

# BUSINESS READY

## UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SCIENCE PARK

## Breaking barriers to bring biology to a whole new audience

Innovative science technology company Humane Technologies is aiming to open up biology studies to a new audience with its affordable and advanced open-source research equipment.



Pictured (left to right): Dirk Schaefer, Dr Kalesh Sasidharan, Professor Orkun Soyer

Business Ready assisted the University of Warwick spin-out company as it started its journey. Humane Technologies recently launched its first product and began development on more affordable lab equipment projects. These first products are aimed at creating a greater understanding of how the microbes work.

Securing a place on the Business Ready scheme has given the company a base to work from at the Science Park and accessing crucial assistance with funding applications and marketing advice.

### The company

Humane Technologies is founded by Warwick researchers Professor Orkun Soyer and Dr Kalesh Sasidharan, who want to change the world of biology by opening up opportunities for research to be carried out with greater ease and at a lower budget.

The pair had noted that some of the biggest scientific discoveries of all time

came from so-called 'citizen scientists', including the microscope and the identification of microbes as the cause of infectious disease. They wanted to enable again a sense of community research approach to biological discovery with modern technology.

Enabling their products to be open source, which allows development of software and hardware in a public collaborative manner, was deemed the way forward.

Together they decided that by creating equipment, which focused on reliable construction at a low price and the ability to share the information it recorded, they could open up scientific discovery to the masses once again.

### The challenge

The vision for Humane Technologies was solidified at an early stage but the nature of the business means a lot of development time is needed to ensure products are up to scratch.

The challenge was to get the business up and running while giving Professor Soyer and Dr Sasidharan the time they needed to get their equipment to the highest standard.

They also needed to make contacts to assist them in terms of production and distribution, as well as take on board advice regarding marketing and branding.

### The solution

Humane Technologies was assigned a Business Ready mentor who was able to assist the team with their plans to carve a unique space for themselves in the scientific research market.

Business Ready has also helped advise the company on how to raise funds for their first creation, as well as putting them in touch with other companies who can assist with production.

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Dirk Schaefer of Business Ready said: "Access to Funding is crucial for a company undertaking research and development. But without a clear understanding of markets and how to access them, raising external funding can be a struggle. Our technical marketing support has already helped them raise one grant and we are currently working on another grant application for their second product."

At the same time, they were given a space to work from at the University of Warwick Science Park's Ignite incubator, while they finalised the design for the MicrobeMeter, an innovative device that allows users to continuously analyse the cultivation and growth of microbes.

Its parts-cost is around £150, compared to devices used for a similar task that are available for around £1,000.

To raise funds for the production of MicrobeMeter and create a connection with the customers who will end up using them, the team turned to crowdfunding.

Dr Sasidharan said: "We are committed to keeping the cost of our products down to make science accessible and affordable.

"We are also excited to be using an open-source approach, which means there is huge potential for Humane Technologies items to be at the heart of massive discoveries for years to come.

"As communities of students and scientists use our equipment for their own purpose, we will be able to grow our collective understanding of biology and improve the world around us.

"To us, crowd-funding is a great way to not only fund the production of our MicrobeMeter but to create a connection with our audience."

Prior to that Business Ready helped Humane Technologies with a £10,000 proof of concept grant application to fund further development.

Business Ready is now assisting them with an Innovate UK grant application to help them fast track their second open source product.

The long-term goal for Humane Technologies is to allow people and institutions to establish their own basic life sciences research laboratories at affordable prices.

The company aims to develop a full line of open source basic research equipment within the next two to three years, of which the MicrobeMeter represents the first step.

## The results

A Kickstarter campaign is now underway, with a target of £20,000 and Business Ready is providing support to help them market this campaign.

## 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.



### Access to skills & knowledge

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