

Success Story

WORKBOOKS TAKES HARDSCAPE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Improved business insights support growth of hard landscaping products firm.



“WE’VE USED WORKBOOKS TO VASTLY IMPROVE OUR REPORTING — AND IT’S THIS THAT’S REALLY HELPED OUR BUSINESS.”

Darren Roberts - Commercial Manager, Hardscape

HARDSCAPE

Since 1993, Hardscape has supplied a wide range of paving and hard landscaping products sourced from around the world, mainly for public projects in the UK but also for some private garden design projects.

For more complicated schemes, Hardscape’s Artscape team use computer-aided design, CNC laser technology, waterjet cutters and other state-of-the-art techniques to provide bespoke solutions. As Hardscape Commercial Manager Darren Roberts says: “If a creative person can imagine it, we can most probably produce it.”

Hardscape has worked on some of the most ambitious and prestigious hard landscaping projects in the UK in recent years, including Kings Cross Station in London, Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool, and the regeneration of Hull city centre.



**DETAILED BUSINESS
REPORTS**



**MAXIMISED MARKETING
OPPORTUNITIES**



**IMPROVED CUSTOMER
ANALYSIS**

Working mostly with landscape architects and designers, the company prides itself on offering a huge range of products. With a photo library of more than 30,000 high-quality images showcasing its products, Hardscape understands the importance of choice to its customers.

TIME TO GROW

The success of the company, particularly over the last decade, had generated steady growth and towards the end of 2017, the Hardscape management team realised the time had come to take the business to the next level, so they recruited Darren Roberts to add rigour to their reporting and processes.

Hardscape had initially signed up for Workbooks CRM several years earlier but was only using it in the most basic way – little more than simply distinguishing jobs by giving them unique reference numbers. The team knew the system was capable of much more than that but weren't sure exactly what – and they didn't know how to tap into its extra functionality.

They are not alone. In fact it is the most common reason for a CRM implementation not delivering the expected benefits. It's not that the technology doesn't deliver, it's simply that users aren't given the training on how to maximise functionality. Hardscape recognised this and took the decision to take their Workbooks implementation to the next level.

THE POWER OF LEARNING

To understand the system's capabilities better, Darren and his colleague, Sales/Project Administrator Josh Stevenson, attended a Workbooks administrator course. Darren says: "We needed to start right at the base level and really understand what Workbooks was capable of and how we could use it. We knew there was lots of functionality we weren't taking advantage of, but we didn't know how to tap into it.

"THE ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING WAS JUST RIGHT. IT DIDN'T ASSUME TOO MUCH PRIOR KNOWLEDGE – OR TOO LITTLE. IT WAS ALSO REALLY USEFUL TO CHAT TO OTHER DELEGATES ABOUT THEIR PAIN POINTS AND FIND OUT HOW THEY DEALT WITH THEM. IT REALLY ENABLED IMPROVED THINKING THEREAFTER."

Darren Roberts - Commercial Manager, Hardscape

"We learned that, just like any other software product, you can use Workbooks as a basic tool or you can really make it work for you, customising it to suit your needs – that's what the administrator training enabled us to do. We emerged with a much better understanding of what it was capable of and as a result we've made some significant improvements."

TAILORED BENEFITS

Armed with their new knowledge, Darren and Josh decided to trim some elements from Workbooks and add others, to create a solution that was tailor-made for their business. Darren says: “We’ve got to the point where it’s really helping us with the information it gives us. We can now drill down into specific opportunities by ‘customer’ and see why we win or lose particular jobs.”

The pair decided to commission bespoke development activity from Workbooks to add some non-standard functionality to the system. Hardscape now has a tailored way to log complaints and capture marketing opportunities – by flagging solutions that could be photographed or turned into a case study, for example.

But it’s around reporting that the biggest strides have been made, as Darren explains: “We’ve used Workbooks, together with Sage, our accounting software, and various Excel spreadsheets, to vastly improve our reporting – and it’s this that’s really helped our business.”

QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS

One of the valuable insights Workbooks gave the Hardscape team was the benefit of challenging assumptions about how their business performs. Darren says: “It’s certainly enabled us to make more informed decisions. Take competitive sales pitches, for example. Traditionally, because of the nature of our business model, we didn’t get into competitive situations with other suppliers very often. We didn’t think it was worthwhile for our business. But the historical data provided by Workbooks told us a different story. It showed that we actually had a pretty good conversion rate in competitive situations – and I think it’s fair to say that surprised everyone.

“DRILLING DOWN INTO THE DATA HELPED US TO HAVE AN INFORMED DISCUSSION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BRINGING IN MORE PEOPLE TO ADDRESS THAT KIND OF BUSINESS – SOMETHING WE WOULD NEVER HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE.”

Darren Roberts - Commercial Director, Hardscape

LOOKING AHEAD

Hardscape has a team of ten sales managers and six internal sales support staff who now all use the CRM most days, feeding in the data that's needed for the newly-detailed business reports. But so far, the management team have resisted the temptation to extend beyond this, as Darren explains: "We want to keep the system as slick and streamlined as we can, while still extracting the information we need. We don't want to ram it down people's throats and insist they use it for everything. That would only make it too admin-heavy and put people off."

"Because of the way our particular business works, we don't see any need to use Workbooks to log every contact we have with customers and set targets and so on – I think that's better suited to a corporate environment."

But I wouldn't rule anything out for the future – we're still really in the early stages of finding out what it can do for us, so who knows?"

About

INDUSTRY

Manufacturing

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

51-200

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

September 2015

TECHNOLOGY

- Workbooks CRM
- Workbooks Exchange Server Sync
- Workbooks Mapping Module

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