

BUSINESS READY

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SCIENCE PARK

Business Ready helps horse treat company gallop towards success

Warwickshire-based Kelcie's Horse Treats has more than doubled its turnover in its latest accounts and could do the same again next year after receiving support from Business Ready.



Pictured: Nick Skelton with Laura Kraut

The company, which has been achieving strong sales in the USA, is now also on the verge of tapping into the European market too with its unique brand of horse treats.

The Company

Alcester-based husband and wife team Kevin and Mary Elizabeth Nairne founded Kelcie's Horse Treats in 2019 to offer high-quality, natural treats to high-calibre horses that take part in equestrian events.

Kevin gave up a 30-year corporate career in IT to move into the equestrian industry alongside Mary Elizabeth, who manages her sister and Olympic gold-medallist Laura Kraut.

After seeking advice from Laura and fellow Olympic champion Nick Skelton, they decided to move into the treats market and came up with a product made of 15 natural ingredients.

The Challenge

Finding a company to manufacture the product in the UK or the EU proved difficult, so they turned their attention to the USA and found a partner.

And as soon as they managed to get the treat to market, they found they had an instant hit with horses and owners alike – but they were missing a formal business plan and marketing strategy.

The company was introduced to the University of Warwick Science Park's Business Ready programme by the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) Growth Hub earlier this year and received advice from Business Growth Adviser Gaynor Matthews.

The Solution

Gaynor supported the firm directly and introduced the company to experts who offered strategic sales and marketing advice, followed by a digital marketing plan to grow sales and distribution in the USA and then the EU. The firm was also given business planning advice by Innovate UK Edge.

Kevin said: "We found the right formula to create a great treat, and horse owners who told us their horses were previously fussy eaters loved the product.

"We had produced something that could disrupt the market but then it was all about getting the right marketing plan in place to make sure we could achieve the sales growth we wanted.

"The Business Ready programme played a big role in that and we've also had really helpful advice from other organisations too."

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The Results

Having turned over \$40,000 in its first year, it reached \$100,000 in its latest round of accounts, with plans to double that again over the next 12 months.

Kevin said: "I'd definitely encourage other businesses to tap into the support available. You can see how much it's help us from a sales point of view and the growth we've achieved.

"It wasn't originally the plan to crack the US market first but because we found our manufacturing partner there, it was much easier to sell there than to import back into the UK and Europe.

"However, we are now in the process of establishing ourselves in Europe because we know from our website and social media that there is very strong demand!"

Gaynor said: "This is a classic case of a company creating a great product but then needing support in some of the fundamentals of business – such as planning and marketing.

"Through Business Ready, we could introduce Kelcie's to people with the right expertise to help develop the right strategies – especially around marketing – to help increase awareness and drive sales.

"It's clear that horses love the treats – and now the business is in a position to make the most of that which will lead to even stronger business growth."

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 30 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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