



Lettergold Plastics Ltd shows how certification to the ISO 22301 can boost small firms as well as large organizations

“The BCM system is a great reassurance. It has enabled us to make plans to mitigate problems quickly if they occur – for example, to identify a second water supply and provide electricity back-up – things we wouldn’t have done otherwise.”

Andy Drummond
Managing Director,
Lettergold Plastics Ltd

Customer objectives

- Fulfil tender requirements and win new business
- Increase resilience and minimize the impact of a business disruption
- Reassure customers and other stakeholders that business continuity plans are in place

Customer benefits

- Improved ability to fulfil tender requirements and win new business
- Increased confidence in quick incident recovery
- Evidence of best practice, reassuring stakeholders
- Adoption of a risk management mindset

Customer background

Lettergold Plastics Ltd is a small, but long-established engineering company, specializing in injection moulding, contract packaging and, in particular, domestic water treatment products. It operates from a standalone unit in the industrial zone of Newmarket, where it employs around 25 staff, and prides itself on forming lasting partnerships with its valued B2B customer base.

The company is certified as an Investor in People, and is strong on innovation, holding many patents, registered designs and trademarks. It also benefits from being certified to several important international standards, including the key discipline of business continuity management (BCM).

Why certification?

Lettergold regards management system standards as an important tool in achieving success, not least in helping it to establish lasting partnerships with its customers and suppliers at home and abroad. Over several years the company has achieved certification to the quality management standard ISO 9001, the environmental standard ISO 14001 and the health and safety standard OHSAS 18001. In May 2008, Lettergold became only the third company in the UK to become certified to the BCM standard BS 25999, and it has recently transitioned to the new international standard ISO 22301.

Andy Drummond, Lettergold's Managing Director, explains that the catalyst for certification to the BCM standard came from prospective customers. "We originally sought certification to fulfil a tender requirement and that's happened several more times since," says Drummond.

ISO 22301 specifies the requirements for a management system that ensures an organization – large or small – can continue to operate in the event of business disruption, whether it is a major disaster or a minor incident.

Benefits

Building a management system based on the standard has turned out to be much more

than just a 'tick in the box' on tender forms. It has provided Lettergold with tried and tested methods of minimizing the adverse impact of an incident on its operations, as well as protecting the interests of its customers and other stakeholders. It has reinforced the confidence of customers seeking certainty of supply from Lettergold.

"The BCM system is a great reassurance to them and to ourselves. Previously, recovery plans probably only existed in my head. Like many small firms, we were over-reliant on a few individuals, especially the business owner," says Drummond.

Lettergold has used its BCM system to ensure access to key utilities, as well as for testing the strength of its supply chain for more specialized materials. For example, it has tested alternative sources for industrial chemicals normally imported from Belgium.

"We ran a real exercise, acting as if our Belgian supplier's factory had burned down," explains Drummond. "We tested an alternative US source, which proved acceptable, although the exercise confirmed that it would add two weeks to our supply lead time, as well as some additional shipping costs." Drummond believes the test has been very worthwhile, enabling Lettergold to be well prepared, and to manage expectations, should disruption occur in future.

Implementation

Developing a BCM system requires businesses to consider how they would deal with situations they don't normally experience. These could range widely, for instance, from a flu pandemic to an IT system failure.

Such situations are often unfamiliar to management, so the existence of a well-rehearsed BCM plan that can be implemented immediately can make the difference between disaster and recovery. For Lettergold, the implementation was initially quite challenging. Drummond expands, "We were only the third company in the UK to go for BS 25999 – and the other two were involved in the area of business continuity already, so it was easier for them. We're a manufacturer and a small family business, so

there were some teething problems."

Lettergold engaged a specialist consultant, Adrian Austin of Hereford-based Atlantic Consultants, who has over 20 years' experience in assisting organizations implement a range of standard-based management systems and then using them to drive improvement through the organization.

Says Austin, "It's all too easy to create a big, fat BCM manual for a small firm, which then gets left on the shelf because it's not relevant to day-to-day activities. What's needed are simple mechanisms and paperwork that captures the key points – a 'what do we do when something goes wrong' manual."

Austin helped Lettergold with appropriate system design and documentation, drawing up incident management plans, devising and supervising exercises and training staff.

BSI's role

BSI played an important supporting role too, aware that a small manufacturer like Lettergold was something of a 'guinea pig' for the process of becoming certified to the BCM standard.

"BSI was extremely helpful," says Drummond. "They carried out a pre-audit inspection to give us some additional guidance, clarifying issues we might have misinterpreted and giving us feedback on changes we needed to make to meet the requirements of the actual audit."

It is worth noting, too, that Adrian Austin is a member of BSI's associate consultant programme, which was set up specifically to help firms identify suitably qualified experts to assist them with implementation.

As for the future, Drummond is confident that Lettergold will be better prepared for unexpected disruptions. "Now, whenever we introduce something new into our processes, we consider the implications for business continuity – we ask ourselves 'what can go wrong?' It can be very helpful to have this risk management mindset."



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