

Avocet Materials Group

F1 supplier races ahead with digital transformation

A fast-growing manufacturer of specialist components for high-performance applications including Formula One has invested in technology and leadership to target international growth.

Avocet Materials Group, based in Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, is introducing a £75,000 ERP system to transform its operations, improve productivity and support further growth in a business which exports 99% of its battery products.

Made Smarter North West has supported the project with a £13,000 grant, while CEO Kieren Hall has completed its Leading Digital Transformation (LDT) programme to help shape the manufacturer's long-term strategy.

Kieren said: "Our involvement in Made Smarter hasn't changed what we're trying to achieve, but it has changed how we think about getting there. As a relatively young manufacturer, that's given us a really strong foundation for the future."

The Challenge

Founded in 1996 as a family-owned specialist distributor, Avocet moved into manufacturing in 2021. It has since grown rapidly into an advanced manufacturing business, with its own engineering and R&D capabilities and a highly skilled 29-strong workforce including design engineers, production and quality specialists.

Today, it supplies specialist components and materials for high-performance applications including Formula One, aerospace and advanced engineering. The company says it is the only manufacturer outside Asia producing specialist lead tabs for lithium-ion pouch cells.

Rapid growth exposed systems and processes that had failed to keep pace, with separate software, spreadsheets and manual processes making planning, purchasing and production increasingly difficult to manage and scale.

The Solution

Avocet began working with Made Smarter North West to support the next stage of its transformation, combining investment in new technology with leadership development.

At the centre of its technology plans is an Odoo ERP system to bring sales, purchasing, inventory, production, quality and reporting together on a single platform.

The ERP system, described by Kieren as the "heartbeat of our business", is expected to go live in January 2027.

The Leading Digital Transformation programme gave Kieren an opportunity to step away from the day-to-day demands of a fast-growing business and focus on its longer-term direction. Kieren also received bespoke Organisational Workforce Development support, helping Avocet consider the people and skills needed to support its continued growth and digital transformation.

Through strategic planning and practical tools, it prompted Avocet to revisit its vision, mission and purpose and take a more structured approach to future growth.

Kieren said: "The course was brilliant. It gave me the opportunity to step away from the day-to-day management of the business and think about where we're going and what we need to focus on."

Avocet has also invested heavily in developing its workforce, with employees across the business undertaking training and professional development in areas including quality, health and safety and operations management.

The Benefits

Avocet expects the ERP system to reduce manual data entry and micromanagement by at least 50%. More than 750 hours a year are currently spent on manual planning, material ordering and production scheduling, representing approximately £45,000 in labour costs.

It is targeting a 75% reduction in order remake costs and aims to improve on-time order fulfilment from around 20% to more than 90% within 12 months.

Integrating information across the organisation should also improve traceability, stock control and reporting, while giving employees and managers real-time visibility of the operation. Overall, Avocet's business case forecasts annual savings of around £50,000, delivering a return on investment within two years.

Avocet's wider digital transformation is also demonstrating how technology and people can combine. A team member was initially recruited to visually inspect Formula One components, but Kieren discovered he had a first-class degree in data analytics and had



been developing dashboards in his spare time.

Encouraged to apply those skills within the business, he is now developing dashboards that provide greater visibility of production performance, with Avocet beginning to carve out a data analytics role for him.

Kieren said: "That experience really reinforced that sometimes the capability you're looking for is already there, you just need to create the opportunity for it to flourish."

The technology investment forms part of a much broader growth strategy. Avocet has achieved its target of around 25% sales growth this year and is aiming for similar growth again, subject to market conditions.

The Future

While Avocet's automated equipment can manufacture around 3,000 standard parts per day, its manual visual and

dimensional inspection process can handle around 1,000, creating a potential bottleneck as production grows.

The company is now exploring automated inspection, potentially with further support from Made Smarter. With opportunities growing in markets including the US, Avocet wants to address the bottleneck before it constrains further growth.

Kieren is also looking further ahead at how emerging technologies such as AI could support the business.

He said: "LDT has also encouraged me to keep looking ahead. Digital transformation doesn't stand still, and neither can we. AI is an area I'm particularly interested in exploring next, because I can already see the potential it has to support decision making and improve efficiency across the business."

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