

Weaver Dane Furniture maker creates room for growth with operations integration.

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Paul Dodd,
Owner

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A furniture manufacturer for the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom sector is forecasting 35% growth after integrating design and production, with the support of Made Smarter.

Weaver Dane, based in Hartford, Cheshire, not only designs and makes furniture products, but projects manages renovations, managing everything from flooring and electrics to plumbing and decoration.

With ambitions to grow and launch a series of showrooms to generate more customers, the business needed to improve efficiency and increase capacity.

Working with Made Smarter, the business has created a digital roadmap, adopted top of the range design software which integrates with its MRP and production, and completed a leadership programme to drive forward its digital transformation strategy.

The Challenge

The key challenge for Weaver Dane was the lack of integration between its operations.

Owner Paul Dodd explained: *“In many aspects of our business there is a good level of automation. But our designs needed to be manually programmed into CNC machines. This process takes at least one and half days of work for a trained operator. It is essentially data entry and human error would inevitably creep in causing wasted time and resources.”*

While Paul had been investigating potential technology solutions for two years, it wasn't until he began to work with Made Smarter that he found a way forward.

The company had a Digital Transformation Workshop, where Made Smarter technology and skills advisers analysed its product, process and people to create a digital roadmap of what steps could be taken for sustainable, manageable digital transformation.

Paul was also invited onto Made Smarter's Leading Digital Transformation programme to help him develop a digital strategy.

“The leadership programme really gave me the headspace to step back and start looking at change from a different perspective,” Paul said. “The process changed my entire approach to adopting technology.”

The Solution

The process also gave Paul the confidence to invest in technology. Supported by a £10,000 grant from Made Smarter, Weaver Dan has adopted a leading design software, Imos IX CAD.

The highly technical solution not only enables next level 3D design and modelling but crucially is able to link with the existing MRP system. This means all the manufacturing data related to a product is integrated when it is exported to the production system, avoiding any need for manual intervention.

Ultimately, this has created an end-to-end data flow from sales through to planning, design and production.

The grant also covered the adoption of IX scout, a cloud-based portal which allows order and design information to be shared with customers in real-time, and a powerful PC to operate the software.

The Benefits

The impact of the investment is significant and wide-ranging.

Whereby the manual programming of a project into a CNC could take up at least 1.5 days in some cases, integration and automation has reduced that time to seconds. Data entry, errors and mistakes, including missed parts or revisions, have been all but eliminated.

The result is that Weaver Dane has boosted its production capacity by a staggering 35% and is able to manufacture quicker and to greater volumes.

The investment has freed up the existing operators to focus on managing the CNC operations and more high value tasks. Weaver Dane has also increased his workforce of five by employing two new production operator roles.

Paul admits that technical aspects of adopting the solution have been challenging but the outcomes are and will be worth it.

“There have been pain points,” Paul said. “But we were always aware of that. Data and systems integration is complex. For instance, we have had to put a lot of work into updating the system with five years of historic production data. But this work has immediate benefits, like allowing us to quote much quicker, and will have a wealth of positive impacts in the future.”

The solution is also supporting Weaver Dan's net zero ambitions.



Improving manufacturing efficiency will enable better planning and purchasing, meaning less inbound deliveries to its site.

Automation is reducing errors, waste and rework. It is also enabling the business to manage energy use more efficiently to reduce the carbon footprint of each finished product.

The future

The forecast growth has given Weaver Dane confidence to drive forward plans for a new larger factory and roll out of retail showrooms across the county.

The company is also planning to begin manufacturing for trade customers, generating a new revenue stream.

This will enable the business to adopt more future-facing

technologies such as virtual reality which has the potential to transform how it interacts with customers.

Paul has also become an advocate for Made Smarter, mentoring other manufacturers starting their journeys.

“If there is one word that describes the impact of working with Made Smarter, it is transformational,” he said. “The leadership training, digital strategy and support with the technology investment has created a clear path for our growth and development as a business. Not only that, it has accelerated our ambitions by 18 months. That is nothing short of incredible.”

Weaver Dane

