

# Digital technology in the home goods and furniture manufacturing sector



The future of the industry,  
latest trends, and how  
makers can stay ahead.

# MADE SMARTER

[www.madesmarter.uk/formakers](http://www.madesmarter.uk/formakers)

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# What is Made Smarter?

Backed by world-renowned businesses and the UK government, Made Smarter will improve the development and adoption of emerging technologies within your manufacturing business through:

- Technology grants
- Skill and Leadership training
- Transformation workshops

At Made Smarter, a team of manufacturing industry experts will match your organisation with an impartial adviser who will work alongside and support you through your digitalisation journey. With specialisms within data and robotics, as well as regional specialists, the Made Smarter team will work with you to create a tailored digital strategy and clear plan to power towards.

# The opportunities for home goods and furniture manufacturers

With increased property demand and more people spending time in their homes, a new trend has emerged. Interior design, home products, customisation, and garden-related items have all boomed in popularity. Online shopping has risen in prevalence too, accelerating this trend further, with UK eCommerce sales reaching **£110.6 billion in 2020** and expected to grow to **£260 billion by 2025**.

As a result, manufacturers have witnessed a significant surge in consumer spending. Globally, the furniture market alone is anticipated to grow by 9.2% to **\$692.81 billion this year**. To make the most of this opportunity, makers need to find ways of satisfying the needs of such a high volume of customers. Digital technologies can play a crucial role in this, and investment doesn't necessarily have to cost your business...





# How can my business get support?

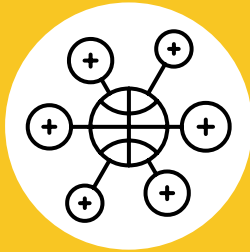
Made Smarter is faster and quicker than other business support functions available. By spending a few hours applying for funding through Made Smarter, you will save hours, days and even weeks for years to come.

**Follow our five simple steps for a successful digital transformation:**



# Funding available to you

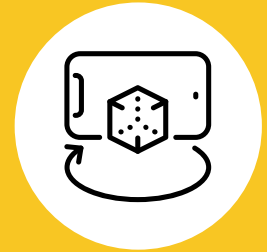
Digital isn't coming – it's already here. Adopting technology whilst funding is in place is a great way to avoid getting left behind. Some of the projects that we can support include, but aren't limited to:



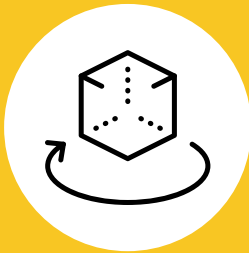
**Data and systems  
(such as ERP and MRP)**



**Sensors**



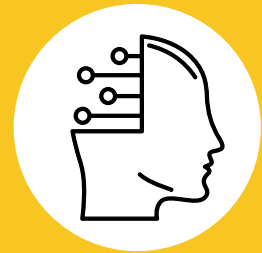
**Virtual Reality and  
Augmented Reality**



**Additive  
Manufacturing**



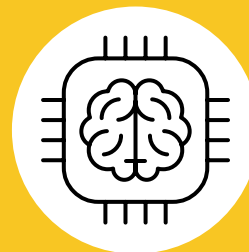
**Wearable technology**



**Robotics, Cobots  
and Automation**



**Cybersecurity**



**Artificial Intelligence**



# Top 5 technology trends across the furniture and home goods sector

To maximise on the high level of consumer demand for furniture and home goods, it's important to be aware of the biggest technology trends dominating the market.

## **1. Predicting consumer demand with machine learning**

Systems analytics will enable you to gauge interest in a specific product, more accurately forecast future consumer demand, and manage products/services and inventory accordingly. This then allows you to streamline marketing strategies to better target customers, boosting both efficiency and sales in the process. Machine learning enhances the traditional methods of forecasting – accelerating results through high-speed data processing.

## **2. Enhancing the customer experience with digital showrooms and virtual staging**

It's never been more important to provide the ultimate customer experience – and now this can be achieved within their homes. Digital showrooms and ever-improving virtual reality technology is creating a new, exciting experience for both buyers and sellers. In theory, the unlimited virtual environment can even act as a substitute to costly retail space – users can access it anytime and anywhere.

## **3. Aiding new product development with 3D printing**

3D printing can be used to boost efficiency, cut waste, and test new products and designs. This is because it only utilises the precise amount of material needed, and produces shapes that would be unimaginable for humans to manufacture.

## **4. Improve the customer journey with product configurators**

With product configurators, you'll be able to showcase your entire catalogue of products, models, colours and textures in an engaging, interactive way. Customers are then prompted to move further along the sales journey, ultimately triggering them to pick their preferred product and go through with their purchase.

## **5. Boost business operations with enterprise resource planning**

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) is a centralised method of handling all parts of facility operations and processes. Not only can this lead to better efficiency, but it will provide you with unparalleled visibility, coordination and management across all your business' separate processes.



# How a bedroom furniture manufacturer transformed their processes

Bolton-based furniture manufacturer, Starlight Bedrooms, turned to Made Smarter to **digitalise their manual and paper-based processes** – and keep ahead of their competition. They first leveraged our digital transformation workshops, which pinpointed their main challenges and opportunities (data and systems integration, the design process, and production optimisation). Their manual ordering process was also **prone to error and restricted their stock visibility**.

We helped Starlight Bedrooms build a bespoke customer management system, which integrated with new CAD design and production software as well as their sales and marketing operations. The CAD system allows them to quickly create room layouts and furniture and fittings configurations, and send machine instructions to their production plant through a cost, materials and workflow planning and management module.

Starlight Bedrooms can now access valuable data and connect key systems, leading to more **informed business decisions**. Plus, they can eliminate bottlenecks, and minimise errors and waste. What's more, their team now has **complete oversight of the entire sales and production pipeline**. It's predicted that **productivity will rise by 15%** and trigger a major improvement in terms of communication with customers. They'll also be able to boost production from 10 rooms per week to 15, and cut the design and quoting process from a week to just one day.



# The benefits of digital

There are so many advantages to digital. And with Made Smarter, you can ensure the technology you invest in achieves your specific goals – whether that's overcoming a challenge or catapulting your growth.

We'll help you leverage the power of these tools, enabling you to secure a competitive advantage as well as many other common benefits:

## Improved capacity

Tools boost productivity, and can handle some aspects of an employee's job. This doesn't mean robots are replacing them – far from it – it simply frees up capacity to work on higher-value tasks.

## Maximised efficiency

By eliminating paper and traditional processes, technology simplifies and speeds up your operations, leading to benefits like reduced downtime. Ultimately, efficiency is maximised.

## Reduced lead times

Real-time data helps inform decision-making and increase awareness around machines and potential supply chain delays. You can then manage inventory and amend production to cut lead times.

## Upskilled employees

The digital skills gap is undeniable. But through technology, you can upskill your team. Tools like augmented reality, assisted assembly and cloud technology infrastructure enable employees to train virtually and without disrupting business as usual. They can also access expert support remotely. This then triggers better morale and enhanced productivity, and provides more opportunities for career progression.

## Increased profits

Thanks to all the advantages above – as well as improved quality and reduced waste – the use of digital technology also results in higher profits for your business.

# Why is digital transformation so important in 2022?

The cost of living crisis can't be ignored. Rising inflation, high energy bills and increased taxes have meant that businesses have had to navigate supply issues and growing operational costs. Add Brexit, the pandemic, and staff shortages into the mix, and it's a challenging landscape to say the least. But there *are* solutions available.

Digital tools can help manufacturers make marginal savings and set themselves apart from competitors in a volatile time. What's more, they'll allow you to make products quicker. And this doesn't mean that the human element will be removed – the two can work together seamlessly. You can additionally introduce technologies incrementally, making the most of funding and support to minimise the impact on your budgets. This is the future of manufacturing.





# How a soft furnishings business boosted their efficiency

Panaz is a leading supplier of high-quality decorative fabrics and wallcoverings for the hospitality, healthcare, workspace and contract sectors. They partnered with Made Smarter to leverage the power of technology by:

- **Developing an end-to-end custom design and digital printing solution, which will radically accelerate and streamline processes and double their production capability. It works by utilising software to allow for design customisation and ordering in a single click.**
- **Investing in a new wide-width digital printer, enabling the print of 300cm-wide fabrics and two 150cm fabrics side by side.**
- **Capitalising on a new wide-width calendar heat transfer machine to generate the digitally printed design onto fabric before the final stage of customer delivery.**

The right-first-time, automated process has cut the number of touchpoints between Panaz and their customers, resulting in **increased efficiency and a faster speed to market**. The usual two-week process has now been cut to just one or two days.

And, as they're more efficient, Panaz can take their highly skilled design resource off of tedious tasks, and utilise them for more complicated design and range work. On top of this, they're **producing much less waste**, with fewer iterations of a sample design. Ultimately, their digital transformation has led to previously unimaginable results.





# What can we do for your business?

Our team is ready to help your home goods or furniture manufacturing business on its journey to digitalisation. Whether this is your first step or you're looking to level up your use of technology, we can offer sound advice, funding, and the skills needed to ensure your business thrives this year – and far beyond.

We've already supported countless manufacturers across the home industry, and we'd love to do the same for you. Get in touch with our friendly team today for an informal chat. We'll help to put the building blocks in place so you can work smarter, make an everyday difference to your business, and capitalise on the current high demand.

Our success speaks for itself – make it yours too...

**250+ funded  
projects across  
the North West**

**50+ businesses  
within your  
sector currently  
working with  
our advisers**

**2,000+ roles  
upskilled so far**

**9 out of 10  
manufacturers  
would recommend  
working with Made  
Smarter<sup>1</sup>**



“Made Smarter has been transformational for us, developing a digital strategy and investing in technology to give us better process control.”

– **Christopher Lever, Managing Director at Bindatex**

“Investing in technology has automated our entire process, saving time, money, and ensuring our staff can focus on new opportunities to drive us forward.”

– **Luke Walsh, Managing Director at Brainboxes**

“[Made Smarter was] the rocket fuel we needed to create a digital roadmap, invest in new technology and embed employee skills.”

– **Lefteris Angelidis, Managing Director at Visual Architects**



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