MADE SMARTER

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From left: Chris Board (Director at Crown Labels), Sally Stevenson, Martyn Mangan, Shai Tailor, and John Board at Crown Labels' factory in Redditch

Smart software to boost productivity at Crown Labels

A printed label manufacturer in Worcestershire is set to boost its productivity after purchasing smart software to connect its systems following advice from Made Smarter West Midlands.

Crown Labels, based in Redditch, manufactures a wide range of labels for various sectors, including food and drink, retail, logistics, and the chemical industry.

While the business was doing well, Crown Labels realised its various systems for monitoring machine performance, data entry and accounting were outdated and needed improving if the business was to grow.

After contacting Made Smarter West Midlands via the Worcestershire Growth Hub, the team recommended purchasing specialist label software Label Traxx to connect its separate systems and reduce time lost to duplication of work.

John Board, Director of Crown Labels, said: "Made Smarter's clear guidance and advice helped us make a firm decision to purchase the new software – a decision we'd been mulling over for two years.

"We're looking forward to fully implementing the software and it making a real difference to our productivity very soon."

The Challenge

The main barrier preventing Crown Labels from growing effectively was its inability to gather data from across its business in real time. Stock takes had to be done manually, which took up a lot of man-hours that could have been better spent on label production.

In addition, it had different software for different systems in the business, but none of them were in sync with each other which meant data entry had to be done more than once in some instances.

Additionally, machine uptime was filled in manually, which meant errors could emerge when jobs were being reviewed.

John added: "We'd sometimes get discrepancies between hours entered for a job and the actual amount of time that had passed, meaning we'd lost time and money somewhere in the process.

"These kinds of issues were common across the business – mistakes here and there because of erroneous data entry or duplication of work was costing us in the long-term.

"If we could gather more reliable data on the shop floor that was immediately shared with the office, we'd be able to make more informed decisions about taking on new work and what we would charge our clients.

"We knew of this piece of dedicated label software, Label Traxx, that could be the solution, but there was no way we could afford the capital expense without knowing whether it would actually do the job.

"I decided to see what grants were out there by contacting the Worcestershire Growth Hub and was encouraged to contact Made Smarter West Midlands to see if they could help."

Luke Willetts, Deputy CEO of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and Worcestershire Growth Hub, added: "The Worcestershire Growth Hub team was able to play a key role in supporting John and the Crown Labels business with accessing Made Smarter.

"We are the first point of contact for Worcestershire businesses and one of our account managers, Sally, went to visit the business to understand the challenges they were facing and identified the support schemes available to overcome those challenges. Sally contacted Made Smarter and then facilitated a meeting to discuss how Crown Labels could benefit."

The Solution

Martyn Mangan, Digital Transformation Specialist at Made Smarter, arranged a meeting with John to speak with him about the issues the business was facing and the processes it used to see if there were any potential solutions.

Martyn visited the business alongside Michael Stevens of the MTC – a partner of Made Smarter – to find out if software installation was the best solution.

John said: "Although we thought Label Traxx might be the best solution for us, Martyn and Michael had a thorough audit of our systems to see where savings could be made.

"It was great to have that outsider's perspective on things to see where we were going wrong and what we could do to improve."

Martyn said: "After our visit, it was clear Crown Labels needed an all-encompassing software solution to make sure all its systems were talking to each other, and that data from the shop floor was accessible in real-time.

"Being a turnkey piece of software, Label Traxx was cheaper by comparison than having bespoke software written for Crown Labels.

"We helped John apply for a match-funded grant of £20,000 to pay for the software, and the money was in the business's account in a very short time once the application was approved."

The Results

Crown Labels is now implementing Label Traxx into its systems in phases, and is already seeing the benefits.

"There's been a lot of capital and time sunk into this software, but we really feel it's going to work for us," John said.

"We can now go into much more granular detail around the performance of our labelling machines, and data entry has almost been entirely automated.

"What really pleased me is that Made Smarter was able to reassure me that I was making the right decision for the business.

"I'd known about Label Traxx for some time, but taking that plunge on an expensive bit of software is not an easy decision to make.

"Martyn and Michael's guidance and the £20,000 grant was the buffer I needed to help make that decision far more simple."

The Future

John added: "While we're yet to know just how significant the software will be, the initial signs are very promising. We think it will boost our productivity and enable us to grow.

"Our staff are already getting used to it and are finding that they can spend more time on producing labels than entering data again and again."

Michael said: "We produced an easy-to-follow digital roadmap to give clear guidance as to how Crown Labels can use the software to grow its business, and when to look for further solutions in the future.

"It's great to hear the software is already having a positive effect on Crown Labels' performance, and we're excited to see what's on the horizon."

Luke added: "I'm pleased to see that Crown Labels has been supported via the Made Smarter scheme. Sally is continuing to work with John and Crown Labels to ensure their business can continue to grow here in Worcestershire. This is just one example of how the Worcestershire Growth Hub is able to support local businesses, acting as the place to go to understand the full business support landscape.

"I'd strongly urge any Worcestershire businesses, no matter your size or sector, to contact the Worcestershire Growth Hub to understand the business support available."

CASE STUDY