

BRADBURY GROUP
THE DOOR TO
OPPORTUNITY



WE LEARN HOW BRADBURY GROUP HAS GONE FROM A SMALL DOOR MANUFACTURER TO THE BIGGEST IN THE COUNTRY.

THE DOOR TO OPPORTUNITY

PROJECT MANAGED BY: DAVID GARNER

Welding during production process

A company's name can mean a lot of things. It can be a statement of intent, an aspiration, even just the name of the founder. With Bradbury Group, it turns out, a name is a primitive form of SEO.

The reason for having 'Bradbury' as our name is because it was at the front of the alphabet and we were in the Yellow Pages," recalls Tim Strawson, the founder and managing director of the company.

It's a story that shows just how much things have changed while Bradbury Group has been around.

"We started in Luton in 1991, with 2,000 square foot of space," Strawson remembers. "We moved to Dunlop way in 1994 to a 5,000 square foot facility, and we grew and grew."

Bradbury Group is the biggest steel door manufacturer in the UK, which sounds pretty straight forward until you realise that no two of those doors are alike.

"We make 80 steel doors a day, all with different heights, widths, colours, locks and handles," Strawson says. "The UK market is a very unique market in that even when a new building is designed and there might be 100 steel doors on that building, there are

100 differences between them. That's why we exist, really. The mass producers can't compete with us because every door is different and the construction firms all have short lead times. We're the quickest and the best."

The speed and quality that Bradbury Group is known for led to rapid growth and, by 2017, the company occupied seven different units on one industrial estate, with their doors having to continually move from one factory to another as they underwent different stages of the manufacturing process.

"It took five days to make a door from start to finish because we were batch producers," Strawson tells us.

However, that was all about to change.

THE STORY OF A DOOR

To understand why Bradbury Group needed five days and seven factories to make a door, you need to understand the many stages one of their doors goes through.

"First you punch and fold," Strawson says. "The equipment for that had to be running at least a day ahead. The second part of the process was fabricating, welding and gluing. Then we had to wait 24 hours for the glue to set. The next process was to manufacture the door leaves and frames and to make sure we have all the right parts for painting and quality inspection. The next process was to paint them and put them into racks, which they waited in for a day. Then we assembled the hardware, hinges, >>

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“THE NEW FACTORY HAS STORAGE CAPACITY FOR 4,000 DOORS AND IS ABLE TO PRODUCE THREE TIMES AS MANY AS THE OLD FACILITY”

locks and handles, pack them and send them out.”

This meant that Bradbury Group had between 350 and 400 doors that were works-in-progress at any given time, and they all needed storing, so the manufacturer quickly ran out of space.

“We couldn’t make any more doors because we had nowhere to put them,” Strawson remembers. “We had storage for 400 doors in goods out, and 200 of those spaces were permanently taken by one customer.”

This all changed when Bradbury Group moved into a new facility that would change not just where they work, or how much space they had, but the entire way the company made doors.

“We’ve now got 135,000 square foot all under one roof. It’s a 25-year-old building that had been empty for five years,” Strawson tells us. “It was in a terrible state, but we’ve completely refurbished it with a new outer layer, reskinned it, repainted it, and put in new electrics and new plumbing. It looks like a brand-new building.”

The new factory has storage capacity for 4,000 doors and is able to produce three times as many as the old facility. It was a £4 million investment that took a long time to bring into production,

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Tim Strawson, founder and managing director

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Bradbury Group headquarters

but the payoff has been worth it. Today, it doesn't take Bradbury Group five days to make a door. It doesn't even take four days. It takes just four hours.

"We put in a large Salvagnini punching and folding machine and in 90 seconds it'll punch and fold the door skin. We need two door skins to make a leaf, so in three minutes we have the inner and outer skin," Strawson says. "It comes out the machine onto roller tables where we fabricate the door together, rivet all the parts together, weld it, and put it in a heat press. Each of those

takes 15 minutes, so that's done in under an hour and a half. We put it on a paint line for another 90 minutes, then it takes an hour to put the hardware on."

The change is dramatic. "Before, I was paying for approximately 60% of my staff to pick doors up and put them down," Strawson says. "Now we have a lot less of that. It's safer, easier, and more efficient."

THE HUMAN SIDE

Of course, equipment is only half the equation, and Bradbury Group's staff have had to undergo a drastic cultural change to adapt to this new way of working. Bradbury Group is always working to nurture a new generation of talent.

"We do a number of things, including running a Bradbury Academy. We take on apprentices and grow our own engineers and staff in skilled areas. We've been

"WE DO A NUMBER OF THINGS, INCLUDING RUNNING A BRADBURY ACADEMY. WE TAKE ON APPRENTICES AND GROW OUR OWN ENGINEERS AND STAFF IN SKILLED AREAS. WE'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR SEVEN YEARS NOW"



“I ALSO SET UP A CHARITY CALLED **YOUTH ENGINEERING SCUNTHORPE** THAT TAKES LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE AND GETS THEM INTO WORK”

doing it for seven years now,” Strawson says. “I also set up a charity called Youth Engineering Scunthorpe that takes long-term unemployed young people and gets them into work. The charity gives us a lot of components that we used to buy abroad. We can give that business to the charity and because it is repetitive work, these unskilled people learned how to make those components and we’ve taken on a lot of people from there. The other thing we do is promote from within. I’ve got people at senior director levels who’ve worked their way up. My production director joined as a sales manager and she’s a very good production director. I have people who came through the Youth Engineering programme to be leaders in engineering, and we have senior managers who started on the shop floor.”

Even with that wealth of talent at their disposal, the move from

batch to flow production was a challenging one.

“We employed a firm called L I Europe who were very helpful and they were very useful,” Strawson says. “It really was a challenge getting our staff to adapt to the new way of doing things. People didn’t realise we couldn’t make a door until we had everything in place. The brackets had to be sitting and waiting and if they weren’t it stopped the whole line. But we worked them. We did a lot of training and it’s worked very well. We have a great team of people and they’re lapping up the work. It’s never worked so well, actually!”

Bradbury Group’s staff have also benefited from the changeover. The new facility provides a better, cleaner environment, a new canteen, and a staff gym that covers 3,000 square foot – bigger than the entirety of Bradbury Group’s original Luton factory! ☺





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