Lighthouse
(UK) Ltd

About Synatel

Formed in 1970, Synatel manufactures Britain's largest range of electronic sensing and monitoring equipment including photoelectric sensors, capacitive and inductive proximity sensors, microprocessor based batch counters, tachometers, flow rate indicators and level controls for both liquids and solids. Their products have multiple applications across industry, and are designed to help solve the kinds of detection problems that can cause costly delays in production lines.

Innovative solutions save money for Synatel

Without the means to design and print their own labels, Synatel had always outsourced the job. The time and costs involved had an increasingly negative impact on bottom line – and it made it harder for them to meet clients' needs for an immediate response. So when Lighthouse UK showed them how easy it could be to design and print labels to their own specifications – in sizes to suit, and in any quantity they wanted, they knew it would have a massive benefit to their business.

Efficiency up; operating costs down

Synatel is always innovating; their customers look to them to provide ready-made solutions to their problems. Unsurprisingly then, their range of products is always developing and expanding as they meet those needs with newly devised components and equipment.

Every new item needs to be clearly labelled to allow for easy identification and to tie in with all the requisite approvals (including ATEX and CSA) that a company in Synatel's niche market needs to adhere to.

So when Synatel approached Lighthouse UK they had a very clear requirement: with more than 200 labels and a stream of new product always requiring new labels, they needed to reduce the length of time and the cost involved in producing them.

Previously they had had no choice but to outsource everything. And that was costly. Commercial printers' minimum order requirements made all but their large scale requirements prohibitively expensive. Even ordering in large enough stocks to try to justify their spend meant stockpiling labels – many of them with a limited shelf life, owing to ATEX safety regulations and the gradual degradation of the adhesives.

Moreover, every time a new label was required from scratch, it necessitated the same laborious process: designing the label, proofing it, making any necessary changes, getting approval on it – all before sending the design to the printer. Any delays at this stage meant that Synatel had to wait to despatch their new product.

Any time they refurbished a piece of kit, Synatel needed to label it appropriately. But producing custom runs of labels for single products was completely unfeasible. Instead they had to improvise solutions – all workable alternatives, but not really coming up to their self imposed quality requirements.

MD Adrian Morris and IT Manager Steve Wright knew that if they could circumvent this part of the process and produce labelling in-house, then they could simplify the production process, reduce costs and enhance their offering to the customer (by virtue of having the means to respond new requirements instantly). But why did Synatel choose Lighthouse UK specifically?

"We wanted – and we've seen – cost savings, driven by the increased speed of production. Additionally we wanted the flexibility to be able to handle client requests quickly and simply in-house. That's what Lighthouse has given us."

Steve Wright, IT Manager, Adrian Morris, MD, Synatel

"We had the sense that Steve and Adrian were already looking beyond baseline costs to the long term process benefits to the business. And we knew that the improvements they could make would help them maintain and enhance their client relationships and profitability."

Simon Pratt, UK Business Development Manager, Lighthouse UK

case study

SYNATEL

Innovative solutions

Lighthouse proposed the CPM-100 (200 DPI). Steve Wright already had considerable print industry experience and was immediately impressed by its adaptability. He saw the potential benefits in time and cost savings too. Synatel bought the machine straight away; it was an easy decision to make:

"The CPM is such a neat solution; using just one 100mm base material you really can produce any shape or size label you want. We use ours to produce shapes upto 30mm diameter and 50mm by 20mm labels. We can produce labels as and when we need them. And we can introduce colour for quick and easy prototyping."

Steve Wright, IT Manager, Synatel

When Lighthouse came on site to train Steve and Adrian their intention wasn't just to get them fully apprised of how to operate the CPM-100 (so they could then devolve this learning to staff); they also wanted to give them the confidence to push the system to its limits. Similarly, Steve and Adrian were keen to see precisely what it could do.

They were immediately impressed with the new machine, and the facility it gave them to design and print labels on their terms. It was so easy to use that Steve and Adrian were quickly able to give the job of producing the bulk of the labels to other members of the team.

"It's so easy to use. The interface is really intuitive, so it's a simple job to create new labels. We can serialise labels, and can even start printing part way through a batch."

Steve Wright, IT Manager, Synatel

Given the sometimes small print size that Synatel were using, they were keen to explore a slightly higher resolution than 200 DPI. So when Lighthouse suggested an upgrade to the CPM-100H (400 DPI) they seized on the opportunity. It means that, even when printing at 6 or 7 point, resolution is crystal clear. In fact, Synatel was so impressed with it that they ordered an additional CPM-100 machine, giving them the means to satisfy multiple print requirements, and to provide back-up if required.

A reciprocal relationship

The CPM-100 gives Synatel considerable capacity. It's estimated that a single roll of vinyl yields approximately 1000 small labels for electronic components. Compared with the costs involved in setting up an external print job – and the costs per label incurred, the savings are obvious. And Steve confirms that they have enjoyed savings of "at least 50%".

Synatel can delay printing labels until much later in the production process to eliminate stockpiling problems. Now, labels are produced at the optimum part of the production lifecycle, enabling Synatel to operate more efficiently than ever before. There are no concerns over outmoded labelling, and there is no further storage capacity required. With a back-up machine available in case of problems, and a fast service turnaround from Lighthouse, they've got the means to support their drive for efficiency.

There are other advantages too. Given Synatel's involvement in the food industry, Lighthouse gives them the means to offer their clients a more hygienic solution than the traditional metal plates which are beloved in some sectors of the industry. A tightly adhered label doesn't allow any ingress of food particles, unlike slightly raised metal plates.

But perhaps one of the best indicators of the success of this working relationship is the way it keeps evolving. Both parties share the same desire to innovate – Synatel is keen to explore the full potential of their CPM-100 – as Steve says, "When you've got the technology, you find uses for it" – while Lighthouse is always looking to develop new kinds of solutions to extend their service to clients. It's a perfect reciprocal arrangement.

Pushing the boundaries

From the beginning, Lighthouse and Synatel have tried to push the boundaries of what can be done with Lighthouse equipment. And this is a good example:

Synatel manufactures capacitance sensors which detect any material within a non metallic container – one application of that is monitoring levels of product in storage hoppers, or items on product conveyor lines. The products incorporate a copper disc on a fibreglass substrate, and Synatel wanted to find a way to reduce cost of production from 8-10 pence per disc.

Lighthouse sent a selection of copper sheet samples for Synatel to try. Using the CPM-100 they were able to cut the required copper pieces much more cheaply. Incorporating the copper discs into the sensors is trickier, but Synatel are working on ways to achieve this – and looking at lots of other potential applications too. It's this kind of innovation that is driving Synatel's costs down.

Lighthouse
(UK) Ltd

ISO 9001   ISO 14001
REGISTERED FIRM

www.lighthouse.uk.com