

Step Change Business Improvement

CASE STUDY

> Conder Structures Limited



Background

Conder Structures is a specialist steelwork company, recognised by main contractors for the design, build and manufacture of all types of steel structures. The Conder name remains synonymous with its innovative portal frame and its yellow paint; but today, the company's steelwork extends to beams and columns, trusses and cell-form beams, in a range of colours.

Steelwork from Conder is used in single-storey and multi-storey accommodation, distribution warehouses, leisure centres, sports facilities, car parks, hospitals and medical centres, car showrooms, offices, commercial premises and retail parks. The organisation works with leading main contractors, architects, engineers and designers to deliver functional, attractive steelwork for high quality buildings, attractive facilities and properties.

It is a member of the British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA) and recognised through leading Industry awards for its innovative design and engineering.

Key Issues

In recent years a failure to react quickly enough to competitive pressures and internal problems led to a reduction in market share and a consequent deterioration in performance. To address these issues a new management team was established in 2002, which put in place changes that have since seen the company make a speedy return to profitability.

The management team recognised that, in

order to generate further breakthrough and sustained continuous improvement over the long term, a leading edge approach to business management was required.

Solution

The management team, consisting of six directors, convened for half a day to conduct an intensive self-examination of themselves and of the business that they now controlled. This half-day session was conducted as a 'round-table' discussion facilitated by an external consultant from Six Sigma Limited.

The process followed was a highly structured approach (RAPID™) that has been successfully used by over one hundred manufacturing companies since 2001, ranging in size from two employees to over 3,000. Against a set of global standards, the management team were swiftly able to identify in-depth strengths in over seventy key areas across the business and significant opportunities for improvement in almost 130 key areas.

A follow-up session was then arranged to discuss and synthesise the findings. From this session, 'vital few' improvement actions for year one were agreed and a robust five-year business improvement plan developed. All improvement activities and goals were set within the context of a management system based on the concepts of a Balanced Business Scorecard.

Results

As a result of the exercise, significant changes have been made that are now being used to drive the business forward. The Managing Director, Gordon Ridley comments *"the exercise opened our eyes as to what we could achieve as an organisation once all our resources were focused and pointed in the right direction."*

It has enabled the management team to take a leap forward, cut through the 'noise' of

every-day business and bring added focus on the 'voice of the customer'.

For example - the organisation now has:-

- a pro-active customer satisfaction measurement and management system designed to both enhance emotional ties with customers and to form the basis for identifying customer future business direction and associated requirements
- a process for understanding the precise reasons for winning new business
- a 'closed loop' employee opinion survey process that is fully congruent with the Conder Business Management Model (BMM)
- a policy deployment process that converts annual business objectives into team and personal goals for all employees
- a well-defined and documented process by which to generate a robust marketing plan, with in-built diagnostics to identify cause-and-effect relationships
- a leading edge business management system modeled on a Balanced Business Scorecard. This management system incorporates the Conder BMM, which is used to identify, drive and track both breakthrough and continuous improvement activity across all business activity.

The company is now enjoying high levels of customer satisfaction and employee motivation, growing market share and solid financial performance. The management system that has been installed is such that it dispels any complacency and serves to ensure that the management team and all employees continually and relentlessly drive the organisation forward in no uncertain fashion.

The business transformation that has been achieved by the management team over a period of twelve months is testament to the concept that "change takes as long as you want it to take."