



# Case study: Biosan

## From college spin-out to international manufacturer

*As a small enthusiastic start-up in the biotech sector, Biosan developed various innovative products that attracted the attention of a larger organisation. When this company chose to invest, Biosan had to scale up quickly to meet its new targets. A rapid review of operations using the IfM's prioritisation and capability assessment tool highlighted several critical areas that the company needed to focus on to improve productivity.*

## Company background

Biosan is a high tech manufacturer founded in 1992 by a small group of scientists to develop innovative products for laboratory sample preparation in genomics, proteomics and cellomics, to respond to changing diagnostics technology in the detection of biopolymorphism of genetic, metabolic and cell diseases. The company has grown to produce a wide range of instruments – for example, for sample mixing, centrifugation, thermostating and cell cultivation – to minimise mistakes that might occur due to small sample volumes, lack of intermediate temperature control during mixing and lack of systems for air deactivation during operation. In 2005, a 50% stake in Biosan was acquired by UK equipment manufacturers Grant Instruments, specialists in the design and manufacture of equipment for sample preparation, scientific analysis, data acquisition and analysis.

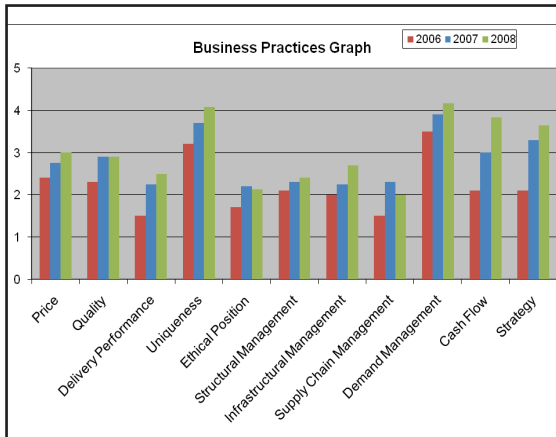
## The problem

Biosan's success has led to rapid growth which, although desirable, has caused certain difficulties. Furthermore, it is making the transition from an academic spin-out into an international manufacturer and integrating with an international partner.

The company used the IfM's prioritisation tool in 2006, 2007 and 2008 to identify priority areas for attention and to develop action plans. The results have shown a steady improvement in performance. The first assessment showed that there were sub-optimal manufacturing planning and control systems as well as poor supply chain management, leading to unmet customer orders. Customers expressed some dissatisfaction with the quality systems and procedures. Insufficient data availability within the company was also creating compromised decision making.

## The solution

Following the first assessment, Biosan decided to focus on improving delivery times and flexibility, improving internal information systems to make data easily available companywide and introducing modern quality systems and procedures. As the graph overleaf shows, the company was successful in achieving improvements across the board and particularly making great strides in improving delivery times, quality and strategic management.



## The prioritisation and capability assessment tool

This tool is specifically designed for small- and medium-sized manufacturers whose managers have little time to undertake elaborate business studies. Instead, this tool provides an efficient but objective route to gaining a provisional analysis of areas requiring further attention. Using structured question sets, a facilitator investigates the key constraints (structural, infrastructural, supply, demand, cash and strategy) a company faces and the order-winning criteria that generate value (ethical position, price, quality, delivery and unique value). Once the top five priority areas have been identified, a bespoke AQLnet programme selects the relevant question sets to assess performance. The programme then generates graphs to analyse and illustrate potential future action or investigation. Additionally, a site visit is often conducted to complement the interview process.

## The company says

“We found this exercise particularly helpful in highlighting the areas needing improvement. The fact that the exercise was being done by Cambridge University and the IfM was undoubtedly a help in overcoming any resistance to change. The empirical methodology and clear graphical presentations focused attention on facts. The extra value came in repeating the exercise over a number of years allowing both sides to see the real improvements being made and allowing them to see the new areas requiring attention”, MD, Grant Instruments.

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