

BUSINESS READY

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SCIENCE PARK

Skilled manufacturer makes major investments on the back of support

The owners of NEJ Stevenson were not convinced there would be help available to them when they set out their plans for growth but after getting support from Business Ready, the company has been able to accelerate its expansion.



Pictured: Fiona Stevenson (left) with Neil Stevenson (right)

The Company

NEJ Stevenson is a highly-skilled cabinet making and joinery business based in Church Lawford, which designs and makes custom furniture as well as creating bespoke interiors for premier residential properties.

The company even has a Royal Warrant and is a cabinet maker for HRH Queen Elizabeth II and has diversified into offering premium containers for luxury drinks which has grown from nothing in 2013 to £1.5m worth of sales.

The Challenge

NEJ Stevenson had plans to grow which would require ongoing significant investment in people, machinery and also in its premises.

It wanted to move but struggled to find the right space and then planned to expand its current headquarters, only to hit the buffers due to a railway line running at the back of the property.

They were issues that were becoming a distraction from what the business did best and managing director Neil Stevenson didn't think he'd be able to get assistance until Business Ready got in touch.

He said: "Janette Pallas from Business Ready contacted us to see what our plans were and whether they could support which was great.

"In the past, we'd try to go for grants and look for help but we were always told we were doing too well or were not in the right area so we had all but given up on getting support."

The Solution

Business Ready supported the firm with grant applications through the Warwickshire Small Capital Grant and also from the Rural Development Fund in order to purchase a new sanding machine, a CNC machine and spindle turner, as well as offering general advice and support.

That was on the back of help the company had been given to overcome its planning issues in order to allow it to expand its premises.

Neil added: "Business Ready has been absolutely invaluable and we have been able to grow quicker than we would have done without the help and that's good for the local economy.

"Janette has helped identify funding opportunities, helped us to make sure we apply in the right way and we have been successful.

"As well as the grant-funding and the general advice, it is reassuring for us as a business for someone to show confidence in us in this way and believe in our growth strategy. On the softer side, it's nice to be a manufacturer that's not in the automotive sector and still feel some love."

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This project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, forming part of the Coventry & Warwickshire Business Support Programme



The results

The company has invested £750,000 in its growth and is accelerating its expansion thanks to the support. It has grown to employ more than 30 staff and is on the hunt for more.

It also had a positive result when it came to the expansion of its property.

"We've bought neighbouring properties in order to expand and we are currently fitting out and creating the most efficient work-spaces possible," said Neil.

The company is also keen to give back to the local area and is working with schools and colleges to provide opportunities for young people to learn more about manufacturing.

Janette Pallas, of Business Ready, said: "NEJ Stevenson is a fantastic success story for our region and proves that we remain at the cutting edge of manufacturing in this area. They are an example of a business that still use traditional skills, but also use advanced technology in design and manufacturing.

"Their support for schools in helping young people to understand differing roles in manufacturing businesses is to be commended and we would urge other companies to do similar.

"Following earlier support provided by Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub on planning issues, it's been great to be able to help the company grow and to see that result in new jobs, new investment and more opportunities for the business."

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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