

## Timberworx

28 employees, £1.7m turnover, based in Sheffield

“Having worked in this company from the early days it was hard to see what improvements and changes could be made, but we knew deep inside that changes were desperately needed.

From our very first meeting with MAS our eyes were opened to the tools and methods we could use to turn our company into an ambitious world class organisation. The past seven months of our lean journey has influenced everyone that works in this organisation and has now become the platform for moving the company forward.”

**Lee Green**  
**Operations Manager**



### Company Profile

Timberworx (part of REL Acoustics Ltd) is the UK's largest manufacturer of premium acoustics cabinets and enclosures for the audio industry. The company supplies to markets worldwide and has even manufactured speaker systems for musician Brian May and singer Robbie Williams for their home recording studios.

### Background

The Sheffield team was facing tough times until as recently as early 2008, when it undertook drastic steps to modernise its working culture.

The management team recognised the need to modernise their approach, empower people and embed Lean into the culture of the business. They therefore contacted MAS and were put in touch with MAS specialist Andrew Nicholson from Nicholson Consultancy who put together a strategic programme of work that would help the company achieve its ambitions.

### Key Achievements

As a result of the strategic MAS intervention, the company has achieved the following:

- Lean Leaders and teams have gained greatly in confidence and are now working together more effectively.
- 100% on-time deliveries have been achieved for nine consecutive weeks.
- Production lead time has reduced from 4-6 weeks to just 10 days, and work in progress is down by 30%.
- The cost of customer returns has been greatly reduced.
- The business has demonstrated that it can achieve high levels of customer service, employee motivation and profitability.

## Making it Happen

To begin the programme of work, MAS specialist Andrew Nicholson of Nicholson Consultancy conducted a full review of the company's financial position. From this he made recommendations for short-term actions that would achieve a rapid increase in profitability.

He then went on to present the future vision for the business to the whole team; and explained what it would mean for them and how this tied in with Lean manufacturing.

Five of the company's managers and team leaders took part in the Lean Consortium programme. Lean awareness training was then delivered to all employees, and they each took part in Seven Wastes 'treasure hunts' to help identify non value added activities. This was followed by a series of brainstorming workshops to develop and prioritise their ideas so they could be put into practice.

The company's Lean Sponsors were offered training and guidance in Lean

thinking, and were also introduced to leadership and change management and how to successfully manage continuous improvement programmes.

Lean Leaders were also coached in a number of Lean manufacturing techniques including Value Stream Mapping, 5S, SMED and Total Productive Maintenance, and are now applying them to their own working areas on a day-to-day basis.

Andrew and his colleagues worked with the teams to introduce simple visual management systems, meaning each department can see the current work schedule and availability of materials.

The implementation of Lean practice has been widespread and enthusiastic – all employees have been actively engaged in improvement activities and a lot of the negativity has been replaced by a much more positive 'can do' attitude.

The overall layout has been greatly improved, reducing internal transport and



human movement, with clearly defined and well-marked gangways and working areas.

Materials are now grouped into kits for assembly and are only received into the next process stage when they are required. Work is undertaken in line with customer demand, without building ahead, overproducing or 'keeping machines busy at all times'

As a result of the MAS intervention, lead times at Timberworx have fallen from 8 weeks to less than 10 days, work in progress is down by 30% and the company is making all its deliveries on time - which has allowed them to target new opportunities in the retail and education sectors.

### About MAS

In Yorkshire & Humber, the BERR Manufacturing Advisory Service is jointly funded by Yorkshire Forward and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and is managed by YFM Business Development, providing 'hands on' advice and support to help improve your manufacturing performance.

### For more information

If you feel your business could benefit from MAS, why not complete your details below and fax to us on **0113 368 5261**. You can also contact: [enquiries@mas-yh.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@mas-yh.co.uk) or visit the website [www.mas-yh.co.uk](http://www.mas-yh.co.uk)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Nature of Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like MAS to contact me to discuss : \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to join the Manufacturing Network and receive a free monthly e-newsletter about funding opportunities and events

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