

Profile

FORWARD VISION



Sam (front, L) and Ian (back, R) at PC Henderson

PC HENDERSON OPENS ITS DOORS TO A NEW VISION

Durham-based garage door manufacturer PC Henderson has opened its doors and welcomed in a secure future, having completed a unique operational and training review.

PC Henderson, which has been a prominent manufacturer in the region since 1921, has dramatically changed its culture and transformed its operational performance in certain areas by up to 40%, thanks to a North-Eastern partnership with Morpeth-based manufacturing consultants Forward Vision, Business Link County Durham, County Durham Learning and Skills Council and the European Social Fund.

Forward Vision – in the form of director Ian Scurfield and consultant Sam Morrison – stepped in to provide a detailed Value Stream Mapping exercise to analyse all aspects of PC Henderson's manufacturing operations and its training needs. Thereafter a potent combination of learning packages and new operational practices combined to help PC Henderson secure productivity gains, shorten its set-up cycles and significantly reduce its throughput times. This has enabled the firm to enhance its delivery capability to customers without the burden of costly finished inventories.

The firm's 300-strong workforce expedited the training programmes and new production methods with enthusiasm and tenacity. Not even a factory fire was allowed to derail the initiative: In July last year the plant suffered a blaze serious enough to close the A1 and merit the attention of the television news.

Fortunately the fire was sufficiently contained to remove any long-term threat to the business. Production was interrupted for only a few days; such was the commitment and resilience displayed by all staff that not only did operations swiftly return to normal, but the training and improvement programme was resumed with renewed determination.

In order for PC Henderson to continue its success in today's manufacturing environment, the firm required a highly challenging vision. PC Henderson's operations director Vicky Brockley explains how the firm has succeeded in using training and development as a competitive weapon: "The initiative with Forward Vision has provided the perfect platform not only to move the business forward, but more importantly to get the key people within the business focused on what we need to do to ensure we have a future. We can now continue to develop our products and fly the flag for the region's manufacturing industry across the world."

Ian Scurfield says: "PC Henderson has fully embraced the need for modern competitive operations in today's manufacturing industry. The programme of training has allowed employees to take charge of their own improvement techniques as part of a complete culture change.

PEOPLE AND PROCESS

"Too often in business we treat training and development as some altruistic abstraction, to be done because of fashion or political correctness, without any genuine expectations of improved performance – or else we pursue lean operating systems or methodologies without considering the need to acquire new skills and knowledge and wonder why it all turns sour. Success demands a co-ordinated approach."

He adds: "Training or consulting firms that lack either the experience or inclination to address both people and process needs shouldn't be in business! PC Henderson's endeavours have shown how manufacturers can secure lasting results by developing and delivering strategies and systems which not only contribute to the continuing development of the business but enhance the quality of the working and personal lives of employees."

PC Henderson's workforce feel that they have benefited greatly from the training. Ian Lawson, TGWU branch secretary, says: "Thanks to Forward Vision we now have the knowledge and tools to move the company forward. Many of our production workers now hold the Certificate in Manufacturing Management so the knowledge is right through the company."

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