

FEEDING ON SUCCESS WITH PSL DATATRACK

Hydrafeed of Milton Keynes is a well-known barfeed machine manufacturer that also runs a major subcontract engineering business. With such a vast range of products and services, managing the manufacturing and associated administration processes that go with them represented a major challenge. This has been solved with the implementation of PSL Datatrack software which records and tracks all aspects of the company's production processes from the initial quotation through sales order processing, purchasing, planning, manufacturing, quality and deliveries to invoicing.

Hydrafeed moved into the production of short magazine barfeeders alongside the manufacture of abrasive belt machines, part unloaders and barrel finishing equipment over 20 years ago. Supplying major machine tool manufacturers, Hydrafeed's barfeed systems are usually sold as a package with new CNC turning centres or directly to companies looking to increase production capacity by introducing automation. Simultaneously, Hydrafeed's engineering subcontracting work has blossomed and is provided to a diverse range of companies in industries such as automotive, aerospace, packaging, test equipment and tobacco.

When current Owner and Managing Director, Martyn Page, took control of the company in 2012, he recognised that a major overhaul of Hydrafeed's outmoded production administration procedures was needed. Implementation of a system was an essential element of his five year investment plan that also included the acquisition of new machining centres and lathes.

PSL Datatrack software was seen as fitting in well with Hydrafeed's business model as it is designed for small to medium sized engineering companies. However, for many years the company had been using an old DOS based system, so it was clear that the new software would need gradual implementation. The focus was initially on the subcontracting business and was followed by roll out to the manufacture and assembly of the barfeeders.

PSL Datatrack starts with the generation of a customer quotation - it is the catalyst from which everything else associated with administration of an order evolves. The works order follows, generating the material requirements and the purchasing module is used to organise the material needed to fulfil an order. A job is then traced through the shop floor with the recording of the costs of the processes, materials,

tooling and - if applicable - the cost of any subcontracted services.

The software helps to avoid unnecessary overproduction whilst reducing administration. It records, and values, the actual time taken for manufacture, creates a history of when parts are made, on which machine and by which person, as well as ensuring jobs are prioritised and materials are available before set-up commences.

Major improvements have resulted in the speed of order placing, raising enquiries, material allocations, traceability and the generation of certificates, vital to ISO and aerospace requirements. The history of materials used has led to improved reporting for supply monitoring, more accurate stock records and enables the company to give better information to suppliers when negotiating prices. Furthermore, when an order is repeated all the historical data is available, saving further on administration time and effort. PSL Datatrack will also highlight potential errors before they can occur - for example if a customer asks for a part to be produced from a drawing that has been superseded, it will intervene and prevent anything being made with a part number that is not linked to the correct drawing.

“PSL Datatrack is making Hydrafeed more efficient, competitive and professional,” says Martyn Page. “We are in a position to win more engineering sub-contract work and continue to expand our barfeed operation, confident in the knowledge that PSL Datatrack will allow us to cope as it can be adapted easily to new requirements.”