

Delivery Partner

**JJ SMITH**

## Background

JJ Smith sells various new and second-hand machine tools related to industrial woodworking. They also have an in-house capability for developing specialist machinery and have supplemented their main product range with the supply of cobots. The sales department is unusual as individuals are responsible for particular products rather than clients.

There is a strong pro-active element to JJ Smith's engagement with the local community concerning supporting general education and promoting engineering.

## Challenge

LJMU Horizons and JJ Smith first established contact at the Knowsley Manufacturing Forum, with the initial formal meetings taking place soon after this. JJ Smith is at the start of a major review of their software systems with aspirational results identified but the process required to achieve them is yet to be established.

Horizons saw the assist as centring on this activity with a key aim for the "cleaning" of historic databases known to hold spurious information. In addition to this, the team wanted to investigate AI abilities for providing design prompts for similar furniture structure designs.

## Solution

The assistance provided by LJMU Horizons evolved as new information and opportunities surfaced or when certain options were deemed unsuitable. This sometimes resulted in a delivery that differed from the company's initial vision, with all modifications being discussed and agreed upon throughout the process.

At a certain stage in the program, it became apparent that the initial request for AI application in semi-modular furniture design was made by mistake, as a KTP was investigated further for tackling the work in support of the software programme, but was not progressed beyond the initial proposal stage.

Both activities did provide useful outputs incorporated into the delivered package though and, by maintaining an agile approach, did not significantly impact the quality of work done.

Therefore, the main drives for the assist became the comparison of the two main databases used by JJ Smith to hold customer information (using one to find redundant data in the other), de-risking development of customised database software and introducing process management for sales staff.

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## Impact

To achieve these objectives, online research and consultations with LJMU experts were utilised. Furthermore, networking opportunities were leveraged to identify commercial expertise and industry capabilities that could benefit JJ Smith through B2B connections. This strategic approach enabled JJ Smith to chart a path towards reaching their goals.

An additional bonus came through the Horizons team being able to facilitate the placement of a student with JJ Smith during this time.

The successful conclusion, despite substantial realignment of targets and proposed actions during the process, has supported JJ Smith to start implementing solutions and gain more visibility of how to achieve their long-term aims. The key to this was ensuring that communication was continuous and clear throughout, ensuring the support of all parties before any changes were made.

The student placement has benefitted all parties with key work being undertaken by a graduate on the one hand and valuable experience being gained on the other.

As JJ Smith has advanced to a significant degree with their programme of software updates, and there is now a solid foundation established for achieving their end goals. The key activities for this are the database cleaning and information flow both within departments and across the company. Improved process control is also enabled through the systems put in place.

The programme of improvements will continue in line with company strategy, building on the work already completed.

**“JJ Smith has been working with the Horizons team at LJMU for several months and we have been really impressed with the ideas and collaboration. The teams have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges we have been trying to solve, bringing fresh ideas, perspectives and connections.”**

Rachael Baker, Managing Director, JJ Smith