



### **Name and Role**

Andrew Robinson is the Management Director of Boomer Industries Ltd, Lisburn.

### **Organisation**

Boomer Industries Ltd employees around 70 staff, which design, manufacture and supply PVC and plastic extrusions to a diverse range of market sectors and is widely known for its quality and innovative products, supported by a strong focus on delivering a high level of customer service. Following an MBO in /??? and relocation to new premises the senior team identified the need for significant change and business improvement to reach the required performance in a competitive marketplace. They embarked on a learning journey that led to dramatic business improvements, sales increase and bottom line results.

*'Looking back I was reluctant at the start to spend the money on the training and development required to support our change process but with the results we have achieved I think I should have spent twice as much!'*

### **Management Development**

There was a clear need to develop all levels of the workforce with the management team taking the lead. It was also clear that all training and development had to be matched to the needs of the business. Through this approach the senior team were quick to identify that with strategic planning, and a balanced scorecard approach, they could use the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) standard as a means of ensuring they were doing the right things to achieve their business goals

### **Before M&L Development – Triggers**

Improvement programmes were focused on the need for: increasing turnover and profitability, re-engineering 'isolated processes', removing inefficiencies, erasing duplication and dealing with a lack of accountability. They initiated a Business Process Re-engineering Programme (Boomer Manufacturing System) via the Business Excellence Programme. The company selected the appropriate team of Middle and Senior Managers to drive and deliver this programme focused on the critical business processes and a careful assessment of training needs of everyone involved.

### **Management & Leadership Development Activity**

The starting point was a strategic review and team building event for the management team to outline what needed to be done. It was important for the company to take responsibility for the development strategy and use external support to bring in expertise where needed such as the Institute of Leadership and Management, Invest NI and the Centre for Competitiveness. Training needs were identified in relation to key priorities such as project management and the introduction of Six Sigma to ensure structured business improvement. They also used the Investors in People to capture and align all the learning and development that was taking place. The benefits that everyone took away from this programme was realising how to have a more efficient work environment – examples are

- A structured approach to project management, designing, improving and reviewing business processes
- Team aspects – realising cooperation and communication between departments and individuals makes for a smoother start to finish process
- Seeing the importance of employee involvement and participation
- Improved personal effectiveness through Individual development in general management skills

### **Actions, Outcomes and Benefits**

Some changes were improved right away were around organisational restructuring and the introduction or improving policies, procedures, work instructions. They were able to incorporate clear guidelines for roles and responsibilities, as well as accountability and higher standards.

Other actions for long term effects were initiated such as identifying IT requirements, 'system gaps', ongoing training and development for all staff in relation to processes. All of the improvements were tracked through measurements, audits, and targets for processing which all contributed to continuous and ongoing improvements.

After taking action on these issues the following benefits are clearly in evidence

- Increased efficiencies/profitability
- More focused strategically – goals/targets/measurement
- Increased professionalism of staff and company processes/systems
- Improved accountability/performance measures
- Improved employee opinion results and retention
- Career development for staff – transferable skills

### **Leadership Style**

Some of the key aspects used by Boomer Industries to approach leadership are

- To be open and collaborative
- To have trust within the company
- To have teamwork on every level
- To know that there is always room for empowerment
- To make sure that communication is always open with all levels of the company

### **Barriers to Improving Management Skills**

Most of the barriers initially, were around the need to deal with the operational responsibilities, and finding the time or support needed for management development activities. Some individuals felt uneasy due to a lack of previous experience in a development situation or lack of qualifications. There was an initial reluctance to allocate resources and finance.



Andrew receives the Ben Wilson Trophy from MLN's Bill Manson and Mark Ennis