



CASE STUDY: SMITHSTOWN LIGHT ENGINEERING

FACT FILE				
Company name	Smithstown Light Engineering			
Business Activity	Precision Engineering / Toolmaking			
Number of employees	60			
Business Range	Local	Regional	National	International
			X	X
Approximate turnover	IR£2,000,000 - IR£5,000,000 (Euro 2,539,476,16 – 6,348,690.39)			
Description of market / client /target group	medical & domestic appliance industries			
Description activities / products / services	Plastic Injection Moulds Jigs and Fixtures Precision Machined Parts			

CASE DESCRIPTION:

The business

Established in 1974, Smithstown has become one of Ireland's leading precision engineering firms. The most important factors in its continuing development since that date are seen by management to be its dedication to product quality and customer satisfaction. The company designs and manufactures a range of products including plastics injection moulds and press tools for the connector, electronic, medical and domestic appliance industries, medical instruments, gauges, jigs and fixtures, precision components and spare parts. It provides low to medium volume capacity on the state-of-the-art production line in its 1400m sq. purpose-built factory.

Introduction of e-business

The customers are increasingly looking for faster response time to quotes, deliveries and at a better price. In order for SLE to provide these services, there were three possible areas of improvement:

1. An Interactive Website
2. Mould flow analyses available to the customer on the website
3. The development of a scheduling system, allowing Smithstown Light Engineering to give accurate delivery dates, deal with emergencies and control of the production flow.

Smithstown Light Engineering approached a few key customers and they all felt that due to the nature of our business, we will always have to meet the customer, review their project and go into great detail as to what is required. Smithstown Light Engineering provides this service and due to the fact that each project is usually a large investment for the customer they are more comfortable with this approach.

We investigated the possibility of having a Mould Flow seat live on our website, available to our customers, to use and get the results of the mould flow, therefore speeding up the entire process. The customers did not see many benefits to this.

Initially SLE felt that the customer would benefit greatly from an interactive website, SLE had an idea that the customer could answer a list of questions to give SLE an overview of what they required. After doing the feasibility study, it became clear that the customers' requirements did not lend itself to filling in details on an interactive website nor does Smithstown Light Engineering have a specific product that the customer could purchase off the website. The outcome was that SLE should scale down the project and continue the personal approach.

SLE discovered that the customer did want project and delivery updates. It was decided that the scheduling system should go ahead. After discussion with the customers the investment required for the mould flow analyses was hard to justify at this point in time. The feasibility study concluded that we should go for a marketing promotional website with a view to being able to add to it if required.

Lessons Learnt

Carrying out the feasibility study has given SLE a clear view of what is required to satisfy our customer. They do not want to go away from SLEs personal approach at the quotation stage. They want more accurate information on the delivery and regular progress updates.

Even though we started out with the idea of having an interactive (all bells and whistles) website, we have changed direction, but we are now giving the customer a better service as a result of this venture.