

BUSINESS READY

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SCIENCE PARK

Business Ready support package helps company target growth

Purple Planet Packaging is on target for £4 million turnover after the company was bought by a local husband and wife team in 2019.



Pictured (left to right): Joanna Farr (Purple Planet Packaging), Steve Tipson (Business Ready), Martin Watson (Warwickshire County Council), Hayley Lineker (Warwickshire County Council), Mark Farr (Purple Planet Packaging)

The Covid-19 pandemic saw interest in the company's products increase massively which was great news for orders – but made it difficult to set out plans and goals.

The couple worked with Business Ready to develop their knowledge of some of the fundamentals of business and to help them build on that whirlwind success.

The Company

Purple Planet Packaging supplies sustainable food and drinks packaging to a range of sectors including schools, the hospitality trade, and directly to consumers.

The company, based at the Seven Stars Industrial Estate in Coventry, works with manufacturers and suppliers to 'close the loop' as the vast majority of the 450 products it supplies are biodegradable material that can be composted.

The firm was bought by husband-and-wife team Mark and Joanna Farr in 2019 as a lifestyle business but the Covid lockdowns – and the sudden demand for takeaway packaging – saw an immediate and unexpected boom.

The Challenge

The couple, who have two young children, had to quickly adapt to life running a business having no prior knowledge of how to run their own company.

Because of the sudden rush of orders during the height of the pandemic, they had little time to plan and develop a medium and long-term strategy as they were too busy fulfilling orders.

They looked into what support was available within the region to help them take a step back and look at what they wanted to achieve.

Mark said: "We did everything to fulfill our orders and make sure that we kept customers happy but we were working really long hours and it takes its toll, especially with two young children in the house."

The Solution

The company started working with Steve Tipson from the Business Ready programme.

As well as receiving one-to-one support from Steve, the company has also accessed online workshops on social media, accessing finance, and marketing to increase its knowledge of how to run the business effectively.

"The support we've had from Business Ready has been absolutely priceless," said Mark. "We had not long bought the business when we went into the pandemic and when demand increased we just had to roll with it."

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"We've had great support from lots of organisations – it really is out there if businesses are willing to look for it and ask for help.

"Working with Business Ready is helping to put things in place such as policies and procedures that we just didn't have the awareness of before. You don't know what you don't know.

"Not only that, Steve and the team have some amazing contacts so he has put us in touch with different advisers who have been able to give us information and advice on matters such as HR and IP.

"I'd urge any business out there to get in touch and find out what help is on offer."

The Results

On the back of the support, Purple Planet Packaging is now on target for £4 million turnover and has picked up a series of awards.

Steve Tipson said: "Mark and Joanna are developing an amazing business and it is not unusual to see a start-up grow very quickly without having everything in place in the background.

"Business Ready is there to help businesses when they hit some of those roadblocks to growth and help them to get processes in place to overcome them. It's also about helping them think differently, sometimes it's just a matter of talking ideas through with others.

"Not only that, it's about giving the business owners the room to have a helicopter view of what they are doing rather than rushing around day to day making sure orders are being completed and cash is coming in."

Cllr Martin Watson, portfolio holder for economy with Warwickshire County Council, said: "The Business Ready support in this instance was bespoke as it addressed specific needs brought about by the Covid pandemic. As well as supporting a local business, it also ties in with the council's commitment to sustainability as so much of the packaging produced is biodegradable. I'm delighted that our support has been so helpful."

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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