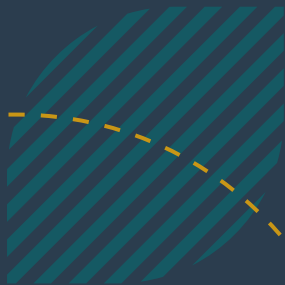




Digital
Growth 
Programme

Celebrating
Success



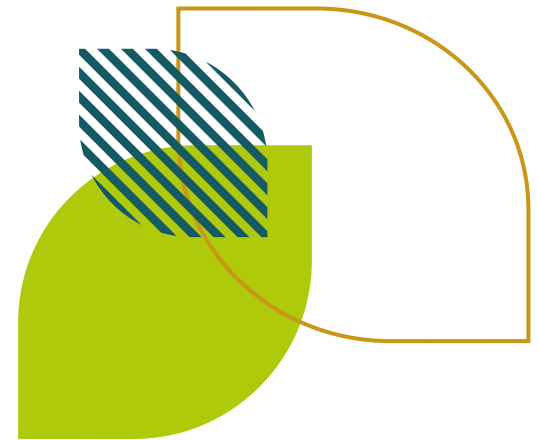
Celebrating success of the Digital Growth Programme

Led by East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire) and part-funded by Leicestershire County Council and the European Regional Development Fund, the Digital Growth Programme was designed to help SMEs across Leicester and Leicestershire embrace technology, learn about the latest digital marketing trends and gain digital skills.

The project ran from 1 July 2016 to 31 March 2022 and delivered a comprehensive programme of 2 hour awareness-raising events and 3-6 hour strategic action-planning workshops supported by specialist advisers and grant funding.

We've seen some fantastic achievements during the programme, these include:

-  **1,888 businesses supported**
-  **£2.2 million grants awarded to 211 businesses**
-  **£3.8 million private sector technology investment**
-  **252 businesses received dedicated specialist advice**
-  **337 2 hour events delivered to 8,423 business delegates**
-  **252 3-6 hour strategic workshops delivered to 2,638 delegates**



Read on for the inspirational stories of 12 businesses, who have been able to reach the next level thanks to the support provided by the Digital Growth Programme.

Find more case studies on our website:



Case Study

Alert-iT Care Alarms

Sector: Medical / Manufacturing

District: Hinckley and Bosworth

Support Accessed: £13,500 Grant and Specialist Advice

Investing to save: How Technology Grant Funding helped Alert-iT Care Alarms to develop potentially life-saving technology in the field of epilepsy care.

About the Business

Alert-iT Care Alarms is a business focused on the development of sophisticated support monitors, designed to alert carers and medical teams, should an individual in their care present symptoms that could indicate an epileptic seizure. The business employs 12 staff, designs all of their innovative products in-house and supplies the NHS as well as medical institutions and care homes worldwide.

The Challenge

Alert-iT wanted to integrate P200 mobile healthcare applications into their two flagship products in order to be eligible to trade in Europe, tender for overseas contracts and provide the best-in-class products to its home markets. This meant the development of an app suitable for a mobile device such as a phone or tablet and compatible firmware within a new, purposely designed device. Development of the technology was delayed as a result of the pandemic and the slow-down was threatening to hold up the growth of the business.

The Solution

Alert-iT worked closely with the Digital Growth Programme Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai, who guided them through the grant process, from initial application to successful outcome. The Technology Grant awarded was invested

in the research and development of the app and accelerated the process of new product development. It contributed to the cost of engaging an external developer to design the app for Apple and Android devices, funded 'Firmware' development and enabled the development of a prototype, to allow the business to speed up the process of tendering. Lyndasy Gunn, Grant Coordinator told us:

"Prashant was amazing. Always very knowledgeable and helpful – guided us every step of the way. There was lots of documentation involved – very detailed and thorough process, but he made us feel at ease - he was just lovely to deal with."

In addition to expediting the new product development process, enabling the business to grow its range of leading-edge medical devices and expand into new markets, involvement in the programme has opened doors through the clinical evaluation process.

“ The grant helped to keep the development wheels turning, ensuring we met the tender regulations in time to submit. Completion of the app was fundamental to us winning this tender. ”



The Impact

Technological advances are better supported: *"It has allowed us to transform our current technology and meet the very latest standards."*

Operating costs have been lowered: *"A focus on creating digitally-based solutions has reduced manufacturing costs and eradicating the need for rechargeable batteries and power supply units has further reduced WEEE liabilities."*

Growing the business means growing the team: *"This cost saving, together with the new tender opportunities created and the subsequent business growth is allowing us to reinvest in job creation and we've already boosted our teams within production and despatch."*

Case Study

Yoga Loughborough

Sector: Health and Wellbeing

District: Charnwood

Support Accessed: Events and Strategic Workshops

Fit for a digital future: How one-to-one expert consultancy and access to Strategic Action-Planning Workshops helped yoga and meditation practitioner, Reena Patel, adapt her business in line with a changing landscape.

About the Business

Yoga Loughborough was established in March 2015 by founder Reena Patel, who holds a Master's degree in finance and management. Having spent many years working in high-stress, corporate settings, latterly as a Risk Manager for a major transport brand, she decided to take a short career break to travel the world. Today Reena is an experienced member of the Yoga Alliance Professionals UK and has accrued over 2,500 hours of teaching experience.

The Challenge

The pandemic hit Yoga Loughborough's business hard. As a business traditionally delivering classes in person, face-to-face interaction became very limited, when social distancing regulations came into force. Reena was no stranger to IT; her technical skills and IT proficiency were already good as she'd previously studied computer sciences. However, one of the main challenges she faced was that digital marketing and promotion was outside her comfort zone.

The Solution

Upon engaging with the Digital Growth Programme, Reena had a four-hour one-to-one with consultant Rob Gregory. She talked through what she was doing and what she wanted to achieve with her website, and Rob was able to help her assess her digital position

and sharpen her strategy, as Reena explained:

"Rob audited my digital marketing plan. He came into the business to provide some excellent guidance – worked through my websites dashboard and helped me make significant improvements."

Reena also attended two social media workshops, 'Boosting your Business LinkedIn Account' and 'Creating Videos for your Business'. The latter was pivotal in helping Reena realise there was a real appetite for video content online.

" I'd recommend the Digital Growth Programme to any business owner who wants to expand their digital marketing know-how. You really have nothing to lose, it costs nothing and can be very beneficial for your business. "

Since accessing support from the Digital Growth Programme, Reena has gained the confidence to push forward with her expansion plans and will soon be launching 'Inner8 Wellbeing'.



The Impact

New channels established to support future growth: *"Moving forward Yoga Loughborough will now be able to present a hybrid solution with a mix of online and offline learning access. This gives us great scope to develop as a business."*

Efficiency improved: *"Improving our e-commerce capabilities has freed up significant amounts of time in the admin involved in taking manual bookings. This time cost saving means I can focus more on growing the business and this will eventually present itself in an increase in turnover."*

Recovery accelerated: *"Being able to access this level of support and learning for free has been an absolute lifeline. I still have challenges to face, but now feel I have the skills and confidence to adapt and move forward. Having applied the things I learnt and improved our digital capabilities."*

Case Study

Blackfriars Bakery

Sector: Food Manufacturing (wholesale and retail)

District: Oadby and Wigston

Support Accessed: Strategic Workshops, £2,456 Grant and Specialist Advice

Rising to the challenge: How Technology Grant Funding and Strategic Action-Planning Workshops helped Blackfriars Bakery elevate their digital capabilities.



About the Business

Blackfriars Bakery is an award-winning, BRC accredited manufacturer of long shelf-life, ambient bakery snack products, including flapjacks and muffins. The business began life on a small bakery site based on Blackfriars Street in Leicester back in 1988 and over the years has expanded rapidly. Still a family-run business today, Blackfriars Bakery now employs a dynamic team of 51 people and produces an extensive range of vegetarian and vegan baked goods, both branded and own label.

The Challenge

For some time, the management team had recognised the importance of boosting the business digital marketing know-how, to maximise growth opportunities and also identified several weaknesses in their IT systems, which were further compounded during the pandemic as more of their team began to work remotely. Their IT system was outdated, occasionally causing delays in completing key administration functions, such as invoicing.

The Solution

Blackfriars Bakery was awarded Technology Grant Funding to support investment in a state-of-the-art server. This not only radically improved business administration speeds, but also ensured that members of the team

working from home were able to function efficiently without interruption.

Alongside this, the business was also able to access a series of Strategic Action-Planning Workshops to boost digital marketing capabilities across the business, these included 'Elevating your Instagram account', 'Building a stronger LinkedIn Business account' and 'How to grow your Email Marketing list'. Business Development Manager, Rozanne Madylus told us:

"We are extremely fortunate to have this business advice and support available, particularly during such turbulent economic times. It's certainly worth exploring what help is available and to join a like-minded community of entrepreneurs via the workshops and webinars to share experience, advice and to refocus the mind."

The Strategic Action-Planning Workshops provided were backed up by ongoing one-to-one support from Digital Business Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai, who provided expert knowledge on the systems available and assisted the business in submitting a successful grant application.

“ The workshops really helped refocus the mind and gave me assured confidence that I'm on top of my game. ”

The Impact

IT performance enhanced and elevated: *"Having the backing to invest in a leading-edge server means our IT system is now faster and more reliable. This has been essential over the last year in particular - radically improving our IT infrastructure has made it possible for our teams to work from home effectively."*

Business development supported: *"More efficient IT systems have definitely increased turnover as the net benefit has been an enhanced customer experience and that's increased business. As a result, we've been able to add two more people to our digital marketing team to help us further maximise our growth potential."*

Team pressures reduced and efficiency boosted: *"When systems are running more effectively, stress reduces and productivity increases. It's a win, win all round. It's clearly demonstrated we're continuing to grow and prosper."*

Case Study

DB Automation

Sector: Engineering and Manufacturing

District: Market Harborough

Support Accessed: £9,500 Grant and Specialist Advice

Securing further growth down the line: How the Digital Growth Programme has helped DB Automation Ltd accelerate integration of new tech to boost productivity, access new markets and reach future expansion objectives.



About the Business

Utilising the latest design software, DB Automation Ltd designs, builds and installs intricate solutions that promote automation in production and packing, enabling clients to drive improvements in efficiency, productivity and profitability. The business was incorporated in 2009 and is part of the PCE Group of companies. It currently employs 100 staff across its two sites in Beccles and Lutterworth and has been awarded many accolades.

The Challenge

The business faced several IT challenges as it began to grow and expand. These were brought into sharp focus by both rapidly increasing business levels and the huge shift in working practices brought about by the pandemic, as Group Director Nick Parker explained:

"Our server speed, data storage capacity and connectivity were not up to speed and we knew it was only a matter of time before our operating system became out-dated. The business was experiencing a period of substantial growth and our old server didn't offer sufficient storage to handle the large amounts of mechanical design data being created. Connectivity was also becoming an issue – our mechanical design team is based across two sites and underpowered networking and sharing

capabilities was beginning to seriously undermine our ability to collaborate effectively."

The Solution

DB Automation Ltd secured substantial Technology Grant Funding through the Digital Growth Programme and was able to rapidly invest in upgrading its business-wide IT infrastructure to transform productivity and radically enhance connectivity and interworking capabilities.

The project scope encompassed procurement and installation of a new, high-performance server, upgrading design software and back-up solutions to enable improved collaboration and provide secure storage for business-critical project design files and data.

The improvements also extended to the integration of new communications switches and hubs and leading-edge laptops for DB Automation's mechanical design team. This has significantly boosted connectivity between teams, taking design capabilities to the next level and enhancing interworking capability.

“ Investment in the very latest CAD application also demonstrates we are a progressive business, committed to staying ahead of the curve. ”

The Impact

Connectivity and server capabilities boosted: *"The business is now operating more efficiently. The new IT infrastructure supports better cohesion between sites and that means productivity has increased markedly"*

Diversification and growth supported: *"Our current client portfolio covers the whole of the UK and a number of US companies. The growth of the US market is increasing, we expect a positive impact on our ability to maximise the opportunities presented in high-growth overseas markets."*

Productivity and profitability enhanced: *"Investment in new and improved tech has increased machine design capacity by circa 50%. Resulting in a greater productivity that meets very high standards of our customers."*

Future team expansion fueled: *"We're forecasting that with the additional projects we now have, our team will grow very soon."*

Case Study

Keith Cook Training

Sector: Construction Training and Development

District: Charnwood

Support Accessed: £3,200 Grant and Specialist Advice

Lightening the load: How Technology Grant Funding supported Keith Cook Training's investment in an ambitious digitisation strategy.



About the Business

First established in the late 1980s by its namesake, Keith Cook Training Ltd was the first UK- approved, Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) tester academy and is today operated on a day-to-day basis by manager, George Walton.

The primary focus for the business is the development and delivery of all aspects of health and safety training surrounding plant. They offer a wide range of courses including health, safety and environment testing and construction plant, agricultural machinery, lift trucks, first aid, manual handling and working at height.

The Challenge

One of the biggest challenges facing Keith Cook Training was the locality of many of the businesses and individuals looking to access the training and testing resources they provided. Many were based a significant distance away from the firm's training centre in Leicestershire, often in rural areas, so access was often challenging. This issue became further compounded during the pandemic when travel became restricted, and more and more people began working remotely. This was something that highlighted weaknesses in the digital systems in place.

The Solution

Involvement in the programme is already paying dividends for Keith Cook Training. Improved connectivity and online capabilities have enabled them to deliver courses in a more flexible way and provide a blend of in-house and online access to courses and testing.

Integration of cloud-based solutions and VoIP has ensured the business can maximise the benefits of the technologies available and offer clients a more convenient and effective training and testing experience. It's directly supported the development of new courses and innovative new ways to access these, which has paved the way to enter new markets. It's also opened the door to forward- thinking ways that the team at Keith Cook Training can now work.

The Technology Grant Funding received by Keith Cook Training was backed up by ongoing one-to-one support from Digital Business Adviser, Tom Conway, who provided expert knowledge on the digital communications systems available and assisted the business in submitting a successful grant application.

"Tom was brilliant – he went above and beyond to help us put our application together and wouldn't submit it until all the 'i's were dotted and the 'T's were crossed. The Digital Growth Programme has been a VERY successful project and has been instrumental in our business growth."

The Impact

Improved cost efficiency: *"The new VoIP system has provided a much more cost-effective solution for us and delivers significant cost efficiency. We're currently saving over £200 per month."*

State of the art digitisation: *"Our system is now state of the art and enables a Line of Sight (LoS) connection. Put simply, that means no underground cables, quicker installation times and lower latency."*

A more sustainable and scalable business: *"The digital transformation of our business means we're able to move in step with the changing ways that clients wish to access our services. 'Online' has now become our primary means of testing."*

Supporting the needs of the modern workforce: *"One team member was actually planning to leave us and stayed as a direct result of us being equipped to allow effective home-working. They are a valuable resource to the business and would have been very costly to replace."*

Case Study

KitKing

Sector: Wholesale Clothing

District: Charnwood

Support Accessed: £25K Grant and Specialist Advice

Match fit: How the Digital Growth Programme helped KitKing to modernise processes and embrace digitisation to accelerate ambitious growth plans.

About the Business

KitKing is one of the leading teamwear distributors in the UK. Established in 1992, the business now employs 23 staff and supplies sports kits to local, national, and international clubs throughout the UK, Ireland, Europe and beyond. They have access to thousands of products across major brands, including Nike, Adidas, Under Armour, Joma, Errea, Umbro, Kappa, Macron and Mitre.

The Challenge

As the business moved towards an ecommerce model it became increasingly apparent that their digital infrastructure was not keeping pace. Sales Director Dips Patel told us:

"We were managing everything using antiquated spreadsheets. We needed our systems to be much more advanced, so that customers could gain a real time view of stock levels and delivery times and we could manage our business much more effectively."

The Solution

After taking the reins of the business, Dips quickly identified the importance of investing in improved automation. He found out about the Digital Growth Programme after searching online for grants which could potentially support his plans. Dips told us:

"The finance provided helped us 'laser focus' digitisation in the business, giving us confidence that digital transformation would be pivotal for us. It's a strategy that's definitely paid off and has enabled us to accelerate growth."

KitKing were supported and advised by the programme's Digital Business Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai. Prashant provided a wealth of knowledge across several digital areas, including ecommerce, software development and digital strategic planning.

Talking about the value of Prashant's expertise, Dips told us:

"I can't speak highly enough of Prashant – he was fantastic, he really took time to understand the business and get under the skin of our ambitions."

Digital Growth Programme funding enabled KitKing to reach several key milestones, including:

- Modernisation of their digital framework, from front to back, including accounts, inventory control, website and CRM.
- Vital improvements to IT infrastructure, including hardware like laptops and bar code scanners.
- Significantly transforming operational and logistical systems - moving to a leading-edge digital inventory control and live stock-feed system.



KITKiNG
UK'S NO.1 TEAMWEAR SPECIALIST

The Impact

Stock management: *"Customer experience has undoubtedly been elevated. Stock management is better than ever and, customers can now see in real time, when line stock will be available again, which cuts down on customer migration significantly."*

User experience: *"Our easy-to-use website has 'Shopify Plus' status and the integration of a bespoke App allows quick and easy personalisation of team wear."*

Logistics: *"Our warehouse efficiency has improved hugely, and we can now stock manage the significant 50,000 Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) we hold, with ease."*

Staff wellbeing: *"The whole team are now much more engaged. As our new systems have bedded in and things have been made much less 'labour intensive', everyone is much happier and more productive. Everyone can see the positive impact it's had on the business as a whole and that's instilled reassurance that the business has a very stable and successful future ahead."*

Case Study

Limelight Beds

Sector: Manufacturing

District: Hinckley and Bosworth

Support Accessed: £23K Grant and Specialist Advice

Comfortably more user friendly: How Technology Grant Funding helped Limelight Beds to integrate an automated, 'real time' stock reporting system into its online ordering platform to improve customer experience and boost sales.

About the Business

Established in the late 1990's, Limelight Beds is now one of the leading wholesalers of quality bedframes. They're trusted by many well-known high-street stores, independent furniture groups and major e-commerce retailers, including Dunelm, Freemans and Wayfair and operate on an entirely B2B basis.

The Challenge

Prior to the integration of automation software, the process of locating and ordering products was proving to be very laborious, for both customers and the team at Limelight. The task of manual order inputting invariably fell to Limelight's sales personnel, and this was naturally taking them away from their primary focus and often leading to human error, which was costly for the business and frustrating for the purchaser.

When combined with the challenges created by manual order inputting, the business was determined to invest in digital transformation and looked to the Digital Growth Programme for support.

The Solution

Through consultation with East Midlands Chamber, Digital Business Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai sign-posted Director Aiyub Sidat to the Digital Growth Programme grant, which was specifically designed to help businesses

“By accessing the funding to invest in digitisation, we've been able to keep pace with product selection capabilities and speed of processing.”

like Limelight Beds harness digital innovation to improve productivity and profitability.

Aiyub told us: “The whole team at the Chamber helped us at every stage and Prashant was amazing to deal with. He had clear knowledge in this area, which gave us real confidence. A lot of the paperwork made me feel a little daunted, but he took us through everything and was very supportive. We just couldn't have done it without him.”

With Prashant's help, Limelight Beds secured a grant of £23,000 enabling them to commission and implement a new automated ordering system. The integration of automation software has enabled real-time stock reports to be sent to customers on PSD files on a daily basis. This means major trade customers can now place fulfillable orders, via a password-protected portal on the site, at any time of day or night. Orders are also automatically entered onto Limelight's SAGE accounting system at the same time, so the entire order processing journey is entirely 'hands free'.



The Impact

Customer-facing stock availability tools: “The stock level positions of 126 products are now 'LIVE' to view and status is automatically updated in real time. The net benefit of this has been a significant reduction in lost sales.”

Time and productivity efficiencies: “Our online ordering hub can now automatically process orders in a matter of seconds, at any time of night or day, saving up to 10 minutes per order placed. Automation has revolutionised our operation, freeing up our sales professionals to spend more time growing our business.”

Improvements in team outlook, productivity and future security: “Job security is of major importance to everyone in the business. Thanks to the integration of smart automation software, we've seen real growth. Automation also means that, our team have the freedom to continue enjoying the benefits of flexible working because the entire system can be easily accessed from home.”

Case Study

Metro-Boulout-Dodo

Sector: Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

District: Leicester City

Support Accessed: Strategic Workshops, £5,272 Grant and Specialist Advice

Making tech innovation a reality: How the Digital Growth Programme supported the research and development strategy at Metro-Boulout-Dodo Ltd (MBD), to help them take Virtual Reality to the 'next level'.



About the Business

MBD is a 'Not for Profit' organisation, focused on creating artistic experiences which have a positive social impact on the community. Established over two decades ago, MBD began life as a small theatre company that over the years began to integrate multi-media into performances. As technology advanced it played a greater and greater role in their offering and today, it is part-funded by Arts Council England and employ a team of six people, all of whom share a passion for designing and delivering amazing and immersive experiences to audiences.

The Challenge

When the Pandemic hit, many traditional arts venues were unable to open, creating the need for MBD to pivot its approach. Venues being able to host their digital storytelling experiences became scarce and a shift in direction was needed to ensure the continued growth of the organisation. The team at MBD had been using Virtual Reality (VR) technology since 2016 with real success and now saw the opportunity to develop.

The Solution

MBD were able to access significant grant funding, as well as ongoing support from their Digital Business Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai. Creative Director Paul Long commented:

"The grant team were really patient and helpful – talked us through the process were there with support and guidance."

He went on to explain what this support meant in terms of the growth of the organisation:

"We were able to purchase vital new equipment, enabling us to push ahead and build a prototype for our 'walkaround experience'."

Following the success of the prototype, next steps for MBD will be to create a 'walkaround room', allowing up to six visitors at a time to enter a completely new world, interact with each other and enjoy a shared experience quite unlike any other.

As a result of the grant support, MBD purchased equipment to create an R&D project called "Heritage Storeys". Heritage Storeys was a prototype walk-around VR museum experience. Museum visitors could travel through time and space in a Virtual lift and be immersed in a series of compelling historical stories.

Whilst MBD has been creating VR artwork for over four years, Heritage Storeys was MBD's first 'room scale' VR experience. This element of gamification within a VR experience was new for MBD and the project involved a large amount of technical development, to create this type of platform for creative content.

The Impact

Team development: *"As a team we have attended quite a few of the seminars and action-planning workshops. In particular, we have found 'Paid Digital Advertising' and 'Google Analytics' sessions very useful."*

Business growth and strategy: *"We received a grant award that contributed towards the purchase of laptops, software and VR headsets that we needed, in order to create a prototype as part of research and development into a new direction for the business."*

In 2020, MBD was recognised for its innovation and was selected to be part of the Createch 100 'Ones to Watch' list and today, continues to develop its pioneering VR work. Following the success of this development, MBD is using the VR experience model as a primary focus for its business development and plans to open its own arts & culture VR experience venue in the near future.

Case Study

Mowbray Leather Goods

Sector: Manufacturing

District: Melton Borough Council

Support Accessed: £16K Grant and Specialist Advice

A significant purse to invest: How the Technology Grant Fund helped Mowbray Leather Goods Ltd procure innovative digital printing technology to digitise production processes and radically transform its customer offering.

About the Business

Formed in 2011 following the closures of two prominent long running belt and leather goods factories, Mowbray Leather Goods Ltd is a business with quality craftsmanship at its heart. The firm employs a workforce of 10, including many highly experienced leather production professionals who have worked in local leather industries, most of their working lives. Today, Mowbray Leather Goods is proud of its long-standing client base, which includes some of the world's most discerning fashion houses and several high-end independent retailers.

The Challenge

The biggest barriers to growth facing Mowbray Leather Goods, were the limitations they were facing in prototyping. Creation of production quality samples was labour-intensive, meaning turnaround times were often much slower. These challenges were compounded when producing to very stringent brand guidelines or complex designs, with colour matching of hides often difficult to achieve and intricate patterns invariably having to be painstakingly cut and laid down by hand. This way of doing things was very slow and not only meant constraining design and finish possibilities, but also resulted in them not being competitive on cost, an issue, particularly in private label, which is a very price driven territory to supply into.

The Solution

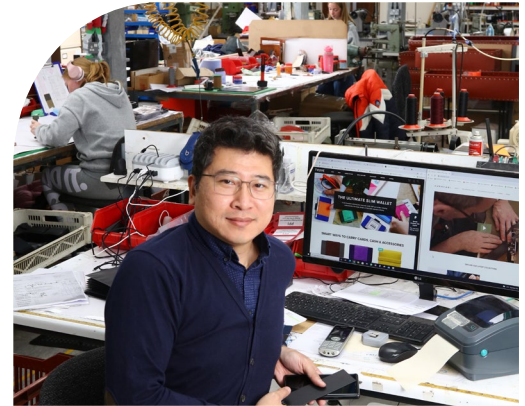
By investing the capital in leading-edge print technology, Director Minh Phan and his team were able to elevate their prototyping service and offer prospective and current clients with almost limitless possibilities in terms of design and finish. The kit enabled Mowbray to bring virtually any design concept to life very rapidly as Minh explained:

"The Digital equipment has given us a competitive advantage. The lead times for creating production standard samples and accurate colour swatches have been considerably shortened. We can now colour match and print pretty much any colour and pattern directly to a neutral hide, which has radically accelerated the process of pre-production approval."

This has all meant an enhanced service offering for Mowbray and given them the ability to develop ideas for customers in a fraction of the time than it would have taken previously. They are also now able to adapt and develop designs in 'real time' based on client feedback, minimising hold-ups, and getting new products to market faster than ever before.

When asked about his experience of the Digital Growth Programme, Minh told us:

"It was seamless. Our Digital Adviser, Tom Conway, really took the time to understand the industry. The support has been amazing, Tom



provided invaluable advice and guidance and even after the project was completed, he stayed in touch with us."

The Impact

New lines with customisation:

Customisation of own brand, now sells in similar volumes as traditional stock items held. Digitised production means that bespoke products are now selling at the same speed and volume as 'off the peg' leather goods.

Increased efficiency:

R&D process has been transformed in terms of speed to completion and therefore cost effectiveness.

Streamlined approval process:

The printing technology purchased has also enabled Mowbray Leather Goods to offer flawless colour matching by printing any chosen colour directly onto the surface of a neutral hide, significantly accelerating the pre-production approval process.

Case Study

Nenette Chocolates

Sector: Manufacturing/Confectionery Producer

District: Market Harborough

Support Accessed: Events and Strategic Workshops

Hungry for knowledge: How the Digital Growth Programme helped one artisan chocolatier, sharpen her digital marketing skills, and realise a lifelong dream to turn her passion into a sweet business success.



About the Business

Nenette Chocolates was born from Nenette Scrivener's passion for creating exceptionally luxurious handmade chocolates. It's a passion that began when Nenette attended a chocolate crafting course at Slattery Chocolate School – a decision that would eventually see her leave a 30-year career in global banking and accountancy and follow her dreams of becoming a professional artisan chocolatier.

The Challenge

Having established digital marketing as a key driver for the business, Nenette soon realised that it would be crucial for her as a business owner, to significantly broaden her know-how across a range of disciplines. Initially, she felt that raising her awareness was essential to allow her to have the confidence to handle various digital marketing activities herself. But, as Nenette explained, this also became increasingly important as she began to engage external suppliers to help her accelerate her plans:

"I knew what I wanted to achieve and as my marketing strategy began to take shape, it was clear to me that sharpening my understanding of digital marketing would allow me to handle some of the activity myself. Moreover though, I knew that working with specialist agencies would be the key to maximising success."

“ Learning how to boost my presence online has certainly been instrumental in increasing brand awareness to a much bigger audience. ”

The Solution

Nenette signed up onto several strategic action planning workshops and webinars in SEO and Google Analytics, website development and social media.

The sessions Nenette attended, were led by some of the region's leading digital marketing experts. They were instrumental in giving her new-found confidence and the ability across key disciplines, and had an immediate positive impact on the Nenette as an individual and as a business owner.

Nenette told us:

"I came away feeling generally more confident about keeping abreast of digital strategy and on working with experts in the field. I was able to put the action plans I developed into motion to maximise the effectiveness of my website and immediately started to use analytics more effectively to identify what was working and what wasn't, that meant getting better results against marketing spend."

The Impact

Digital know-how: *"After getting involved in the Digital Growth Programme, I felt I had the skills and the confidence I needed to develop a better and more rounded marketing strategy. Boosting my confidence in this area has certainly had a positive effect – not only on growing my brand, but on supporting my own professional development too."*

Digital presence and brand awareness: *"Since the first lockdown in March of 2020, I have seen a marked increase in the activity on my website's online sales. My social media presence was greatly enhanced with followers, increasing significantly since November 2020 when, thanks to the greater digital confidence I'd developed, I began 'contracting-out' my social media strategy to a specialist provider."*

Case Study

RJ Brand Design

Sector: Brand and Marketing Consultancy

District: Market Harborough

Support Accessed: Events and Strategic Workshops

Rising to a 'brand' new challenge: How the Digital Growth Programme helped creative agency owner, Rob Johnson, grow in confidence, gain new skills and broaden his client offering, to take RJ Brand Design to new heights.

About the Business

When he launched RJ Brand Design, Rob's vision was drawn from his strategic design and marketing experience to establish a full-service agency. Today, he is positioned to provide a turn-key creative solutions service to an increasing client portfolio – able to support brands across all marketing channels with branding, content marketing, digital acquisition and print.

The Challenge

Having previously held several senior creative roles for iconic household names, including Thomas Cook and Gala Bingo, Rob gained experience of leading the high-level strategy and execution on many major brand marketing and customer acquisition campaigns. Throughout his career Rob was supported by in-house marketing teams and specialist external partners, who were engaged to deliver specific digital functions, such as social media and SEO.

The Solution

The expert-led workshops and support Rob accessed, helped him gain vital new digital skills, especially in complementary areas, such as social media marketing, SEO and Google Analytics. Bolstering his knowledge and confidence in these areas, not only

helped him market his own services more effectively, but also enabled him to broaden his client offering – something that was pivotal in the subsequent growth of the business the obvious benefits of learning new skills and refreshing existing ones. Rob found that getting out of the office had a significant impact, he did quite a few of the LIVE events pre-lock down and found these were a great way to get out of the studio and engage with people face-to-face.

“**The quality and content of the awareness raising seminars has been superb. The team that delivers the workshops and those in support roles have been of the highest quality and professionalism. They are all highly knowledgeable in their subject fields and I've got utmost confidence in the information they have imparted on me.**”



The Impact

Personal development: *“I must admit that when I first set up the business, I sometimes felt myself suffering from ‘imposter syndrome’. The workshops re-established my confidence, that I really DID know my stuff. Signing up has strengthened my existing knowledge in key areas and plugged skills and gaps in others.”*

Business improvement: *“I have implemented changes to my own website, social media channels and approach to clients, as a direct and positive result of the knowledge I've gained. My website has benefited as a result, for example- I'm more visible to Google and other search engines through improved SEO. My social media presence has come on leaps and bounds and I'm seeing tangible results in the analytics.”*

Client experience: *“I am already passing on value to my clients and they are benefitting from what I'm learning on the Digital Growth Programme. I've even had peers approach me to pick my brains based on my new-found knowledge and skills. These courses have empowered me to provide a much more end-to-end service to my clients that drives efficiencies for them both in terms of cost and budget.”*

Case Study

Video Analysis Solutions

Sector: Business Intelligence Systems

District: Blaby

Support Accessed: £8,500 Grant and Specialist Advice

Exciting growth in store: How Technology Grant Funding enabled award-winning retail security and intelligence technology provider, Video Analysis Solutions, to unlock its digital innovation potential and secure future progression.



About the Business

Video Analysis Solutions was founded in 2011 by Managing Director, Martin Meakins and has since gone on to supply some of the world's most renowned retail brands with intelligent CCTV systems from its base in Huncote, Leicester. The leading-edge monitoring solutions they design and manufacture produce exceptionally clear imaging (up to 12 megapixels), which provides extremely reliable image-based evidence to prosecuting bodies.

The Challenge

Having established a widespread reputation for providing loss-prevention CCTV systems, founder, Martin Meakins felt that the business was running the risk of stagnating and missing emerging opportunities presented by the evolving needs of major retailers. Investment in new technologies was clearly vital in order for the business to take themselves to the next level, open up new commercial channels and see continued and sustainable growth.

The Solution

Video Analysis Solutions was successfully awarded Technology Grant Funding to accelerate the development of a Business Intelligence System for video analytic data. This included integration of progressive functionality, including a cloud-based interactive dashboard giving retailers the ability

“**Securing Grant Funding through the Digital Growth Programme has enabled us to push forward at pace. Accessing and embracing new technology has provided the business with a competitive edge and unlocked scalability potential, by opening up new channels.**”

at their fingertips to centralise and aggregate shopper data for analysis reporting.

This business insight generated is delivered in an accessible, convenient, and easy to read format and it's this area of the business that the leadership team at Video Analysis Solutions believe holds significant potential for future innovation and growth, with several major retailers already showing a keen interest in trialing it in their estates.

The business received one-to-one digital advice from Digital Business Adviser, Prashant Gandabhai, who also guided them through the grant application as Martin explained:

“Prashant was very helpful in the initial stages of getting the project started, the Digital Growth

Programme funding made the new application affordable and allowed our business to compete against multi-million pound corporations... and win!”

The Impact

Profile and awareness raised:

“Development of the App, really caught the attention of potential new retail clients and has been instrumental in getting us around the table with them.”

Future business growth fuelled:

“Involvement in the Digital Growth Programme has supported the development of a digital solution which has drawn interest from some of the largest security firms and retailers in the world. Our clients have doubled due to development of the App, and we are in the process of taking over the majority of our largest client's estate. We're confident that the growth potential provided will support the expansion of our team.”

Achievements and Successes



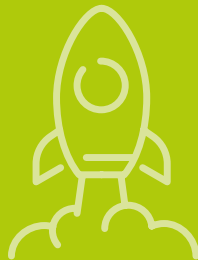
1,888
businesses
supported

£2.2 million
grants awarded



£3.8 million
private sector
technology
investment

187 new
products to
market



337 2 hour events delivered
to 8,423 business delegates

252 3-6 hour strategic
workshops delivered to
2,638 delegates



Digital Growth Programme



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