

KEEL BOAT SERVICES LTD UNDERGOES SUPPORT FROM THE VIRTUAL ENGINEERING CENTRE FOR CREATING DIGITAL TOOL FOR CUSTOMISATION AND COMMUNICATION

THE BRIEF

Based at Tattenhall Marina, Keel Boat Services Ltd focuses on the refurbishment and repair of canal boats. Canal boats have a long-standing history across the UK; introduced in the 18th century for workers to transport a variety of goods and commodities, now more commonly used for leisure purposes.

Keel Boat Services offers a wide range of services to their customers including internal refurbishment, hull blacking, jet washing, electrical and heating system repairs, engine maintenance, painting and battery testing.

The company was keen to learn more about how digital technologies could enhance their current services and processes to boost productivity whilst also improving the customer experience.

THE APPROACH

The Virtual Engineering Centre's Industrialisation Team met with Keel Boat Services to gain a strong understanding of their business and how they currently operate.

The VEC discovered that the majority of design work was being undertaken through paper-based operations, which could be time-consuming and often resulted in numerous revisions and always with the constant possibility of error or misunderstanding between parties.

Keeping what the company would like to achieve at the forefront, the VEC suggested creating a digital tool to virtually convert these hand-drawn designs into virtual 2D models of narrowboats. This visual demonstrator could enhance the design process and highlight to customers what their refurbishment project will visually look like once completed.

The tool could also demonstrate the different stages throughout each renovation or repair project providing clarity and transparency between the company and clients. Additionally, the tool creates a design blueprint for the Keel Boat staff to work from.

The design tool would allow users the opportunity to explore alternative narrow boat layouts, defining options for living spaces, galley furnishings, bathrooms, bedrooms, windows, bulkheads and hatches.

THE BENEFITS

Staff can use these converted 2D models to ensure the team keeps to the client agreed brief thus safeguarding against unexpected problems and eliminating human error.

This digital tool will also enable Keel Boat Services Ltd to reduce a high percentage of paper-based operations currently used within its design process. This will ensure that information is easily shared with customers and clients, whilst reducing time and effort spent when compared to the hand-drawn designs.

The 2D models can be interacted with and modified, offering bespoke customisation to suit the needs of their clients, who can now quickly explore numerous designs easily and make quick changes.

Keel Boat Services are now looking to implement some of these virtual demonstrators as engaging examples of their work on their company website that will highlight their in-house capabilities.

"This project through the CW4.0 team at the Virtual Engineering Centre has been fantastic. We are always looking for ways in which we can best communicate with our customers and we know digital is the answer but it is finding the resources to reach this. The VEC team have helped us by keeping us very hands-on so we can develop and manage ourselves and use directly with our customers as we offer them an even better service than before."

- Simon Burgess, Director, Keel Boat Services