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Accelerator Case Study



SkinSolace

Skin Solace



Sector: Manufacturing

Size: Micro

Location: Gedling

About the business

Natalee Onyeche set up her plant-based, natural skincare and wellness business in 2020 and today employs four people. She has premises in Arnold as well as a website where she sells her skin and body products. Skin Solace also offers candle and soap-making workshops which are bookable online. Her business has evolved to also include management of a local market, by her premises, which has gone from zero to 25 new traders in recent months.

Challenges faced

It's been a challenge for Natalee to keep the retail arm of the business going. Skin Solace products are considered a luxury item, so the cost-of-living crisis has had a major impact on sales. Low income and sales made it difficult for her to employ people, leaving her to manage the shop and restricting her ability to utilise other income streams.

Thinking outside the box, Natalee applied for a market tender to help increase footfall for all the shops in the area. This has been successful in generating income, enabling her to keep the shop open and employ casual support.





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Solution and impact

Natalee has been supported by the Accelerator Project. This is delivered by East Midlands Chamber and funded by Gedling Borough Council's share of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

After getting in touch with Council, Natalee heard about the 1-2-1 business support that was available from Accelerator. She has been helped by the Chamber's Head of Business Support Services, Paul Stuart who conducted a business diagnostic.

Natalee comments: "Paul supported me to have clarity about what I was doing and why. This brought me back to my original ideas for Skin Solace which were not about retail but more focussed on wholesale. Today I have two new retailers stocking my products and I also create white label bespoke products for other businesses."

The support has enabled Natalee to find the right people to support her business activities and to work in a more streamlined way. It's given her the focus to go for her goals with confidence and clarity. Natalee has also attended the Gedling Business Support Network to hear about funding and other support available to her business and to network with other local business owners. In addition, the Council has also funded support for Retail Business Advisers which Natalee has taken advantage of through provider, Ovy Design.

Collaborations and new routes to market with Ovy Design

Wendy and Marcus Walker from Ovy Design played a crucial role in supporting Skin Solace by helping Natalee explore new routes to market. Through collaborations with other makers and trade customers, her business was able to access fresh opportunities to complement her high-street shop sales. Natalee remarked: "Thank you for making the time to visit me at my shop yesterday, it was much appreciated and felt motivating".

Ovy introduced Natalee to Full Square, a print and promotional gift company, and they are now collaborating to create a bespoke candle range for the client, helping Natalee reach a wider audience through corporate gifts. "This is amazing Claire, thank you. The mock up is so good! I am ready to go!"





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She is also speaking with a local Pilates studio and a beauty salon to offer white-label bespoke skincare products. Ovy initiated a collaboration with the Rosie May Foundation to discuss producing a bespoke scented candle for the charity sector, providing new fundraising opportunities. This collaboration also presents an incredible marketing and PR opportunity for Skin Solace, as the Rosie May Foundation is supported by many large corporate businesses in the finance and wealth management sectors, and it attracts a great deal of media coverage.

Additionally, Ovy Design recommended other local retailers to have a market pitch at Natalee's AMP market, encouraging further collaboration and retail support within the high street community. This initiative not only strengthens the relationships among local businesses but also provides another income stream for Natalee, helping to boost footfall and revenue.

These collaborations and strategic partnerships have opened new income streams for Skin Solace, helping Natalee offset the challenges faced by retailers. The introduction to corporate clients and the exploration of white-label opportunities has set Skin Solace on a path to long-term growth and sustainability.

A word from the business

"I feel that everyone should get support. Working for yourself is no mean feat and induces anxiety when there is no guidance or someone to provide a listening ear which helps give a voice to your ideas. I'm very grateful for the support provided so far."

Natalee Onyeche, Founder

Accelerator has provided:

- Adviser support
- Gedling Business Support Network

Impact to business:

- Clarity of business plan
- Increased footfall and sales
- New wholesale clients
- Diversification into new areas – workshops, market management
- New routes to market

