

CASE STUDY

Tooled-Up improves operational efficiency

Read how Toolled-Up utilised Microsoft Power Platform to optimise operations



About Tooled-Up

Lee Industrial Limited was established in 1976 and operates under the trade names Tooled-Up and MyToolShed. It serves as an online retailer specialising in hand and power tools.

The company offers a diverse range of brands, catering to general DIY repair and maintenance needs, as well as providing high-quality tools for trade professionals. Customers can purchase tools through various marketplaces, and the Tooled-Up and MyToolShed websites.



Helping Tooled-Up work smarter, not harder

For over 10 years, Tooled-Up has been a customer of Columbus. In that time, we've helped the business drive several improvements across its operations by utilising Microsoft Power Platform (Power BI and Power Automate including Robotic Process Automation - RPA):

- **Overcome the pressures of lockdown**
- **Reintegrate marketplaces to meet demand**
- **Improve data quality**
- **Automate time-consuming business processes**
- **A brief summary**



Overcome the pressures of lockdown



Like many businesses across several industries, the coronavirus lockdowns presented a new set of unprecedented challenges. With people confined to their homes and having extra time on their hands for DIY projects, Tooled-Up experienced a surge in demand. Their order backlog increased by a factor of over 1000%.

As a small business operating out of one warehouse, Tooled-Up faced significant pressure on the warehouse team due to the increased workload. With the support of Columbus, Tooled-Up used Power BI to optimise its picking process and enhance efficiency, successfully overcoming extreme workloads.

Previously, the warehouse followed a traditional order picking, FIFO-based process where a team member located each product individually as orders came in. The high volume of orders for the same products forced warehouse staff into inefficient back-and-forth trips to the same locations.

Columbus helped Tooled-Up create a set of Power BI reports that allowed the business to quickly analyse the order data, enabling them to adapt the picking waves within their ERP system. This adaption increased staff efficiency by limiting the number of journeys they had to undertake. As a result, this improvement significantly reduced travel time and enabled warehouse members to process multiple orders simultaneously.

Tooled-Up adopted this processing method during the busy 18 month period and continues to use this approach during peak seasonal demands.

Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up, speaks on how the new approach helped his business during this period, “By having a clearer visibility of the order demand impact on the warehouse processes, we were able to quickly respond with maximum efficiency during this unprecedented time.”



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Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up

Reintegrate marketplaces to meet demand

As well as selling through their own website, Tooled-Up also sell on several marketplaces. However, they too faced challenges during lockdown as their processes couldn't keep up with the increased data demands. Post-COVID, the Columbus team reworked the integrations, helping Tooled-Up better manage the 70,000 plus product SKUs the company offers.

Columbus has also helped Tooled-Up optimise processes to ensure information is kept up-to-date across its website and all marketplace platforms. For example, a new product added to the ERP system is then made available on the website and all relevant marketplaces in near real-time. This means Tooled-Up now has the flexibility to sell the same products on several different channels, therefore increasing overall sales.

”With the newly improved near real-time integrations, the challenge of stock availability across multiple channels has been optimised, reducing the risk of overselling and increasing customer satisfaction.”

Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up



Improve data quality

With a vast product range on offer, Tooled-Up are unable to stock every item. Instead of offering next day delivery on every product, customers have the option to arrange collection or delivery on items that aren't currently in stock. This approach allows Tooled-Up to sell its entire product range across all channels, but it's crucial for the business to have access to the correct inventory feeds to understand which products are available.

Another challenge for Tooled-Up was that, aside from a few main suppliers the company has good relationships with, not every supplier would send data feed files containing stock availability. Previously, a Tooled-Up employee had to manually search through supplier websites, gather feed files, spend time editing them (as they were usually in a different format) and load them into the company's ERP system.

Since there wasn't a dedicated employee assigned to this task, it could take weeks before feed files were updated. By leveraging the RPA functionality of the Power Platform, Tooled-Up automated the data collection process and integrated it with the company's existing ERP system. Now, this process can be completed multiple times a day without the need for human intervention, improving data quality and saving time for Tooled-Up's employees.

” Columbus helped us identify inefficiencies in our current manual processes. They delivered a simple and robust automated solution that increased data accuracy and efficiency, based on the Power Platform.”

Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up

Automate time-consuming business processes

Invoices from Tooled-Up's suppliers used to arrive in a single inbox. It was then the responsibility of one person to forward these emails to the correct individual in the finance team for processing.

By using Power Automate, MS Teams, and SharePoint, Columbus implemented automated rules to save incoming emails and attachments into specific lists categorised by supplier in SharePoint. This automation significantly reduced the bottleneck caused by a single person forwarding emails to the team.

Now, the finance team can access the lists and perform several actions, such as:

- **View the number of completed/outstanding purchase orders**
- **Assign items in the list to themselves**
- **Change the status of an item (e.g., 'in progress' or 'completed')**

This not only provides the finance team with an accurate list to work from, but also enhances visibility across the business regarding outstanding purchase order invoices.

“ **Using the Power Platform and Microsoft 365, a simple solution has removed previous bottlenecks in the business. A really small change has delivered increased efficiencies to the team.**”

Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up



Columbus as a provider

Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up, speaks on how his business has improved as a result of working with Columbus, “Thanks to the successful implementation of Power Platform with support from Columbus, we’ve been able to make several operational improvements in the business. For example, we’ve made financial gains by increasing order volumes within the business without the need to increase the team size.”

Jason also says he would recommend Columbus to other businesses wanting to undertake a similar project, “Columbus is our trusted advisor when it comes to recommending changes in the business. Their direct and hands-on approach has been invaluable for us. Over the years, we’ve built up a hands-on working relationship, and they have a deep understanding of our business.”

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A brief summary

See below a brief summary of achievements Tooled-Up has accomplished in their long term partnership with Columbus:

- **Gained actionable insights for informed decision making –**
Power BI enabled Tooled-Up to access valuable insights into warehouse operations during the coronavirus lockdowns, contributing to increased efficiency to overcome adverse workloads
- **Improved data quality –**
Power Automate significantly enhanced data quality for Tooled-Up by automating time-consuming processes, eliminating bottlenecks, and improving overall productivity
- **Made enhancements to the core ERP system –**
Columbus has helped Tooled-Up leverage its existing system of records and added new technological capabilities around the core ERP system, enhancing business processes and user experience



“ Having been a Columbus customer for several years now, we look forward to continuing our shared and progressive relationship in the future.”

Jason Chance, Director at Tooled-Up



About Columbus

Columbus is a global IT services and consulting company with more than 2,000 employees serving 5,000+ customers worldwide. Columbus helps ambitious companies transform, maximise and futureproof their business digitally.

We are specialised within the industries retail, distribution, food, manufacturing and life sciences. We offer a comprehensive solution portfolio with deep industry knowledge, extensive technology expertise and profound customer insight. Columbus has offices and partners all over the world and we can deliver our solutions and services locally – on a global scale.

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