

**BUSINESS
READY**

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
SCIENCE PARK

Expansion for the future of special company

A family-run firm, which is the only UK-based business that specialises in the design and manufacture of wheelchair accessible motorhomes and caravans, is thriving.

Thanks to the guidance of support from Business Ready, Coachbuilt GB is pushing forward for the future and expanding.



Pictured (left to right): Jeff Bull with Dirk Schafer

The Company

Coachbuilt GB was started by Jeff Bull back in 2009 and totally transforms motorhomes and caravans into 'independence vehicles' for wheelchair users.

The firm was originally based in Nuneaton, before transitioning to a larger unit in Atherstone to accommodate new projects.

The company designs and manufactures coach-built independence vehicles, which enable individual wheelchair users to take their personal healthcare equipment and access needs 'on the road' with them, promoting accessible travel and an inclusive lifestyle.

A family-run firm, which includes Jeff's daughter Kate as commercial director, Coachbuilt has a skilled workforce that use their expertise for the good of the client.

Each model that is worked on and transformed by the team is bespoke in its design as clients tell them exactly what they need and want from the vehicle.

This helps wheelchair users to not only live an independent life, but get out and about

and enjoy hobbies, attend events, enjoy holidays, safe in the knowledge that all their personal equipment is at hand.

Jeff said: "These vehicles get rid of the reliance on disabled facilities – which are just standard in size and design.

"We know that one size does not fit all and we make sure that the vehicles meet the mobility needs of each individual."

The Challenge

Coachbuilt has been looking to expand both in terms of premises and staffing levels due to an increased demand for its work.

It's base at the Carlyon Road Industrial Estate in Atherstone became too small as more and more clients wanted to use the skills of the company.

Jeff said: "Our Atherstone site was a great home for us, but it just became too small as the business progressed.

"Demand was rising for our work, we just outgrew our premises and needed to find somewhere to move."

Jeff has been working with the University of Warwick Science Park and its programmes, including the Business Ready scheme, for a number of years.

"I have been in high positions of companies in one specific department but running your own business presents its own challenges," Jeff said.





"You are an expert in one field or department, but when it's your own company, you need to be able to run it and have an understanding about it all, and that is where the Science Park has been a huge help."

The Solution

As Coachbuilt has expanded, Business Ready has used its expertise to help Jeff and the team access funding and provide input into the strategic direction and innovative developments.

The funding has helped the business move forward for the future and find premises that now suit the need of the company.

Jeff has also used the Science Park's business programmes as a way to get a

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better understanding of running and managing a growing company.

It has also been a chance for his daughter Kate to gain advice and support as the plan is that she will take over the business in the future.

Jeff added: "The team have really helped us gain an understanding of looking after the running of all aspects of a business. We have been given access to an experienced mentor and a range of workshops to achieve this.

"I know that my daughter has found the programmes extremely useful and the plan is to hand the company over to her, so the workshops have been very valuable.

"Being able to access information and advice over the years has been fantastic and something that we have needed."

He has found the projects and the team an invaluable source of information, support and guidance.

Not only that, the company continues to push forward in both what it does with the design and manufacturing of vehicles, but also the growth of the firm.

The Results

Thanks to help from Business Ready, Coachbuilt has gained a strong reputation within a niche market for providing a quality service.

This has meant that its services are in high demand and after a number of years based in Atherstone, the firm is moving back to Nuneaton.

Coachbuilt has relocated to Attleborough Fields Industrial Estate in the town as it needed a bigger site to continue on with its work.

Its annual turnover has also grown at an average of 200 per cent per year over the last five years.

Not only that, it has won a rare Queen's Award for Enterprise following the company's outstanding achievements in the innovation of coach-built independence vehicles.

Jeff added: "Coachbuilt would not be here if it wasn't for the support, help and advice that the Science Park and Business Ready have given us over the years.

It has been so invaluable to us and making sure that we continue to push the business forward

"Our aim has always been to make accessible travel available to everyone, whatever their ability.

"Business Ready has definitely helped us to continue to achieve this aim and we cannot thank them enough."

Dirk Schafer, a Business Ready adviser at the University of Warwick Science Park, said: "Coachbuilt is an incredibly inspiring business for the work that it does by giving people independence.

"But also, the fact that Jeff and the team are always striving to gain more business knowledge and improve their skills, which is where Business Ready and the University of Warwick Science Park come in.

"The fact that the firm's annual turnover has grown at an average of 200 per cent per year over the last five years proves that with hard work and the right advice and support, you can achieve anything in the right market.

"We will continue to work with Coachbuilt to provide as much support and advice that the company wants to carry on thriving and being able to assist those who need it the most."

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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