



Superior Cabinets

Digital transformation gives manufacturer a new lease on life

Superior Cabinets, a Saskatoon-based designer and manufacturer of custom kitchens, has invested heavily in digital technologies to boost productivity, reduce costs and improve the customer experience.

During the last recession, the company fell into financial difficulty amid falling sales, excessive overhead and operational inefficiency. As part of a turnaround strategy, a new management team invested \$2 million in technology to transform the company.

A key decision was to introduce software that allows staff to design a kitchen with customers in its stores in Saskatchewan and Alberta and send the order directly to the factory in a smooth, paperless process.

Scott Hodson, Superior's President and CEO, says the system dramatically improved Superior's customer experience because it allowed for quicker order times, better visibility on an order's progress and the elimination of many manual processes.

"Now, no one touches an order," Hodson says. "We eliminated all of the non-value-added costs that customers weren't prepared to pay for."

The company has also "fully embraced the 3-D printing movement," creating various items for use in its manufacturing processes, as well as a product it sells to do-it-yourself customers to help them easily drill holes for their own handles and knobs.

In the early stages of its turnaround plans, Superior spent more than \$1 million to map every process, from initial customer contact to kitchen design and installation. That initiative helped the company reduce the number of software systems it was using from 17 to two.

The company began tracking a series of financial and customer service measures—including quality control, on-time delivery and other key performance indicators. It also built an online portal where staff could monitor how their customers' orders were progressing and see real-time service statistics.

Hodson estimates productivity gains to be about 50%; waste has been reduced from 7% of sales to 2%.

Hodson says he believes it's essential to invest in technology to be able to compete and grow as a manufacturer in today's economy.

"If you're dependent on manual, traditional ways of doing things, you can't scale your business."