

Label Apeel is Leading the Way in Digital Transformation with Made Smarter East Midlands

Case study



Label Apeel has a long history of excellence in delivering high-quality label printing and decoration services. Founded in the early 1980s, the company has grown from a small garage operation into a leading UK print manufacturer, serving various industries, including beers, wines, spirits, cosmetics, beauty, luxury food, and sports nutrition. As a family-owned business, Label Apeel prides itself on maintaining world-class levels of customer satisfaction.

Recently, they started on a digital transformation journey with the support of Made Smarter East Midlands to enhance their operational efficiency and customer service.

The Challenge

Label Apeel aimed to provide a digital platform for customers to place orders, call off stock, and upload artwork conveniently and efficiently. The goal was to modernise their operations, making them more flexible and competitive. However, their existing MIS (Management Information System) or ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system was outdated and unable to support this vision. Diversifying their customer base and growing the business required a shift from traditional phone and email orders to a seamless online system that offered real-time stock visibility and order history.

The Solution

To address this challenge, Label Apeel decided to implement a new MIS/ERP system, set to go live in December 2024. A dedicated team of two employees has been seconded to manage this project for a year, with additional support for six months post-launch to address any issues. Super users from each department will be trained by the system providers and will, in turn, train their teams, ensuring the system meets their needs through continuous feedback and adjustments.

As part of the fully funded Made Smarter support available, Helena Mckinder, Managing Director of Label Apeel, undertook the Leading Digital Transformation programme, delivered by Loughborough University. This course provided the necessary headspace to think strategically, free from day-to-day distractions. It also fostered a peer support network, allowing participants to share best practices, learn from each other's experiences, and reflect on their processes.

"The relationships developed during the Made Smarter digital course were incredibly beneficial. We all came from different businesses with unique challenges, yet there was common ground. Because my peers weren't from the same industry, they weren't competitors. This allowed us to be open and honest, providing genuine support to one another. The exchange of ideas and best practices helped us reflect on our own processes and consider new approaches to leading our digital transformation."

Helena McKinder, Managing Director of Label Apeel



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One significant concern was managing the change and addressing staff worries about digital technology replacing jobs. The customer service team, for instance, feared losing tasks to automation. However, the new system would free them to focus on more value-added activities like client management and relationship building, rather than mundane administrative tasks. The course has played a crucial role in supporting Helena to manage this change, ensuring everyone across the business understands the benefits and reasons behind the changes.

In addition to the course, Label Apeel also received a full £20,000 in matched grant funding from Made Smarter to help purchase the new system.

The Benefits

Label Apeel plans to launch the new system in a staggered approach. The internal system will go live in December, followed by a trial with long-term customers in March/April. By Q3 2025, the full customer portal will be rolled out to all customers, new and repeat. This transformation is expected to improve customer retention, enhance turnaround times, and increase competitiveness. The new system will streamline processes, such as artwork

approvals and workflows, reducing the strain on servers and speeding up operations.

Customers will benefit from greater visibility over stock, orders, and previous transactions, all accessible through the new portal. This unique selling point will help attract more customers and retain existing ones by offering a more efficient and transparent service.

The Future

Label Apeel's primary focus remains on providing the best quality products and services to their customers. The new system will enable customers to have greater visibility over stock and orders, enhancing overall service quality. As a small family-owned business, Label Apeel can quickly adapt to changing customer needs, diversifying further if necessary. The integration of the new system with their production presses will improve efficiency, reduce human error, and enhance the quality of their output.

With the support of Made Smarter East Midlands, Label Apeel is well on its way to achieving its digital transformation goals, ensuring continued growth and success in a competitive market.