

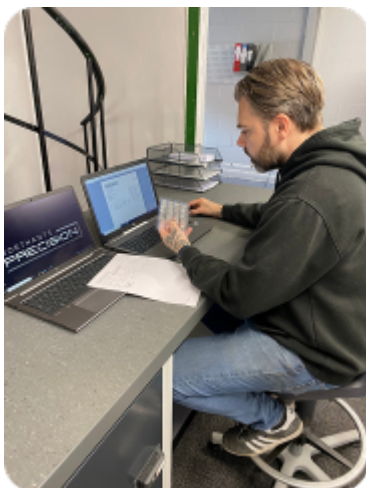


START-UP MOTORSPORT PRECISION ENGINEERS TURN TO PSL DATATRACK

Having decided to take the plunge by opening for business in August 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic, Northants Precision's decision to make that bold step has been fully vindicated. The company's high precision engineering services, based around turning and milling expertise, are being used by a growing number of specialist manufacturers and restorers within the motorsport sector.

For Dan Green, the enthusiastic owner of the specialist subcontract engineering business, the timing was more to do with the fact that the locally based Formula 1 and motorsport industries were reopening and presenting new business opportunities. This was a sector with which Dan was very familiar and had the experience to offer potential customers a first class experience.

"It was a bit of a gamble. I love the industry and know motorsport customers always seem to want everything yesterday so – engineering expertise aside – it was also about being able to respond to requests for quotations (RFQs) pretty much straight away. I needed to make sure I could cope completely with the demands of the market to have a chance of success," says Dan.



Having been Director of Engineering at another company also operating in this market, Dan had a clear vision on what was needed to make Northants Precision successful in the critical initial phase of trading. The company's key strength was indeed Dan's 20 years of experience in the sector and he had learned that investing in the right areas would be vital for success. "Precision engineering is an expensive business to run but in terms of set up costs it is always worth paying that little extra for quality products," comments Dan. Significant investments had already been made in two Doosan Mill/Turn CNC lathes, class-leading inspection equipment and high-quality cabinets and workbenches.

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Then there was the question of how exactly to respond to potential customer demand for fast turnaround of quotations. Again, Dan called on his vast knowledge as he was being asked to quote even before the new lathe had arrived. He was first introduced to PSL Datatrack production control software some six years ago at a previous company where he was part of the investment decision making process.

“To improve our business administration there, we looked at a few different software suppliers and chose the modular PSL Datatrack system. It was really simple to use, visually user friendly and very self-explanatory. It was also the ideal choice for Northants Precision, a small company in the start-up phase, where speed of quoting would be important in securing new business and where our administration procedures as a whole had to be as efficient and traceable as possible,” says Dan. The decision would also allow Dan to maximise the time he could spend on the shop floor managing and executing production.

“The support from PSL Datatrack is fantastic and we’ve never had any issues. I even sent them a new laptop which they kindly set up for me, installed everything I needed and removed everything that I didn’t. If we need any help, one of the PSL team can just dial in and take over our screen. We also have a very simple step by step user guide if needed,” comments Dan.

Northants Precision initially invested in the Quotations, Purchase Orders, Material Stocks, Works Orders, Process Layouts, Work In Progress, Deliveries and Invoicing modules. Of these, Quotations made the most immediate impact when dealing with enquiries from one-offs to 1000s covering a wide range of components for F1, supercars and rally cars including chassis parts, sub-frame components, gearboxes, track rod ends, engine shear bolts and bushes.

Once the initial quotation has been created, everything else is very straightforward as information flows through the rest of the system. “One of the best things about PSL Datatrack is the ‘Copy to New Generation’ feature. It allows us to copy a quotation and sequence it directly after the original quotation.

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We can keep quotes for different batch numbers together and when a customer needs a quick requote for say five different quantities of the same part or component we can respond swiftly and easily – sometimes within seconds or minutes.”

Northants Precision can also store material details and costs on PSL Datatrack avoiding the need to contact metal suppliers every time an RFQ comes through – often late at night. The system tracks current and historical material prices. When quoting for a new job Dan is able to see the latest prices together with order dates to determine whether to contact the supplier for an up-to-date price or not.

The facility to acquire new modules to control different areas of production is especially important for Dan. Traceability is a serious requirement within motorsport so Northants Precision has to have full control of that. “We of course needed ISO 9001 accreditation due to the nature of the motorsport business and with the PSL Datatrack system in place we achieved it very quickly. By having the system prior to achieving the accreditation my customers knew that our business was already being run already to ISO standards but having that official certification is very important,” says Dan.



Indeed, Northants Precision had its first audit within a couple of months of start-up. “PSL Datatrack helped out massively as everything was logged, accessible and traceable. I could pull up any information from previous jobs for assessors within a few clicks,” continues Dan.

All of the company's work at present is in the motorsport sector but Dan is always looking to offer his expertise to new industrial sectors such as aerospace. In doing so, the company will already have its well-equipped machine shop and proven production control system to support any expansion of the business. There are already plans to invest in an additional lathe and other PSL Datatrack modules to replace Excel spreadsheets and manage, for example, tooling and gauges.

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“I think it’s great that you can add modules as you go along – especially for a new start-up business. I do think PSL is very good value for money – let’s face it, you get what you pay for in this industry. I can spread the cost in monthly instalments so it’s very affordable for me in these early days,” comments Dan.

As far as achieving company Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is concerned, PSL Datatrack also plays an important management role. A delivery performance report is currently highlighting that 85% are early and 10% are on time, Dan is happy with that.

“I can’t rate PSL Datatrack highly enough. It has allowed me to spend more time on machining rather than hours of administration on a laptop. It’s also been crucial for me in obtaining the important ISO 9001 accreditation,” concludes Dan.