



Excellence in production control and administration for manufacturing businesses

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## FUTURE DESIGN FUTURE-PROOFED WITH PRODUCTION CONTROL SOFTWARE

There comes a time when all subcontract precision engineering companies have to take a good look at their business administration procedures. That may be when the existing manual methods simply become too time consuming and labour intensive or it may be when existing software is no longer fit for purpose. These issues can be recognised at different times in a company's life cycle – typically when taking on new customers, more business from existing ones or acquiring a new company. In the case of Future Design & Engineering Ltd, the need arose when the company had to update its existing ISO 9001:2015 accreditation.

Managing Director Simon Humphrey knew that PSL Datatrack production control software had already been widely used by other subcontract engineering companies either with or seeking ISO accreditation and that it was tailored specifically to the sector's requirements. This included the functionality and manufacturing traceability to keep track of a job from initial enquiry through to final invoice as well as providing auditors with all the information needed quickly and professionally.



The Bedfordshire based company specialises in CNC milling and turning as well as 3D printing. It provides its engineering solutions, including a complete one-stop shop service, to various industries that require high quality engineering solutions and reliability in terms of both product quality and customer service.

With lots of different product lines and batch quantities to be manufactured, the company's existing production control software package was no longer up to the task and upgrading it would not provide the necessary functionality. Other systems available were considered complex with too many unusable

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features for Future Design's specific needs. As it turned out, they needed to implement PSL Datatrack earlier than originally planned when their old system stopped working.

The main challenge was to get PSL Datatrack installed and functioning quickly in time for the reaccreditation process as there could be no overlap between using the two systems. Once the decision had been made to invest in PSL Datatrack, it was on the basis that the necessary support would be provided to achieve this goal. Future Design, like so many subcontractors, has a team whose primary aim is to get products manufactured to the highest standards and out of the door as quickly as possible. Time can be tight for the essential associated administration tasks and getting staff trained in using the new software system as quickly as possible was vital.

From PSL Datatrack's viewpoint, training new users quickly through both onsite training and remotely is a regular and frequently called upon service. "Our clients need to be able to carry on their day to day business with minimal disruption and so our training is carefully tailored to meet individual circumstances," says Geoff Gartland, Managing Director.

Future Design's main contact for using the system and receiving the initial training was Administration & Office Manager Kate Waller. Having already managed the use of the company's original system, Kate's role and experience was key to the process. It was, however, a challenge having to master the controls of PSL Datatrack in such a short period of time. She says: "The training I received was first class, using a combination of onsite face-to-face instruction and remote web-based sessions with screen sharing. The support was excellent and nothing was too much trouble for PSL Datatrack who provided me with all the guidance I needed throughout the implementation of the system."

Modules covering key areas of production and administration were acquired, including Quotations which has dramatically reduced the time involved in generating customer quotes to minutes, whether for new, repeat or infrequent customers.

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Alongside Quotations, Future Design has benefitted from other PSL Datatrack modules designed to manage sales/purchase order processing, Shop Floor Data Collection, post production job costing and control of supplier invoices. With all this information at their fingertips, the company can be much more confident when quoting customers in terms of cost and scheduling of deliveries. Critical quality control aspects of the production process, including non-conformance and gauge calibration, are also managed in the system.

The company has also been able to capitalise on features available in PSL Datatrack that were not present in their old system.

One of the interesting aspects of Future Design's use of PSL Datatrack software is the fact that the software is installed and run on a Cloud-based server whilst maintaining full security over the data. This offers the company significant advantages, such as being able to interrogate and find out information about customers, orders, work in progress and much more from any location remotely rather than just from a fixed office PC. For a small company this approach is very flexible and PSL Datatrack was easily integrated into Future Design's Cloud-based approach.

Future Design subsequently benefitted from the modularity of PSL Datatrack and invested in the Assemblies module to manage the production of multi-item products. Most recently, the Sequential Scheduler module has been added to control and manage the company's workload and flow on the shop floor.

Future Design is now reaping the full benefit of transferring to PSL Datatrack. "The availability of information at management and shop floor level enables us to make decisions quickly to improve the production process and offer the best possible service to our customers in terms of product quality and meeting their delivery requirements," says Simon Humphrey.

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The company operates on the basis of continual improvement and the ability to see the status of live production in real time and provide instructions directly to the shop floor may be addressed through the acquisition of Status Boards in the future. Simon concludes: "By routing everything through PSL Datatrack, we are able to run our business in the most efficient way and there is potential for taking on more business without spending too much extra time on administration."

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