



COVID-19: What You Can Do To Maintain Continuity And Future-Proof Your Manufacturing SME

Maintaining Continuity

Adapting Production

Supporting Staff Morale

Future-Proofing

Look for expert help

The Impact

STRONGER



We understand your situation

We understand that the unexpected COVID-19 outbreak has widespread repercussions on the UK economy, which will have most likely led to uncertainty in terms of the way your business operates. It may have forced your doors to close temporarily, limited your activity, or changed how your staff carry out their everyday tasks.

From agile and remote working, to stockpiling, to customer and order management, the pandemic has collectively caused many leaders to think about how they can safeguard their businesses and future-proof their processes. Although this can sound daunting to many, often simple, small process changes can reap big business rewards. Makers should also know that there's support available to them in these tough, uncertain times.

How can digital tools reduce the impact on your business?

Through digital technologies, there is the option to run your manufacturing operation virtually, remotely or with minimised human intervention. There are a number of ways in which new tools can help to not just maintain production and processes during the current instability, but also enable your business to weather any future unexpected circumstances as they occur.



Maintaining Continuity

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Keeping up productivity is essential

With employees suddenly having no option but to work from home, and not having their usual physical surroundings to carry out their work, tasks must go virtual.

Thankfully, a number of tools can assist with tasks such as increasing throughput, and quality and compliance checks. There are many fantastic technologies that can help you to adjust seamlessly and effectively to the changes...

Control your factory remotely

Your factory may not need to close completely. Whilst perhaps its physical doors may have to be locked, its processes and procedures can be automated. This means that many tasks can be effectively carried out with minimal human intervention required.



Visualise data

Instead of having multiple team members in the same room, or the physical data right in front of you, data visualisation tools can help. They allow you to use graphics to represent data, empowering easy analysis and informing business decisions. Wherever your team members are in the world, there does not need to be a delay in reaching a resolution or determining next steps.

Store data in the cloud

If you've previously been storing data on local storage devices, thankfully cloud computing has been around for quite some time now and so is incredibly effective. Services and resources can be uploaded to, and retrieved from, the internet. Additionally, documents can be held on cloud-based storage systems.





Maintaining Continuity

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Integrate the physical with the virtual

Cyber-physical systems (CPS) can integrate the dynamics of the physical process together with those of software and communication. The result is that you'll have access to abstractions and modelling, design and analysis techniques.

Carry out human tasks through robots

On a similar note, artificial intelligence and machine learning systems have been purposely created to work and react just as humans do. Remember, however, that this is not 'replacing' a human worker – people should be placed before technology.

Simulate experiences through virtual reality (VR)

These can either be alike or entirely distinct to those in the real world. There's the option for collaboration if users wear VR headsets at the same time, allowing them to experience the exact same virtual environment. Providing training through VR can be very beneficial, and often something people opt for regardless of where their staff are working. VR ensures the current workforce don't have to be disrupted, and the entire team's development doesn't have to be put on hold either.

Augmented reality (AR)

Through AR, you'll be able to take your existing manufacturing environment and add on digital information. This results in an 'augmented environment'. It's particularly useful for identifying the machinery that's working, as well as if it's up to the required conditions.

Collaboration and remote-working software

Whilst perhaps not as 'groundbreaking' as other technologies, free software that helps us work remotely, and together, is essential. Here are some of the most valuable tools:

- File storage and sharing: Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive and Box
- Video conferencing: Zoom, Whereby, Skype and Google Hangouts
- Online whiteboard: Miro and Stormboard
- Task management: Trello, Wunderlist and Asana
- Note-taking: Evernote, Microsoft OneNote, Google Docs and Notion
- Meeting planning: SessionLab and Google Sheets
- Engagement tools: Stormz, Axis, Mentimeter and Slido

Adapting production

FASTER.

Adapt to evolving challenges to respond faster

You may be able to adapt to the situation by changing your manufacturing production. For example, some are switching production to respond to various product shortages, or are increasing it to ensure they can meet a higher number of orders. What they all need to do is introduce new processes in a very short amount of time. There are toolless and flexible manufacturing methods, like 3D printing, which can be re-purposed to match the current demand.



Distilleries are now manufacturing hand sanitizer, perfume makers are now producing soap, and more food makers will require a robot at the end of the line to help with packing and picking. For some, this adaptation will happen immediately – and others might follow suit later on. Made Smarter are here to support you, whenever you decide to make changes to your manufacturing processes.





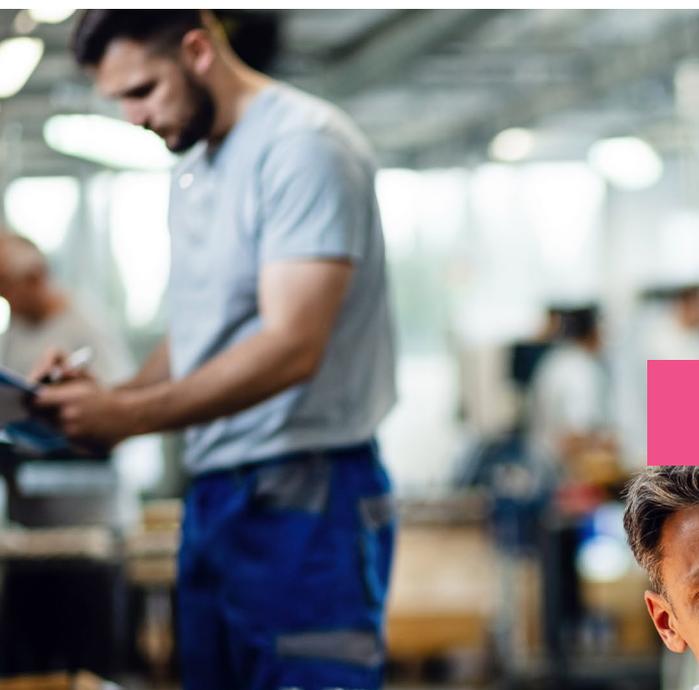
Supporting staff morale

TOGETHER.

Stronger together

With these technologies in place, the operations of your production can proceed like 'business as normal' – as much as possible in these current circumstances. As a result, you can focus on your clients, as well as your employees' health and wellbeing.

It's absolutely key to look after others in this current climate. Technologies will give you the chance to place your attention where it's needed most.



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Future-proofing

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Future-proof your production

Digital tools can not only help maintain continuity, but can future-proof your business too.

It can be hard to know where to start, especially considering the urgency of the present situation. Here's what we would suggest, and how Made Smarter can help:

Immediate-term

The action you can take right now is to speak to a business advisor about using digital technologies. The sooner you talk to them, the sooner you can begin to benefit from the tools' capabilities. The advisor will take the time to understand your business, how it works and its needs. Please email info@makesmarter.uk to book a virtual appointment.

This month

You can move your project forward by then speaking to an Industrial Digital Technology Advisor. You'll be advised on the right technologies for your specific enterprise. These experts can work with you to complete a project proposal or match funding application.

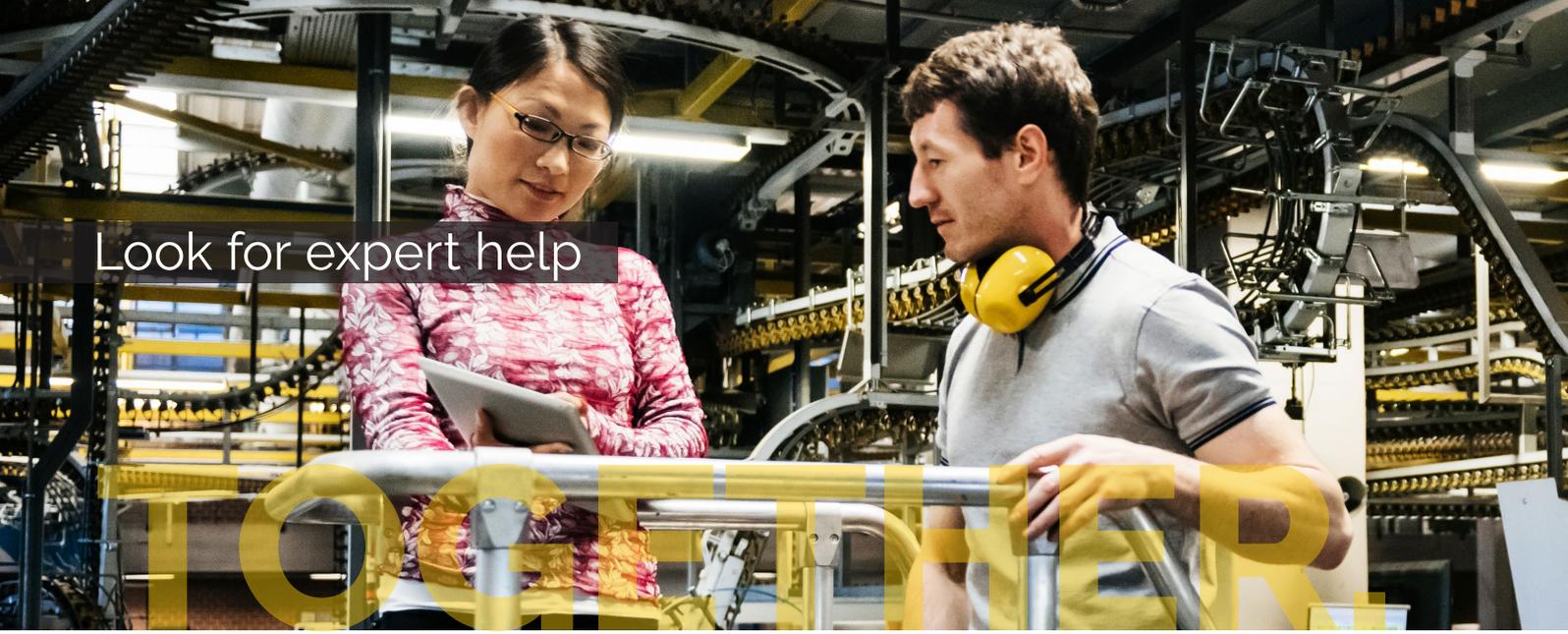
Alternatively, why not find out how you can create a digital roadmap for your business? We'll be running an introduction on the topic soon. Keep up to date with when this will be by checking makesmarter.uk.

Next month

For the final stage of this process, your project will be submitted for panel approval, which are on a monthly basis.

Project planning

This time could also be used to prepare and plan projects for the future, and scope out any that may have been on the back burner for a while now. Although you may not be able to go ahead with these because of the present uncertainty and possible financial limitations, you could carry out more comprehensive research and planning. This enables smoother project implementation later down the line. Made Smarter can support you with this as well.



Look for expert help

Remember: it's never too late to change

We often find that when businesses haven't used digital technologies like these before, they fear that they can't use them at all – or that getting all stakeholders to embrace them will be extremely difficult.

However, this is not the case. It really is never too late to change. With the right support and guidance, your business can get the best out of digital tools.

Made Smarter provides specialist advice and support for manufacturing SMEs in the North West region. This empowers these small businesses to obtain the relevant knowledge while adopting new technologies successfully. Our expert advisers would be more than happy to talk you through the process. Funded student placements are also available to help with implementing or identifying projects, as well as supporting the current workforce with learning how to embrace the new technology.

We've helped many manufacturers reap the rewards of digital tools. DA Techs is just one example of an SME who recently realised the advantages of using technologies. They upgraded their machinery and IT architecture which kick-started a period of growth for them. You can read their case study [here](#).

Never be afraid to ask for help

The COVID-19 situation is of an unprecedented nature, and so there really is no shame in reaching out for any type of support for your business. We urge you to do so.

There are a number of resources available through the [Business Growth Hub](#), including a webinar series and a specific guide on managing cash flow. They are also available for you to [reach out](#) to and discuss any concerns you may have.

Additionally, the UK Government's advice and support can be found [here](#).

If you would like support in your area, further information and guidance is available from the Growth Hubs:

Cheshire & Warrington – www.candwgrowthhub.co.uk
Cumbria – www.cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk
Greater Manchester – www.businessgrowthhub.com
Lancashire – www.boostbusinesslancashire.co.uk
Liverpool City Region – www.localgrowthhub.com

