

Massey & Harris Playing with the potential of digital transformation

A playground equipment manufacturer has armed itself with a digital strategy and engaged workforce after embedding new leadership skills.

Massey & Harris, based in Stockport, recognises that digital technologies are key to realising its growth plans for UK and global markets.

Now, with the support of Made Smarter, Business Manager Alison Brooks has taken the lead on plans to digitalise.

The Challenge

Since the 1930s, Massey & Harris has made and installed equipment for councils, schools and public bodies throughout the UK, including the play area at Mayfield in Manchester, the first city park in 100 years.

Recent technical and design developments coupled with an increasing interest in its products has accelerated Massey and Harris's investment in machinery, ensuring they stay at the forefront of manufacturing.

However the business realised it lacked an overarching strategy and someone to lead their digital transformation.

A Made Smarter led, digital transformation workshop analysed the people, processes and products, and immediately identified some key challenges, specifically a lack of integration between operations and the use of paper-based, manual processes.

A digital roadmap was created to guide their transformation journey. Solutions involving data and systems integration tools, such as a customer relationship management (CRM) and materials

requirement planning (MPR) software were identified as potential priority projects.

But what also emerged was a vital need for digital leadership skills.

The Solution

With a relatively small but agile team of 15 staff across its design, production and operations functions, there were two clear candidates who could help steer Massey & Harris's digital transformation.

As Business Manager, Alison Brooks liaises between all parts of the business, so she was put forward for Made Smarter's Leading Digital Transformation programme.

The fast track, high impact programme uses a blend of face-to-face workshops, online webinars, case studies and site visits to smart factories - including Print City, MMU's 3D additive and digital manufacturing hub - to arm delegates with a set of practical tools and a strategy for digital transformation.

The Benefit

Alison admits she was initially a reluctant participant.

"In truth, I feared it would be too technical and it was out of my comfort zone," she said. "But that all changed from the first session and I was hooked. I was able to quickly ascertain where we were as a company, why we had previously failed in leading change, what we needed to do, when, and how."

Change has been rapidly implemented.

A key first part of the programme is surveying the workforce for their views on the business. Alison feared a negative response but was surprised by the responses.

"The team wanted to understand the company's vision and their role in it," she explained. "They wanted more personnel development and to become invested in the business."

Immediately, Massey & Harris implemented change. It improved communications, sharing the company's vision and plans, enabling the team to feel valued and increasing the buy-in for the changes in the pipeline.

"It was a simple change, but it had a huge impact. Instead of just sending down production instructions for a set of play equipment, we now explain what it's for. Knowing that a product is going to a school or new park or being exported to as far away as Mauritius adds real value to the work."

Alison also benefited from learning from her peers and visiting their factories.

"Although we are all at different stages, it is comforting that we share the challenges," she said. "The peer learning forums were an added bonus to discuss and share business issues and good practice, the other delegates are now regular contacts - and friends."

Another major change is that the business has created a new administrator role to free up Alison to lead the digital



transformation and work with Regan to implement change.

Alison said: *"I've done lots of courses in the past and found some of the learning wasn't relevant. This was different. The belief and confidence I have walked away with, both professionally and personally, is quite something. The programme was well led, engaging, full of useful information, and a real source for inspiration."*

The Future

Massey & Harris has been able to embed digital leadership skills at shop floor level by allowing Regan Mannion, Production Coordinator, to attend Made Smarter's Leading Change for Digital Champions programme. This uses a bite-size, blended approach consisting of two face to face workshops, online coaching, a site visit to an SME manufacturer

to see the impact of digital change first-hand, as well as a chance to see the latest digital technologies at an Amazon fulfilment centre.

Massey & Harris is now in the process of refining its digital strategy and exploring the potential of technologies.

"That investment is likely to happen later in the year," Alison said. "We're acutely aware of the need to invest in new technologies, and we will continue to talk to Made Smarter about that. But if there's one thing I've learned is if we are going to be successful then we need to take one step at a time."



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Alison Brooks
Business Manager



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