly in the UK, WAWWA's production processes evolved organically as the business expanded.

While it embraced digital technology in other areas, manufacturing remained highly manual. Patterns were created using cardboard templates, production was managed using whiteboards and Post-it Notes, and garment layouts were marked onto fabric by hand before cutting.

As demand increased and the business doubled in size, these manual processes became

increasingly difficult to manage. Production planning, stock visibility and customer communications became more complex, while paper-based pattern development and manual cutting created bottlenecks that limited efficiency, sustainability and future growth.

Recognising it needed a more structured approach to improving its manufacturing operations, WAWWA turned to Made Smarter.

The Solution

WAWWA's relationship with Made Smarter began in 2024 with a Digital Transformation Workshop, which examined its people, processes and technology to create a digital roadmap to prioritise improvements and investment.

The exercise revealed that many customer service issues were symptoms of wider production planning and visibility challenges, helping WAWWA focus on addressing the underlying causes.

One of the key opportunities identified was digitising pattern development and cutting, beginning with the processes needed to create and optimise patterns.

A £10,000 Made Smarter grant supported an initial £20,000 investment in a Vetigraph CAD/CAM system, replacing manual pattern drafting, grading and fabric marker planning with a digital process.

That investment laid the foundations for the next phase of automation. Following further advisory support from the Northern Engineering and Robotics Innovation Centre (NERIC), a Made Smarter technology partner based at the University of Salford, WAWWA secured a £50,000 grant towards a £100,000 Assyst Bullmer fabric spreading and cutting system.

Integrated with the Vetigraph software, the investment will complete the digital workflow from garment design through to finished cut pieces.

Made Smarter's support has extended beyond technology. Operations Coordinator Alex Parry completed its Leading Digital Transformation programme, strengthening the company's leadership capability, while the programme connected WAWWA with fellow textile manufacturer Lusso to trial automated cutting technology and learn from its experience.

Alex said: "The Leadership programme was a real eye-opener. The strategic tools, such as SWOT analysis, helped me see the bigger picture and approach transformation in a structured way. It also reinforced how important mindset and communication are in shaping culture. The peer learning element was invaluable, giving me practical ideas to take back into WAWWA and the confidence to drive change with people at the heart of it."

The Impact

The combination of technology, leadership development and a clearer digital roadmap is delivering significant improvements across the business.



The Vetigraph system has reduced pattern storage by 90 per cent, cut grading time by 75 per cent, improved fabric utilisation by five per cent and created capacity to introduce 25 per cent more styles without increasing staffing levels.

The Assyst Bullmer technology is forecast to save more than 90 per cent of the time needed for laying and cutting fabric and almost halve fabric waste. With around 35 per cent of production currently outsourced for cutting, the additional capacity will enable WAWWA to bring more manufacturing in-house while supporting continued growth.

Over the last two years, WAWWA has tripled its turnover and increased its workforce from 10 to around 30 people across manufacturing, warehousing, offices and retail, creating 20 jobs. The business is continuing to grow at around 30 per cent each year.

The Future

WAWWA's digital roadmap continues to shape its future plans, including integrated MRP and ERP systems, RFID-enabled stock management and further development of its Airtable-based production management platform.

Alongside manufacturing, the business plans to expand its Manchester retail presence as a blueprint for future locations.

Charlie added: "What we've learned is that you don't have to do everything at once. You just need to understand where the biggest opportunity is and focus on that. Made Smarter helped us do exactly that, and now we've got a clear direction for where we go next."

Charlie Pyatt
Production Manager

