

Digital Upscaler

Case Study

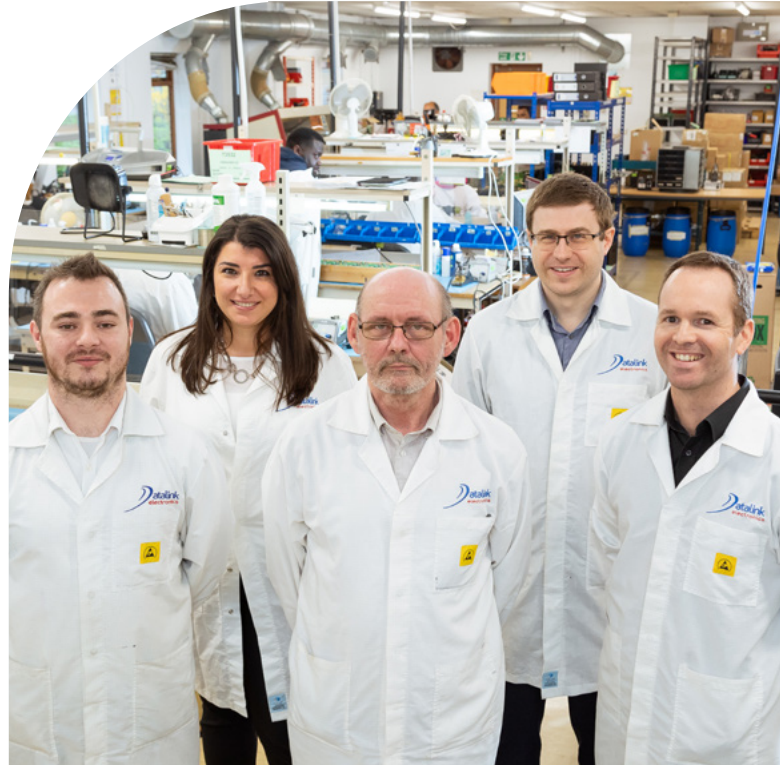
DATALINK ELECTRONICS

Sector: Electronics Design and Manufacturing

District: Charnwood, Leicestershire

Support Accessed: £23k Grant and Specialist Advice

How did the Digital Upscaler project help Datalink Electronics to power-up its digital transformation?



As part of their ongoing upscaling strategy, Datalink Electronics received substantial support from the Digital Upscaler project, in the form of grant funding and expert-led digital advice from Digital Technology Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai.

The business needed to accelerate its digital transformation strategy to drive cost and time efficiency across the business. In addition, it became business critical to bolster IT capabilities to react to emerging business challenges arising from the pandemic.

To meet these objectives would mean investing heavily in upgrading their IT infrastructure, including procuring a new high-spec operational server and upgrading their MRP (Material Requirements Planning) system, as Datalink's Finance Director, Mariam Smith explained:

"At the time, the financial outlay would have impacted on Datalink's cashflow – the grant covered 30% of the cost, which was extremely helpful."

In addition to funding, the Digital Upscaler project provided access to much-needed expert technical advice and procurement support - finding a solution with MRP already integrated for example, was a key specification requirement.

About Datalink Electronics:

Datalink Electronics Ltd designs and manufactures innovative, high-technology electronic products. The business serves a variety of industrial sectors, including Oil & Gas and Scientific Instrumentation. They major in Life Sciences and Medical fields and are an ISO 13485 certified manufacturer of medical devices. They provide an end-to-end service, taking product design from concept, through to production manufacture, offering clients on-going engineering support over the product lifecycle.

The business was established in 1984 and today employs a workforce of 35 at its Loughborough base, where everything they develop is manufactured.

What were Datalink Electronics' Key Challenges?

Datalink's IT infrastructure was outdated and also lacked the capacity to host and manage remote working. They had servers that were unable to integrate with other business applications systems, posing potential security risk to the business.

The business wanted help from the Digital Upscaler Programme to enable them to meet several key objectives:

- To have the ability to work remotely, with no server issues on interruptions.
- To reduce manual processes to increase productivity efficiency.
- To improve overall IT security and protection.

Datalink's existing servers did not offer the connectivity required to accommodate seamless remote working. They were also unable to integrate other essential business applications, such as SAGE. The system was also not supporting the operating system, which could lead to a potential security risk to the business.

Mariam also explained that prior to becoming involved in the Digital Upscaler project, the business had a manual process of managing workflows streams, which consumed both time and resources and carried a high risk of human error:

"I was personally having to check the figures manually, as I couldn't trust that the data coming out of the MRP system was accurate."



“Working with Mariam on Datalink Electronics’ digital investment project has been an absolute pleasure. Getting to know how the business operated and the challenges they faced, gave me a good understanding of their project requirements and investment needs. It gives me great satisfaction that I’ve helped a business make a great start of their digital transformation journey.”

Prashant Gandabhai,
Digital Technology Adviser

How has the Digital Upscaler project fuelled Datalink Electronics’ digital transformation and what impact have they seen?

The project has supported the successful acquisition and integration of high-performance servers, which will transform the businesses interworking capabilities and support future growth. In summary, this empowers Datalink Electronics to:

- Cater for remote working within a secure environment.
- Ramp up shared working capabilities and support dynamic interworking.
- Benefit from a new Materials Requirements Planning (MRP) system, which allows them to work with greater accuracy and efficiency.
- Realise significant time-saving benefits that both increase productivity and reduces stress levels across the team.
- Reduce down time and business interruption often experienced when working from home.
- Deliver the benefits provided by an MRP that has several business-critical extensions already integrated, including ‘defect tracking’ functionality.
- Significantly reduce manual manipulation of figures data to improve accuracy.



Delivered collectively, these outcomes mean the business is now primed to capture and embrace real-time functionality, as Digital Technology Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai explained:

“The introduction of the enhanced MRP system will support the digitisation of their current manual processes. Datalink previously adopted a labour-intensive process of extracting and reporting information. The impact of this was that their leadership team was spending long periods of time running the data manually, it also meant the data was not totally error free due to human error. This investment enables their team to extract data straight from the system in real-time; this will mean quicker, easier and more accurate analysis can be conducted on the data in order to improve their product quality.”

Key Improvements and Impact:

- **Efficiency boosted:** The new MRP generates accurate reports 25% faster. It also includes quoting, billing materials, build planning and invoicing, saving valuable time by making end-to-end project management and processing considerably quicker.
- **Team experience supported:** The improved connectivity and responsiveness of the new server is able to support seamless remote working and deliver ‘in office’ functionality.
- **Reliability improved:** The new MRP has the capability to generate a WIP (Work in Progress) report, that accurately shows what volume of work we have in progress – as a result the business now has greater confidence in the data provided.
- **Streamlining enhanced:** Previously, defect detection software, which flags up if any components are missing, was running totally separately. This often meant having to input the same data twice. This is now integrated into one system, reducing task duplication and increasing productivity.
- **Further growth secured:** Datalink Electronics has projected that the increased efficiencies provided will drive increased orders and this enhanced demand will also support additional recruitment in the future.

“**I’d highly recommend getting involved in the project. Prashant was brilliant – he really simplified the process for us and helped me personally to fill any gaps in knowledge and process. He was incredibly helpful.**”

Mariam Smith,
Finance Director

To learn more about funded advice and support visit
www.emc-dnl.co.uk