

VCI Develop their Outsource Partnerships

When it comes to making an impression on the panel production market, VC Industries continue to make their mark - 8 years on.

VCI's unique management structure, combined with the company ethos of 'right, on time, first time, every time' has enabled VCI to secure an enviable list of customers.

"We established our name and position within the marketplace at an early stage. Our reputation for consistent quality has ensured that customers continue to use VCI for their panel production needs," stated Robin Cliff, VCI Director.

The manufacturing operation at VCI's Stourton, Leeds, works has been developed to be there as an 'extension' to customers' own manufacturing capabilities. "We provide the specialist services or additional resources for our customers, flexing our service and systems to suit their needs, not allowing the system to dictate what they must have. We become an integral 'manufacturing partner' rather than just another supplier," concluded Robin ■



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VCi Edge Ahead with MFC Door Production



VCi have seen a marked upturn in demand for PVC edged kitchen cabinet doors of late.

Changes in marketplace demand, especially in the contracts market - apartments/new builds, social housing refits etc - has seen a resurgence in the demand for MFC doors. As Director Pauline Vernon commented: "There have been significant changes in marketplace styles and trends - modern builds are demanding clean lines and mix plain colours with patterns and timber effects".

The results are that VCI have produced more of the 2mm PVC edged MFC doors over the past 12 months than ever before.

Pauline continued: "VCi have been an integral part in the design shift - new designs, with horizontal grains, 'plains' with attractive accessories and new decors and trims are all being heavily promoted at the moment".

VCi are one of the very few established, true, 'panel manufacturers' in the UK and as Pauline said: "It is our sole business - we produce panels. We are not board suppliers or distributors offering an add-on service - we just produce panels, and we have to be good at it".

The 58,000sq ft manufacturing plant houses more than £2million worth of specialist machinery and integrated design production and order processing systems. And with a 45 strong manufacturing workforce under the watchful eye of works manager Paul Douglas standards have to be maintained. Paul said: "We are our own worst critics and it is instilled in everyone never to be complacent and always look for ways to improve" ■



VCi Get 'Inside Industry'

VC Industries Ltd have, through the 'Inside Industry' programme, opened their doors to other manufacturers to demonstrate how they have successfully combined LEAN manufacturing with enhanced ICT systems to create sustainable improvements.

The 'Inside Industry' programme sponsored by the Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS), gives manufacturing companies the opportunity to visit and learn from other successful manufacturers in the Yorkshire and Humber region - allowing them to benchmark their performance. The VCI factory visit was a resounding success, with representatives from 6 companies visiting the factory to increase their knowledge.

"The factory visit gave us the opportunity to showcase our ICT capabilities which have helped VCI improve job tracking from order through to delivery. With support from MAS Consultant Neale Cook, we have developed a customised production system which has enabled us to plan jobs quicker and reduce non-conformances," stated Pauline Vernon, VCI Director.

The bespoke software system has been developed to work via VCI's existing web browser, and interfaces with their existing Exchequer operating system - enabling cost implementation to be kept to a minimum. Every panel produced by VCI now has a bill of material, a preferred product route and a panel specific drawing.

"Representatives on the visit were able to see the next phase in the development of our software system - implementation of shop floor data collection. Each process within the manufacture of a panel has an individual bar code which is scanned as the panel completes its process allowing the panels to be tracked through the factory," continued Pauline.

The implementation of VCI's shop floor data collection system was funded through a grant from AIDC UK's Business Assist Programme which aims to give SMEs in West Yorkshire advice and guidance on the technology that is most suited to their business needs.

Pauline concluded: "The aim of the factory visit was to demonstrate to other manufacturers the benefits of ICT systems within their manufacturing environments and to demonstrate how their present systems might be used as platforms for further development. The Inside Industry visits are very useful, giving companies the opportunity to learn from others outside their market sector. Hopefully visitors to VCI will have taken away some ideas they can implement to make improvements in their own manufacturing facilities" ■



VCi Improve their Footprint (and Pets get a Good Bed!)



VCi, with the help of the Carbon Trust, are reducing and managing their energy usage and waste more efficiently.

The survey, undertaken by the Carbon Trust, is an initiative to help organisations identify energy saving opportunities, leading to cost reductions and a reduction in the company's overall carbon footprint.

VCi's production processes will always produce timber related waste, and as Director Pauline Vernon said: "VCi are always looking for new ways to reduce waste and save energy within the company, and the Carbon Trust Survey was an ideal opportunity to see where and how we could improve". Conducted by independent accredited consultants, the survey involved all aspects of the VCI manufacturing process. Energy saving opportunities were identified and a practical action plan drawn up, to achieve the objectives.

Once implemented, the recommendations could lead to significant energy consumption (and therefore cost) reductions, with payback of approximately 12 months anticipated.

Initiatives from the Carbon Trust Survey are quite far reaching and have stimulated other ideas at VCI. "We have recently secured a deal with a local company to supply all our waste for use as animal bedding, which reduces the amount of waste we have to dispose of," concluded Pauline ■

Quality and Credibility Improved Again at VCI



VC Industries Ltd, manufacturers of MFC/MFMDf panels for the furniture industry, continue to prove that quality is a strong company ethos with the successful re-assessment of ISO 9001:2000, at their Stourton, Leeds, manufacturing base.

The recent assessment was a Triennial Audit by ISOQAR Ltd and once again showed no 'non-conformances'. VCI Director Pauline Vernon said: "The directors of the company are obviously pleased with the assessment but it is the comment from the auditor which pleased everyone - 'VC Industries Ltd has an established and well managed BMS. The staff members that were interviewed during the audit have an obvious commitment to continual improvement'."

ISO conformity is only half the story at VC Industries because, in addition, the timber panel processors have had their FSC accreditation renewed which endorses the company's ongoing commitment to the environmental concerns of both customers and employees.

"We are extremely proud of the audit results which reinforce to our customers that procedures in place at VCI promote responsible forest management. The audit procedure verified that VCI have a well established system that allows complete traceability with excellent data capture, demonstrating how VCI successfully track the FSC material from our supplier, through all production processes to our customer," concluded Pauline ■



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