



Laser cutting specialist SLP gains multiple benefits from its BSI certification to two standards

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Duncan Proctor,
Founder and Managing Director,
SLP Ltd

At a glance

Specialised Laser Products Ltd (SLP) is a family-run business offering laser cutting of sheet metal for customers nationwide. Based in South Yorkshire, it is a typical SME engine of the UK economy, having grown to employ 30 staff and make annual sales of around £4m.

The company cares about quality, which it has enhanced and is proud to demonstrate through its certification by BSI to two standards: the iconic ISO 9001:2015 for quality management, and the CE mark for structural steel – BS EN 1090 CE Exc. Class 2.

Certification benefits:

- Meet regulatory requirements
- Facilitate construction industry tenders
- Strengthen bids and exceed client expectations
- Improve commercial quality awareness
- Show company-wide commitment to best practice
- Drive business improvement
- Create competitive advantage
- Build sustainability and organizational resilience

Business background

SLP was founded in 1995 by Managing Director, Duncan Proctor, who saw a niche opportunity in the laser cutting services market, based around the machine knife industry. He explains, "We were stocking sheet metal, so we could offer to cut parts and supply the material, which became a real selling point."

The company grew steadily over the years, reinvesting in new premises, machines and processes to enhance the range and quality of its services. Today, it occupies a modern 20,000 sq ft manufacturing facility in Rotherham, where most of its capital plant and equipment is less than three years old, enabling it to focus on quality laser cutting of sheet aluminium, copper, brass, stainless steel, and mild, spring and structural steel. Its customers now include leading names in the engineering, architectural, rail, recycling and construction sectors, as well as in the machine knife industry.

Why certification?

It is no accident that SLP has grown to become a multi-million pound business. Working across a wide range of sectors, the firm's technical expertise is coupled with a commitment to providing excellent product quality, customer service and value for money. "We're fast, we're efficient and we're reliable," says Proctor.

He continues, "We've invested in the latest technology, enabling us to deliver laser-cut metal products on time and to specification to every corner of the UK. We wanted to be the best at what we do – and that's also why we've invested in our international and European standards."

Underpinning SLP's hard-earned reputation for quality and service excellence are its BSI certification to ISO 9001:2015 for quality management, and the CE mark BS EN 1090 CE Exc. Class 2 for structural steel.

"Certification to ISO 9001 helps us to continually improve, streamline operations and reduce costs," says Proctor. "It's a requirement for some tenders, and it makes us better able to compete in others. It helps us win more business and satisfy more customers. It also shows we have strong corporate governance and that we work effectively with all our stakeholders and our supply chain."

The structural steel CE certification to BS EN 1090 is equally important to SLP. Since July 2014, structural steelwork and aluminium construction components have fallen under the Construction Products Regulation (CPR). This means they must secure CE marking to show they comply with BS EN 1090, which is the harmonized European standard that applies to structural metalwork.

"In fact, much of the laser cutting we carry out doesn't require us to have CE marking for BS EN 1090, but it became a requirement for our construction industry customers – we simply couldn't supply them without it," says Proctor. "Our certification assures them our products meet all the regulatory requirements."

Beyond compliance

While compliance with the CPR was SLP's initial motivation for CE certification to BS EN 1090, which it achieved in February 2015, it has brought significant additional advantages. "From our perspective there are benefits that go beyond compliance, including better processes, better controls and better traceability," says Proctor. "It's just as much about improving working practices, efficiency and professionalism."

Proctor says BSI's rigorous certification process has helped refine and improve SLP's operations: "A major benefit is how it reinforces our systems of work – particularly material traceability, which is essential, so if anything goes wrong with a job further down the line, you can trace it right back to where you got the steel from, and all the other details relating to it."

He adds, "You must comply with the standard's specific requirements, so it's about getting down to the detail of how you work – for example, accurately documenting goods in, goods out, job numbers and stock references."

Another key area of focus has been people: "We had to define all our roles and responsibilities and show we had well-trained staff. We created a comprehensive training matrix that documents the skills we have on the shopfloor, with details of individuals' training and skill-level. Where we were lacking in certain areas we put additional in-house training in place."

BSI's role

In a previous managerial role, Proctor had implemented BS 5750 – the British predecessor to ISO 9001 – so when he set up SLP he brought this experience with him. "I put a lot of that framework in place from the start to help us work efficiently, so in 2014, when we started working towards certification to BS EN 1090 and then ISO 9001, a lot of sound systems were already well established. They only needed identifying, tweaking and documenting, rather than radical changes.

"That said, we still had to put a good deal of work into achieving the certifications," he continues. "I probably spent about a month preparing the documentation for BS EN 1090. I did it myself – without bringing in a consultant – but it was quite involved."

Proctor did not hesitate in choosing BSI as SLP's certification partner. As a Notified Body for many European Directives and Regulations, including the CPR, BSI offers a wealth of expertise to support manufacturers. "They're so well-known and respected – they were the obvious choice. And I've been very happy with the relationship. They've always given us very clear guidance," he says.

Looking to the future

Looking ahead, SLP's certification success demonstrates its ongoing commitment to quality and best practice. "We've had customers complimenting us on our standards even when they don't need us to have them – certification reassures them that we take quality seriously," says Proctor.

Above all, he does not regard maintaining the BSI certifications as an end in itself – still less as just a 'tick in the box'. "It's much more about having a good framework for working," he says. "And because it's well-documented, it's easy to ensure that everyone is aligned to it."

He sums up: "We had good systems in place already, but now they are even better, helping us build a sustainable business and resilient organization."

Contact us to find out how BSI certification can help your business make excellence a habit.

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