



Case Study



HARDING BROS ELECTRICAL LTD

Originally established in 1964 Harding Bros Electrical (HBE) is an amalgamation of two companies, which came together in the 1990s. It has a loyal list of clients and strong reputation in the market providing minor electrical works through to major contracts, in all areas of electrical contracting.

Recently Harding Bros have had to face a major change in the way Local Authorities contract their work. Local Authorities now commission work through large contractors who subcontract out the various elements of the contract. These large contractors are seeking to increase their profit margins by driving the subcontractor prices down. This in turn means an increase in competition, reduced control over the contract, and little or no direct contact with the actual client.

HBE took up the offer of a free Business Review from Gateway for Business (GFB) to help them resolve the issue. It resulted in a new business plan, which identified a number of areas and actions for improvement, to enable the company to respond to this contracting challenge. Before the company could diversify into a number of additional areas required by potential clients, the entire workforce needed to be brought up to a common base level of skills. A number of training courses were arranged which attracted some financial help from GFB. These covered areas such as the latest regulations, H&S, Testing and Leadership and Management. This has led to an increase in delegation and better prioritising. The second phase has focussed on training staff in Testing and Inspecting as part of a new division that can offer these services, a vital aspect of winning more business.

Another issue uncovered in the review was internal communications. With a workforce who spend most of their time out on site it is very difficult to arrange meetings and share information. As a result of the work with GFB, Harding Bros now hold 6 monthly staff meetings and produce a newsletter twice a year. They also produce information on the latest developments, which are sent out as memos to all staff. As a result staff are much more aware about what the company is trying to do, producing suggestions for improvements and identifying potential leads for work.

Heading for a 5% growth this year Harding Bros hope to achieve 10% in successive years, and to continue to expand their offer so that they can provide clients with a single point of contact for a range of services.

Partner Vernon Parker is certain that in 18 months the real benefits of working with GFB will kick in.

“I would really recommend other companies to take advantage of the GFB service. It’s been a really good way to see my business from the outside. The advisors from GFB have been really helpful in guiding us through grant forms and explaining how things work. Their flexible approach has meant that if an aspect of the programme has not suited the company it has been put to one side. They have also been great giving us the right prod when we needed it!”

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