



PSL DATATRACK FULLY SUPPORTS BROWN AND HOLMES' GROWTH AND EXPANSION INTO NEW BUSINESS AREAS

Brown and Holmes's success over recent years has been reflected in its growth which has seen a doubling of production output, an increase in turnover of some 50% and the ongoing development of a global business. This has resulted in the acquisition of additional premises and investment in new machinery and staff. The creation of a new Apprentice School is addressing the skills shortage in the industry as a whole and ensuring that the company's future is in the hands of qualified engineers who understand the company's business, production processes and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This is all supported by their PSL Datatrack production control system.



In 2002, Brown and Holmes of Tamworth became the first Precision Workholding Manufacturer to use PSL Datatrack. Specialising in the design and manufacture of complex, bespoke workholding fixtures and tools, in recent years the company has expanded its business to cover new areas including robotics and more recently 3D printing, building upon the company's manufacturing expertise while embracing new technologies. The production and administration processes behind all of these business elements demand close control for Brown and Holmes to be profitable and fulfil its KPIs. This control has been achieved through continued investment over the last sixteen years in both standard PSL Datatrack modules and features customised specifically to support the evolving business.

Steve Smith, General Manager, says, "Proper production control is the key to our successful operation and the adaptability of the PSL Datatrack software, customised to meet our evolving production needs, has been vital over the years." Brown and Holmes recently updated its process regarding the KPIs it

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reviews and, after a site visit from PSL Datatrack to discuss different reporting requirements, a new bespoke report that automatically details the activities of the business on a daily basis was formulated. This includes the value of orders received, invoicing value, purchase invoicing and the value of orders currently on the system. "The daily availability of these KPIs allows us to have better foresight and planning of the sales, production and accounting functions within our business," says Steve.

The company's specialist workholding fixture design and manufacture, where almost every job is different, still makes up around 60% of its business. Specially machined and assembled parts, standard components and 'bought out' items are usually required and these variables are managed from quotation to invoice by PSL Datatrack. When quoting, Brown and Holmes establish the details required including workpiece locations, orientation and clamping systems. The quotation is then generated using PSL Datatrack and the proposal sent to the customer on highly customised letterheads. Historical customer information is kept in a separate PSL Datatrack archive system enabling the recall of any historic customer quotation and sales data.

Once an order has been secured, a detailed CAD drawing is produced and works orders for parts to be manufactured are raised in PSL Datatrack from the quotation. Process layouts are generated for use on the shop floor and all manufacturing times are recorded, allowing critical comparison between calculated and actual times taken.

Brown and Holmes now use a wide range of PSL Datatrack modules quotations, works orders, purchase orders, scheduling, Shop Floor Data Collection (SFDC), CRM/Tasks, deliveries and invoicing as well as benefitting from customised management reporting. All production data including inspection and finishing is entered on a daily basis and PSL Datatrack provides accurate end-of-job costing which, together with the cost of purchased items such as material and subcontract operations, ensures that Brown and Holmes are constantly monitoring production efficiency and estimating procedures.

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With all of these different elements to consider, two particular advantages of using PSL Datatrack spring to Steve's mind: traceability and flexibility. Full traceability is provided as every job is tied back to a specific works order number, encompassing purchasing, production, assembly, inspection, invoice/credits, delivery notes and conformance certificates.

In terms of flexibility, PSL Datatrack has been adapted over many years and for Brown and Holmes is now almost a bespoke piece of software due to the number of options that have been configured to address daily requirements. "The standard reporting available is comprehensive but, in addition, the team at PSL have also created a number of completely bespoke reports that allow us to drill down into each area of the business and analyse individual areas," says Steve.



The software also provides invaluable assistance across the company's robotic, precision engineering and new subcontract engineering business areas. The reports available within the PSL Datatrack system allow Brown and Holmes to separate out the different revenue streams within the business and evaluate the activities within each of them. This allows for the assessment of different elements in detail, to find and address the areas that impact on profitability as well as to promote the actions that have a positive effect.

For Brown and Holmes the versatility of the company's shop floor staff – many of whom have come through the company's long standing apprentice training scheme – means they can comfortably switch disciplines and have the knowledge to use PSL Datatrack at every stage of production.

Brown and Holmes are currently in the process of reviewing and improving its SFDC procedures with a

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view to realising more accurate reporting of real time actions on the production floor. At the same time, plans are in hand to introduce visual reporting in the form of PSL Datatrack's shop floor Status Board display system which will help to highlight any production problems encountered, enabling them to be addressed at source.

If support is needed, Brown and Holmes have great confidence in the assistance they receive from PSL Datatrack. "The support offered is second to none. There is always an advisor available on the telephone support line to deal with any problem or query we encounter and it is very rare that these cannot be worked through, either over the phone or through a remote desktop session. On the odd occasion where a more detailed need arises, such as introducing a new process to the business, onsite support is also readily available," says Steve.

Steve concludes: "PSL Datatrack has developed their system in line with the way we have developed our business. The system is easy to understand, versatile and, with the help of the team at PSL, can be moulded to suit whatever business need arises. We would definitely recommend it."