

Case Study

Barkston Plastics

80 employees, £7m turnover, based in Leeds & Hull



Their familiarity with Barkston enabled them to quickly “hit the ground running” and introduce significant change.

Barkston's management team were aware that the company had ‘drifted’ over the past two years, and the two manufacturing specialists provided some objective eyes and outside advice to help see what could be improved.

Roy Kitchman, Sales Director

‘This is an on-going success story and we are well on the way to achieving all of the goals we set out when we started working with MAS!’

The suggestions from the MAS consultants together with ideas from our employees led to an improved factory lay out and additional key pieces of equipment.

We are also really seeing the results of a new scheduling system which was implemented, allowing us to grow the business.

Our employees are more motivated and feel much more involved and valued within the company. MAS advice has shown us how to get to where we want to be, and beyond.’

Company Profile

Barkston Plastics Ltd began life in 1969 as a rubber and plastics stockholder.

By the mid 1970s it had developed its own engineering division and in 1993 it added a fabrication service. Today, it operates from three sites: Hull, Leeds and Hebburn in Newcastle.

The company's Hull based fabrication facility operates from rented facilities, manufacturing products to customer requirements.

In Autumn 2004, management felt that the Hull site was operating at full capacity with no scope for expansion. Sales orders were not being met on time and the company was struggling to meet increasing customer demand.

Earlier in the year, the Leeds site had received assistance from MAS which was quickly followed by a manufacturing improvement project at the smaller Hull-based site.

Manufacturing specialists Abigail Levin and David Brannock of MCCR & Associates (a MAS approved consultancy) were called in and involved with both projects.

Key Achievements

The assistance provided by MAS covered three key areas: processes, systems and people. As a result of the assistance, Barkston's have achieved the following improvements:

- 50% improvement in overall productivity.
- 50% reduction in lead times allowing additional work to be taken on.
- Access to capital grants enabling the purchase of new equipment which has opened up markets.
- Development of new products and processes.
- Improved factory layout and appearance.

The new whiteboard based scheduling system has reduced lead times dramatically and coupled with the purchase of two new pieces of capital equipment, the company can now serve additional customers that only three months ago it had to turn away.

Making it Happen

It became clear very early on that the layout of the factory was sub optimal and that the organisational structure was causing conflict.

Whilst the practical side of improving the operational layout was tackled with input from the workforce, a careful assessment was also made of the individuals' skill areas and in particular how they interacted with each other.

Following this, roles and responsibilities were clarified which has led to improved team-working and workforce involvement on how the company can be better organised. It has also enabled the company to simplify key processes - from orders right through to receipt of customer payment.

The project also focussed on how to get orders out on time and in full; an issue that was frustrating employees across the whole of the organisation.

The pressures of peaks and troughs in sales were affecting production scheduling, leading to erratic lead times which caused tension between the sales and production teams.

By introducing a simple scheduling system, run by the Production Supervisor, the sales team can now easily see constraints or slack periods in the production schedule and adapt quoted delivery times accordingly. The improved transparency which the new scheduling system provides has led to all products now being produced on time and in full.

Highlights of Achievements

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What the Barkston Plastics people said:

'MAS have been instrumental in creating an effective environment which has led to increased capacity, efficiency and pride'

Mark Carter, Operations Manager

'By instigating some basic but new technology and structure into our quotation systems, both me and the company have benefited.'

'Streamlining some archaic methods, we have now made the estimating department much more effective. We also have a much more productive workforce'

Charlie Bland, Estimating Manager

About MAS

MAS is a national DTI initiative, delivering practical, hands-on manufacturing advice and expertise to help you improve your performance. Delivered by experts with real-life knowledge and experience, MAS has already given advice to hundreds of businesses in Yorkshire & The Humber. Why not see how MAS can help your business?

For more information

If you feel your business could benefit from MAS, why not complete your details below and fax to us on **0113 368 5261**. You can also contact: enquiries@mas-yh.co.uk or visit the website www.mas-yh.co.uk

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Name:	Job Title:
Company Name:	Nature of Business:
Address:	
Telephone Number:	Email:

I would like MAS to contact me to discuss (please tick box/es):

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hands on manufacturing improvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Product development | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous improvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical and materials issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing organisational 'change' | <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce training and development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lean manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Process analysis | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing control and factory layout | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving workforce productivity | |

- ☐ I would like to join the Manufacturing Network and receive a free monthly e-newsletter about funding opportunities and events

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