



Case Study. WLR Prototype Engineers Ltd

Nottingham Company Grows by 40% thanks to GNP Initiative

The Greater Nottingham Partnership, (GNP), launched a £¼m programme to help manufacturing businesses in Greater Nottingham last year. Over 40 manufacturing businesses signed up and, according to project managers MCCR and Associates, there is still time for others to benefit. One company that is already reaping real rewards is WLR Prototype Engineers Ltd. of Ruddington who have seen turnover grow by over 40%, whilst maintaining profitability, since joining the World Class Manufacturing Programme, Four extra staff have been employed.



WLR Prototype Engineers was founded over 35 years ago and has developed to become specialist manufacturers of precision engineered parts and prototypes for pharmaceutical and oil exploration companies. Its Managing Director Kevin Callon found that he was spending all his time with 'his nose to the grindstone' and lacked time and opportunity to think strategically about the company or to plan its future. Kevin is an ambitious engineer and is keen to grow the firm. He signed WLR up to the programme in September 2004 and has not looked back since.

MCCR associates Geoff Price and Dave Brannock led the delivery of the programme for GNP. Both have years of senior manufacturing management expertise behind them and, according to Kevin, their input was pivotal in helping him achieve the step change, "I have used consultants and business advisers before, but Geoff and Dave had the right manufacturing background and could work with both my management team and with the shop floor. They are experts but are very down to earth and understand the issues and opportunities facing the business," he said. With Geoff and Dave's guidance, Kevin and his team undertook a series of business re-engineering processes. The roles and responsibilities of each senior management team member were agreed and performance measures introduced to monitor progress. Work was better shared and delegated, profitability better monitored and pressures on the M.D. reduced. Kevin then had the time to develop an ambitious growth strategy, acknowledging that WLR offered its blue chip customers not only a specialist production facility, but also the knowledge and experience to assist them with a wide range of engineering problems.

As the business grew production was separated into two teams and new employment opportunities were created. Teamwork was developed and extended beyond the senior team to involve the whole work force. According to Kevin, "The business is now far more focused. Employees are far more involved and far better motivated."

Kevin is the first to admit he can't just sit on his laurels, "We still have lots to do. We are introducing job-costing disciplines and we need to develop a continuous productivity improvement programme. The most valuable thing the project gave us is the confidence to take on, adapt and measure the impact of new ideas and new ways of working. It has all been very valuable."

GNP's Mark Sisson added "The issues that the WLR team are working through are common to many manufacturing firms - the need to offer the best possible service to customers; the need to identify where and how profits are being made; the need to focus on what really matters; the need to reduce waste whether in time, effort or material; the need to measure and manage processes properly rather than relying on gut instinct. In short, the need to become world class and to win a long term future." The programme is still open to manufacturing companies in Greater Nottingham who should contact Geoff Price on geoffprice@cowgate.f9.co.uk or call on 01629 534656 for further details.

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