

ActOn Finishing Driving forward future innovation

The UK's leading surface finishing technology provider in the healthcare, aerospace, automotive and motorsport sectors has installed new software after taking advice from Made Smarter specialists.

ActOn Finishing has grown steadily since it was established in 1965 from its base in Torrington Avenue in Coventry.

In 2020, the business modernised its laboratory which is used to demonstrate products to new and existing clients as well as replacing halogen bulbs throughout its premises with LED lighting to improve its carbon footprint, leading to around 32 tonnes of CO₂ emission savings per year and reduced energy costs.

Over thirty people work at the family-owned business which specialises in providing surface finishing solutions which include manufacturing a range of machines for a variety of applications and industries – including finishing medical implants, aerospace components and cutlery.

ActOn Finishing is a client of the WMG centre High Value Manufacturing Catapult, who referred the business to the West Midlands Made Smarter programme.

Through Made Smarter, a Cim50 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system was deployed integrating with their legacy Sage 50 accounting software to improve operational visibility and move towards a paperless factory. This was closely followed by the deployment of a Solidworks Product Data Management

(PDM) software to centralise the management of their product and process data.

Sid Gulati, Managing Director at ActOn Finishing, said: "The Made Smarter team has been very helpful and supportive and this new software will enable us to become more efficient and ensure we continue to evolve in the different markets we work in."

The Challenge

ActOn Finishing wanted to introduce state-of-the-art manufacturing software to keep track of its orders which are sent around the world from its Coventry base.

Sid said: "Often when you are running a company, you are so busy dealing with the day-to-day operations and management that you don't get much time to sit back and think about improving the way you work."

"We wanted to be able to control our billing methods for our orders since as well as running our surface finishing company, we have a sub-contract service and deal in consumables so there is a lot to juggle."

After finding out about Made Smarter, Sid contacted the team and arranged for Paul Sullivan, Industrial Digital technology Expert at Made Smarter for Coventry and Warwickshire, to visit to find out how the scheme could benefit them.

Ioan Lutas and Nasar Jockey from delivery partner WMG centre High Value Manufacturing Catapult also came along as part of their collaboration with Made Smarter to put together a digital roadmap, outlining the technology changes which would make a positive difference to ActOn Finishing.

Nasar Jockey, Principal Engineer at WMG, University of Warwick, said: "Having experienced the versatility of ActOn Blasting Machines whilst working at Rolls-Royce, it was great to see them register for Made Smarter. Sid being an open-minded, commercially astute and digitally savvy business owner made their Made Smarter journey fairly straightforward."

The Solution

Paul Sullivan guided ActOn Finishing through the application process for a 50 per cent match-funded grant of £13,000 to purchase the innovative Cim50 software to manage their stock control as well as compile quotes and invoices.

Sid said: "Made Smarter suggested technology we could introduce and helped us to understand the benefits after we took part in a digital workshop."

"They put together a plan with milestones that we wanted to achieve because we want to grow the manufacturing side of the business."

"2021 was one of our busiest years in manufacturing and we want to build on that."

Nasar added: "ActOn didn't stop at just an ERP solution but took further advantage of Made Smarter to also deploy a Solidworks PDM software to streamline information flow from their design office to the production shopfloor."

The Benefits

Introducing the ERP has been welcomed by staff and is allowing the company to run more efficiently in a number of areas.

Sid explained: "After talking to the Made Smarter experts, we realised some of our digital technology was out-of-date and knew we could become more efficient."

"The team has responded really well and bought into it because it is saving a lot of manual work since we can access information much more quickly."

"For example, if the storemen want to find a particular product, they can now find it in our warehouse much more quickly so there is less time wasted."

"We were always looking to be more digital and reduce our paperwork to become more efficient but it was always something on the list to do!"

"Everything now is much more automated which is a really big help since we can access the information we need at the press of a button instead of going through sheets and sheets of paper and the new system will keep up with growth in our manufacturing division."

Nasar explained: "The Made Smarter Roadmap helped ActOn focus their efforts and sharpen their vision for moving to a Smart Factory and offer further servitisation."

The Future

The business is now working more smartly and bringing departments closer together for the benefit of its extensive client base in a myriad of sectors.

Sid added: "I would encourage other small to medium businesses just like us to find out more about the Made Smarter programme because it is a decision we have not regretted."

"It was really useful having independent experts assess the way we operate since when you are involved on a daily basis, you don't always appreciate there are different ways and systems that can be introduced to help you work in a more streamlined manner or are aware of the technology that is available."

"That is where the experts from the programme really helped us and the advice from Paul Sullivan was just what we needed since he took us through the grant application step-by-step. It can sometimes be daunting approaching something like that."



From the left, Paul Sullivan (West Midlands Made Smarter), Nasar Jockey (WMG at the University of Warwick), Ioan Lutas (WMG at the University of Warwick) and Sid Gulati (ActOn Finishing)