

Challenge: To successfully merge two company divisions and establish the company as a key player within the commercial publishing arena.

Solution: The Charlesworth Group undertook a Premier Snapshot to gain an objective look at how to improve its productivity and gain a competitive edge.

The academic publishing industry is constantly under pressure from new media and technology. Printers in this sector compete under growing pressure to provide a cost-effective service to customers, who are increasingly calling for a more on-demand service.

Charlesworth's, founded 1928, developed into one of the world's leading providers of prepress, printing and binding to the academic publishing industry, with offices in the UK, Philadelphia, USA and Beijing, China. Charlesworth now produces journals, books and other publications both in print and electronically.

Situated in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, the Charlesworth Group's UK offices have recently been extended and extensively refurbished after the amalgamation with its bindery division, Hammonds. The Group's printing operation, formerly based in Huddersfield, made the move in order to streamline the business further, ensuring the quickest turnaround times possible without compromising on quality.

Helping things run smoothly

Throughout the move, it was vital that operations continued to run as smoothly as possible, which prompted Charlesworth's Production Director, David Boothman, to embark upon a Vision in Print Premier Snapshot diagnostic, sponsored by Premier Paper. David explains:

"The move was a very hectic period for all concerned. It was extremely important that we pre-empted any problems that may arise as a result. With the consolidation of our businesses complete, we saw the opportunity to use Vision in Print's Premier Snapshot program to identify ways of implementing Best Practice procedures at our plant, with the view of ultimately making us more profitable."

David continues, "We thought that the Vision in Print engineer's hands-on approach would be better for staff morale rather than employing a 'management down' method, where we would dictate what should be done. Essentially, we wanted to gain everyone's buy-in on the project and avoid establishing a 'them and us' culture. Furthermore, we saw the opportunity to use the Premier Snapshot experience as a way of getting the newly combined teams to work together, almost like a team building exercise."

The spread of 'Best Practice' or 'Lean Management' philosophy throughout your printing business is increasingly important in an industry dominated by high technology and under pressure from squeezed margins

A comprehensive diagnostic

The Vision in Print engineer spent two days with the Charlesworth team, speaking to members of staff from directors to customer service personnel and shop floor workers. This culminated in a qualitative business audit and quantitative analysis of how our business was being managed, including culture, organisation and control, with a review of our readiness for improvement. Although the outcome was positive, David admits that the engineer had to contend with some initial scepticism from some parts of his workforce:

"Some of the team initially felt that 'we had been there before' with consultants. Of course, people establish ways of doing things, and getting them to try an alternative is not always easy. However, it was made clear from the beginning that Premier Snapshot was not about identifying how to do things differently, but building upon our existing methods to increase our performance. Once we'd got underway, people understood this and could see the value of what we were doing."



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premier snapshot

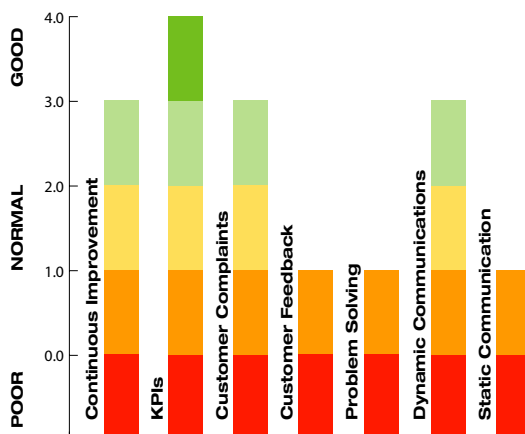
Charlesworth's experience of Vision in Print's Premier Snapshot program was extremely positive, showing evidence of the company's strong desire to keep pushing forward. As the engineer noted in his report "The need for continuous improvement [at Charlesworth] has been widely accepted throughout the business, which is an essential foundation for any company's competitiveness in the marketplace."

David continues, "This particular programme was different from other consultancy we had had in the past. The engineer was an excellent communicator who explained things in a way that the staff could get to grips with easily. He dealt exceptionally well with differences of opinion and knew exactly what to focus on. Through this we got excellent advice on Best Practice, and had no hesitation in signing up for the subsequent Vision in Print Masterclass programme, which focuses on key issues raised in Premier Snapshot."

These key issues typically include the reduction of paper waste, producing a higher percentage of good copies, reducing make-ready time and generating Key Performance Indicators, through to implementing better material handling procedures.

Many companies, including Charlesworth, already have ways of dealing with problems such as these. The Premier Snapshot assessment gives a company's existing methods a score out of five, along with comments and recommendations about how processes and procedures can be improved.

Culture and Environment



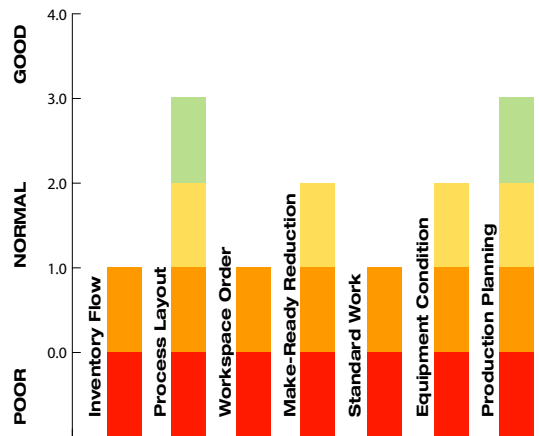
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techniques to success

Organisation and Control



Often these recommendations include formalisation of existing informal working practices in order to help them run more efficiently. For example, the engineer was impressed at the solutions being implemented in response to problems at Charlesworth, but recommended structured problem solving techniques in order to reach conclusions more quickly.

The Premier Snapshot programme forms the basis of Vision in Print's mission to drive the British print industry forward in terms of its competitiveness, efficiency and profitability. Even the most efficiently run businesses have benefited from having an external organisation observing its working practices in order to identify specific areas for improvement.

Martyn Eustace, Chief Executive of Premier Paper Group said, "The success of the Premier Snapshot diagnostic at Charlesworth and that it has resulted in further improvements, is proof that sponsorship of this important industry programme was the right decision for us. We hope that more companies will take this route to improve their own success as well as the overall effectiveness of the industry."

"The engineer was an excellent communicator who introduced new tools and techniques in a way that our staff could easily get to grips with"

David Boothman, Production Director