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Warwickshire engineering firm building dream team after Business Ready support

A major grant and support from the Business Ready programme at the University of Warwick Science Park is helping Bayton Road based P&D Engineering push for enhanced growth over the coming years.



Alex Toft (left) with Phil Vandries

The company

P&D Engineering, based on the Bayton Road Industrial Estate, designs and engineers a range of machines and 3D parts for a number of clients, including JCB, Jaguar Land Rover, Caterpillar and even British Cycling.

In 2003, Phil – who now runs the company – won the UK stage in Mechanical Engineering CADD of the World Skills Competition – the ‘Olympics’ for practical skills and trades such as engineering, construction and baking. He went on to represent the UK in St. Gallen, Switzerland where he finished 12th against engineers from around the world.

The Challenge

Like many SMEs, the ability to grow was being held back by a number of factors – including access to finance and access to the right skills pool.

“I bought the business in 2015 and we were facing a number of challenges,” said Phil. “There was the need for liquidity to grow, we had older machines which meant we were not as efficient as we needed to be and needed to optimise productivity.

“We didn’t want to stand still, we wanted to move the business forward but we were at a stage where if we didn’t invest we were going to start being unable to fulfil orders, let alone bid for new business.”

The firm is also constantly looking to find the right skills in order to ensure that the high-level of engineering is maintained.

The Solution

The company has been supported by the Business Ready programme at the University of Warwick Science Park, after a referral by the CWLEP Growth Hub, and without that help, its growth could not have been as strong.

The Business Ready team also helped the firm to access a £32,000 grant from Warwickshire County Council to purchase a new machine that will speed up its processes and make it more efficient.

That will allow the company to bid for and win new work as well as fulfil existing contracts for its expanding client-base.

Phil was also assigned a Business Ready mentor in John Griffiths, who has a background in engineering, who has been a source of wisdom to assist with P&D Engineering’s growth.

“Of course, the grant towards the machine is huge and that really does help us to drive up productivity but the support from John has been invaluable. Sometimes, I’ve put ideas to him and he’s given me the confidence to say ‘go for it!’”

He’s added two more World Skills Competition competitors as well as four new apprentices.

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Phil added: "As for the team, I am a huge believer in backing skills and backing talent. It really disappoints me that we don't make more of the World Skills Competition over here – other countries treat their competitors the same as we treat Olympians! It's a massive competition so to have three people here who've competed on the international stage is a testament to our investment in skilled people."

The results

The company has grown its workforce in the last 12 months and is still on the hunt for more engineers. It wants to grow by another 50 per cent over the next three years and is forecasting a jump in turnover this year of 25 per cent.

Alex Toft, a Business Ready adviser, said the firm should be hailed for its growth and commitment to skills.

He said: "P&D Engineering are a wonderful success story for this region. The grant came at a critical time when other sources of financing would have been difficult. It not only enabled this business to grow but it secured the roles for the existing employees."

"They are now on the path to future success and growth and we are extremely pleased that the intervention from Business Ready, together with our work with the Economy & Skills Group at Warwickshire County Council and the county council grant, has had a significant impact which will lead to jobs, investment and growth at a local company."

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Leader of Warwickshire County Council, said: "This is just the kind of ambitious company that Business Ready and the Warwickshire County Council grant fund is designed to support."

"The council is committed to generating economic growth in the north of the county so we are delighted to support businesses with such good prospects for growth and jobs in the area."

Business support for the next level

The Business Ready programme is managed by the business support team at the University of Warwick Science Park. The experienced Business Growth Advisers team have been delivering business growth and support services to technology based businesses for over 20 years.

In addition, the team are supported by a range of specialist mentors who have run their own businesses and have expertise and experience supporting, advising, coaching and mentoring other growth businesses.



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