

# Sustainable Growth Through People Power

“Without doubt, the future now looks bright for Oxley and our 200 staff in the UK and USA. We are capitalising on our traditions of self-sufficiency and world-beating innovation, backed by a sustainable growth plan which is empowering our people to satisfy even more customers.”

**Darren Cavan**  
CEO, Oxley Group



## The Background

Founded by the late Robert Frederick (Freddy) Oxley in 1942, Oxley Group has a proud 77-year history of family-led innovation and self-sufficiency. Freddy relocated the vital capacitor company from London to Cumbria following the Blitz.

Geographically remote, Oxley became highly innovative in doing everything in-house – from design to manufacturing and test.

Having more than 150 patents to his name Freddy's attitude to innovation, quality and manufacturing excellence helped Oxley grow and establish an international customer base, predominantly providing electronic solutions for the defence and aerospace industry.



## Challenges

In the late 1980s Oxley hit a plateau, with static turnover and low profit. Self-sufficiency had led to a silo culture and the company lost sight of its plan and its people.

Eventually in 2018 Oxley applied to join the Sharing in Growth (SiG) productivity and competitiveness programme.

## The Solution

Following a SiG in-depth business diagnosis, Oxley set a target of doubling turnover in five years, and trebling it in ten years. Innovation and self-sufficiency remained core but in a way that would create sustainable growth.

The innovative new strategy capitalised on Oxley's core competencies in LED lighting, night vision solutions, EMI suppression and the design and production of high specification components. The drive for growth meant focusing on ceramics improvements; improving LED lighting productivity to enable expansion into civil aerospace; and making technical investment for the future.

To deploy the strategy, the company used Sharing in Growth's X-matrix, underpinned by robust monitoring, a control and reporting system and a complete overhaul of employee engagement.

The company created a vision designed to both deliver for customers and engage staff: Empowering our people to deliver success together. The POW of empowering was used to brand all employee communications with each letter having significance - P: people, productive and performance; O: ownership, optimise and originality; and W: winners, world class and whole-hearted.

Without a huge local talent pool, Oxley needed to engage and develop its team with skills and experience to contribute to Oxley's success. A SiG employee engagement survey found that recognition, communication and personal development were

raised as issues, so a communication team was formed to lead changes, the majority of which were delivered within months. The organisation structure was also reviewed and life insurance, sick pay, holiday hours, and bonus pay were standardised and enhanced and a new skills matrix and personal development plans were introduced and aligned to the company objectives.

To focus everyone on the customer, Oxley introduced a new customer relationship management system and a business development information centre to help win new business.

To tackle silo working, team activities were organised such as fund raisers, challenges, parties and recognition events. And faced with a skills shortage as experienced staff reached retirement, Oxley renewed their apprenticeship scheme and ran community programmes to encourage young people and women into engineering careers.

To help build capacity for volume production, a Sharing in Growth 'lighthouse cell' was introduced to implement world-class standards so they could be well-understood before being rolled out across other areas. These included visual management boards for short daily meetings to review progress, floor space utilisation and improvement of workplace organisation and effectiveness.

In the ceramics production area, where Oxley had struggled to meet huge market demand because quality was being protected through inspection, continuous improvement was applied to gather real time data for root cause problem solving.

**The results of Oxley's business transformation are impressive. After one year on the Sharing in Growth programme the group has:**

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**Improved turnover to a record £17.8 million (up from a pre-Sharing in Growth £13.7 million in 2017)**



**Initiated commercial launch projects with leading aircraft manufacturers**



**Achieved a 61% improvement in the number of ceramics products that were right first time on two frequently running lines**



**Streamlined processes and reduced cycle times, saving 90 man-hours per batch and reducing lead time by 14 weeks on one key product**



**Won recognition in local and electronics industry awards**



**Winners of 2019 Sharing in Growth Inspire Award**