



EUREKA

Project Overview and Client Case Studies

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Version 2

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The Digital Development Unit

The DDU has a strong track record of assisting Blackburn with Darwen based small to medium sized businesses, start ups and inventors to develop their ideas and to be more competitive through the effective exploitation of technology and innovation. The service is impartial and is delivered by an experienced team.

The Eureka strand of the No Limits initiative enables this support to be made available to the wider Pennine Lancashire area of Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn and Blackburn with Darwen. This support is offered in partnership with the respective borough councils and a range of other partner and support organisations involved in the delivery of the wider No Limits strands and other schemes.

The support ranges from initial information and awareness activities such as seminars, through to in depth specialist support and partial financial assistance to effect innovative change. Examples include, but are not limited to, information technology, software development, networks, mobile solutions, web sites and related e-business implementations, product development, manufacturing and other process innovation.

This portfolio of case studies presents examples of different types of projects from across Pennine Lancashire. Projects range from ICT/e-business projects, process innovations through to new product development work. The portfolio is not an exhaustive list of the types of support available. Within the broad parameters of innovative change and the requirements of the No Limits programme, the aim is to keep the funding as flexible and responsive as possible in order to meet the needs of local businesses and residents.

Contact:

Digital Development Unit
Blackburn Technology Management Centre
Challenge Way
Blackburn
BB1 5QB

Telephone: 01254 582426

Email: ddu@blackburn.gov.uk

Web: www.blackburnbusiness.net

Product Development

SCSA Holdings/Kiddisure Ltd - Blackburn

Steve Catterall designed an improved child safety gate, fixed at the head or foot of a staircase to prevent a child through falling on the stairs. There are two types of this product, one which requires drilling the wall and fixing with screws, which not everyone is happy to do, and another type which wedges across the staircase, expanded into the space by screw pressure.

This latter type is much easier to fit and leaves a minimum of damage when removed, but uses a horizontal bar across the top edge of the step, causing a trip hazard especially severe when used at the head of a staircase.

Mr Catterall has designed an improved gate which can be expanded into the space, needing no drilling or screws, but which avoids the trip hazard of the horizontal bar.

He has secured the offer of purchase of a license to manufacture this from local Blackburn company Atkinson Varitech. After market research, they are so positive of its success that they have set up a new independent company to manufacture it, SSCA Holdings Ltd, and a marketing arm under the name of Kiddisure. The parent company manufactures school furniture, and so this is seen as a logical diversification.

The DDU has assisted them to commission patent attorneys to protect the product by a UK Patent application; as when the structure is revealed, it can be seen that the changes over existing models, though revolutionising the safety of the product, are very simple, and thus easily copied.

The appearance of the product, and the new trade name, will also be protected with our assistance by a UK registered design and registered trademark.

Assistance has also been given with pre-production prototyping costs. Initial reaction at exhibitions has been very encouraging, and they are also discussing manufacture with a Rishton company, as Atkinson Varitech may not be able to cope with the likely orders.

The Idea

Steve Catterall the inventor of the Kid-Sure-gate observed his youngest granddaughter almost trip over the bottom rail of an existing safety gate, narrowly avoiding a serious accident.

After investigating the market place and finding that all existing pressure fit safety gates have this problem he developed the solution.

People most at risk from falling down the stairs:

- Children
- Parent - carrying baby
- Grandparents
- Elderly relatives

Printed on recycled paper

Worm Digital - Darwen

Worm Digital has designed and built a prototype of a new type of stringed bass musical instrument. Trademarked the “Spike”, it is basically an electric bass which can be played in the conventional position slung from the neck, or, by extending a spiked metal tube from its base it can be used as a string base in an upright position.

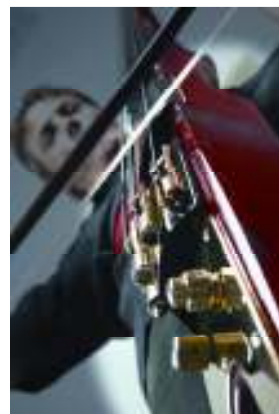
The spike, as well as providing a convenient stand for the upright position, also operates an electronic mechanism within the body of the instrument, and tunes an acoustic chamber, so that many new effects can be achieved on the sound made by the instrument.

The prototype has been tried out by many professional musicians with very good response. The project appeared in Lancashire Business View Magazine for July/August. Andy McEvoy, the instrument’s designer, has put on record the following statement:

“I was made aware, through a Business Link contact, of Paul White, Innovation & Technology manager in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council’s Digital Development Unit (DDU). With Paul’s industrial experience in product design and development, Jenny and I were not only guided competently and enthusiastically through Patent application, but also accompanied by Paul to site visits with patent attorneys and with industrial contacts in the area, who could perform 3D scanning and other highly technical procedures, previously invisible to us. Grant funding was also accessed for us to ease the cost of the Patent Application.

“Michael McNicholas, also of the DDU, has enabled funding to help us to develop a website which will bring customers all the up to date information of the Spike, and eventually to offer on-line sales channels and talk back facilities. Further details on our developing and soon to be released website at www.thespike.co.uk

“I am sure that without the help of the Digital Development Unit, the pitfalls of self-projecting a development like The Spike would have brought us to a complete halt. Today however, we are almost ready to go into production, with interest from 3 recognised, world class bass players, John Wetton (King Crimson, Asia, UK) John Jowitt (IQ, Jadis, Arena) and Tony Levin (Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, King Crimson and Yes)



The Spike

Crystal Plastics - Padiham

Crystal Plastics were established in October 2005, employ 2 staff and have a turnover of £130,000. They have a number of their own products which they manufacture, and also take on trade plastic injection moulding contract work. Their product range is mainly concerned with the building and construction industry, and a main product line provides clips for holding reinforcing bars for concrete in position whilst the concrete is poured.

Extensive use is made of recycled plastics, which are ground and blended on the premises. An effective supply chain exists to find and identify these materials, thus saving them contributing to the land-fill problem.

Due to developments in the market, there has arisen a chance to take a step forward into a new design of concrete reinforcing bar positioning clip, with a potential sale of 3million items per year. This product would give the company an increase in turnover of £33,000 per year, or approximately 25%. It would also be likely to lead to introduction of other complementary lines with potential for further sales increases.

To take advantage of the opportunity, Crystal Plastics needed to invest in having new injection moulding tooling made, which will enable them to manufacture the necessary quantities. Eureka staff checked the designs for correct manufacturability, and communicated with toolmakers to monitor quotations and subsequent build. The Eureka project contributed part funding to enable the client to go ahead with the project in a timely fashion, which was necessary to capture the market opportunity.

Operation of this tooling will provide 2 new jobs at their premises.

CPB Design Services and Axess 2 - Nelson

Established 1996, CPB Design Services Ltd is an independent engineering design consultant with clientele mainly composed of engineering companies throughout Pennine Lancashire. CPB provide computer aided design services (CAD), specialising in conveyor and mechanical handling design and special purpose machines.

CPB are a regular supplier of CAD services to a major customer, Axess 2 of Nelson.

Axess 2 are currently in the process of designing a new platform lift to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. There are only two or three manufacturers in this country, and most of the products are imported from either Sweden or Italy. Axess 2 have asked CPB design to complete some difficult design aspects of the lift. The complexity of the project means that CPB will have to upgrade their present 2D AutoCad design software to 3D CAD to cope with it. Acquisition of suitable software will mean that CPB will be involved in this project heavily over the coming years, and it is confidently predicted that at least one extra staff member will be needed at CPB to cope with the extra work.

The platform lift market is very fast growing and is estimated to be worth around £85 million per year, with approximately 15 – 20 manufacturers supplying into the UK of which only two make a broadly similar product to theirs. The Axess 2 design incorporates a totally unique drive system that has not been used in the lift industry up to now, and a click together type shaft system that should enable fast installation and cost benefits.

Axess 2 are looking to develop partnerships with local companies for key components, and predict that they will employ up to 10 extra personnel by this time next year.

The Eureka project worked with CPB to review and select suitable software for the purpose. The Autodesk Inventor 3D CAD suite of products was selected, supplied via Quadra Solutions of Accrington, and Eureka part funded its purchase.

Axess 2 will be holding separate discussions with Eureka staff to identify other areas in which the No Limits scheme can assist them.

William Austin (Walking & Stair Aid) - Blackburn

This product development project has now reached a stage where wider publicity can be given to it, due to a UK patent application having been filed in June 2007. The product is a simple non-powered mechanical device to assist the partially-able to get up and down stairs safely.

Mr. Austin came up with the design when his wife had a stroke. She had difficulty negotiating the stairs until he built his prototype, and the DDU assisted him to find a potential licensee manufacturer. Polymet of Blackburn took up the idea, developing the design for production. Lancaster University have been involved in mechanical design and testing, Twin Valley Homes have offered houses as test beds, and occupational therapists have given a favourable report on the product for use with some of their clients.

The DDU has assisted Mr. Austin to apply for a patent, and has mediated between him and Polymet to bring about a licensing agreement, which is now being drawn up by Forbes Solicitors of Blackburn.

Polymet were sufficiently impressed with the potential of the new product to found a completely new company to manufacture it, Maple Leaf Ltd.



The Stair Aid folded out of use



The Stair Aid deployed at the head of a stair case

No-Go Security Products - Oswaldtwistle

No-Go Security Products is a new start-up company founded in 2007 to commercialise a patented invention in the window security field. The company has been set up by personnel from S4S Ltd, a supply-chain specialist consultancy, who have already secured active interest from window installers and local authorities.

The product prevents intruder entry through externally beaded glazed PVCu windows. The glazing units in these windows are held by beads which snap in to the main sash frame. These beads can be designed to be fitted either from the outside or the inside of the window. Outside fitting is preferred in many cases due to superior weather performance and ease of fitting without the need to enter the property. The disadvantage of this fitting is that the beads can be levered out from the outside, enabling the glazing unit to be quietly removed to gain unlawful entry to the building.

The product developed by No-Go effectively prevents this, being fitted in pairs to the inside corners of the glazing. The exterior bead can still be removed but the product prevents removal of the glazing without breaking it. This creates noise, and raises the security of an externally beaded window to that of an internally beaded type, in which the glazing must be broken to gain entry.

Market research commissioned has indicated a potential market in the UK alone of quantities in the millions of units. Burglary via these types of windows is a serious problem, and since the product is visible from the outside of the window, it will provide a clear visual deterrent to a potential attacker, who should then not even attempt an entry.

Hand-made prototypes were constructed and worked well, and the company were at a stage where they needed assistance to commission a prototype die-casting tool to manufacture initial quantities which can be tested for strength and adhesion to the glazing. Successful outcome of this stage will clear the way for commissioning of a multi-cavity full production tool.

The work has been financially supported by the Eureka project of No Limits, and placed with Ashley Engineering, also of Oswaldtwistle, who can undertake the casting of the metal parts in addition. Success with the project will not only establish No-Go as a new company but will help to safeguard and create jobs at Ashley also. Mechanical strength and adhesion testing is being carried out at LPD Lab Services of Blackburn.

Cunningham Developments - Oswaldtwistle

The UK generates approximately 65 million waste lead acid batteries per year, mostly from vehicles. In the past it was acceptable for these to go to landfill but legislation is now stopping this. Batteries are now being stored in large quantities since there is no really effective and economic way of dealing with them. There is an escalating environmental risk. There is a clear and so far unresolved market need for a suitable technology to dispose of or recycle them.

Desmond Cunningham, of Cunningham Developments, has worked for several years on the development of a technology to process and recycle all the elements of commercial lead acid batteries, including trial working assemblies. He has worked with the Engineering Department of Lancaster University, which has developed a virtual model of the process layout.

Indications are that the performance characteristics of the design will deliver not only a solution to the market need but also major environmental benefits, good economic returns and sound profitability. The finished process will also create new jobs.

The immediate aim is to develop a prototype process plant capable of automating the comminuting (breaking up), segregating and presenting for recycling the components of lead acid batteries – plastic casing, lead and sulphuric acid. Calculations show that the prototype plant will be capable of processing between 20 and 50 tonnes of batteries per day. After test and trials, there will then follow the creation of a fully scaled up commercial plant.

There are further potential applications for the technology, in separation of wastes in landfill. Mr. Cunningham approached the Digital Development Unit for advice and assistance, and was first introduced to Groundwork to check the legislation with which his equipment would have complied.

Next he was introduced to Manchester Patent Library to carry out a patent search to ensure his process was not infringing existing patented technology. He was then assisted to commission a patent attorney to apply for a UK patent on his process. Eventual full commercialisation of the project, especially outside the UK, will very likely in part at least take the form of licensing it to larger companies, and it is therefore very important for the project to be well protected as Intellectual Property.

Sources of supply of the batteries have been identified, as have buyers for the plastic, lead and acid.

The prototype plant is scheduled to start operation during February 2008.

TAGI (That's a Good Idea) Ltd, Church, Accrington

TAGI Ltd, founded in 1997, is a specialist manufacturer of aluminium extruded retail display systems incorporating a patented flexible insert which automatically grips display panels and other items inserted into it.

The system has attracted a great deal of attention having been shown at a number of major shop-fitting exhibitions. The speed and ease of fitting has proved very popular, attracting large customers such as SpecSaver Opticians and high street banks.

Even so, the system is still a niche product, and the main business is in smaller quantity applications with special requirements needing special modifications and adaptations. It is now the intention of TAGI to develop the product further so that a standard range of stock items can be offered in larger quantities to a mass market.

This entails the development of five new aluminium sections, which will each incorporate the patented gripping system.

The extended system will allow new markets to be accessed and enquiries are already being received from large multinational shop fitting groups.

The products are at present extruded in the UK and assembled at the Accrington works, and it is intended that this will continue with the new ranges. The standard component mass market range of products will probably be assembled and sold by a new company which TAGI will establish, leaving the original company to concentrate on its present successful specialist applications. Additional sales and jobs will be established by the new company.

The Eureka project has assisted to commission and part fund construction of five prototype extrusion dies. The company is also being assisted by the Finance for Growth project with exhibition and other expenses

Process Innovation

Dietech Engineering - Blackburn

Dietech Engineering was established in 2004 from a buy out of the tool room at Tensar International. It operates high precision machine shop facilities. Business was good in the first 2 years and the company had grown fast.

The directors Michael and Ian Clayton contacted the DDU to help them to help them consolidate this growth and make the company stronger.

The DDU held a number of innovation workshops with Michael and Ian which identified 2 key areas for investment in better technology.



Production bottlenecks at turning and grinding were impacting on order turn round times, a key customer requirement. Supported by the DDU the company invested in more advanced machining technology to overcome these bottlenecks.

As the business grew Mike and Ian were spending more and more of their time dealing with paperwork which was causing them more and more frustration. The DDU helped them to source a local supplier that was able to develop an Access based fully integrated sales order processing system which has cut the administration effort required to support the business.

As Michael Clayton, Managing Director of Dietech found one hidden benefit of the investment has been improved company image. *“When you have invoices that look professional and are clear in what they refer to, chances are you are more likely to get paid sooner”*

The DDU was also able to assist the supplier of this solution, ML Systems Ltd, to develop the software into a more widely marketable product called ‘First Base’. This is a software package aimed specifically at small companies that need to improve their administration work flow. This reduces the amount of time spent on day to day processing and improves the image of the business to their customers.

Partwell Cutting Technology Ltd - Blackburn

Partwell Cutting Technology Ltd was formed in 1979 and is based on Stanley Street in Blackburn. The company is family owned, employs 28 people and has a turnover of just over £2 million.

The company started life producing knives and supplying knife steel to the footwear industry. It has grown and diversified into new products and new markets but with cutting and cutting materials still at the core of the business activity. Partwell Cutting Technology Ltd is organised into 4 operating units, Cutting Technology, Box and Carton, Industrial Plastic and Food Industry. Each unit has increased its market share by effective sales and marketing and by the addition of new products to its now comprehensive product range.

The Box and Carton unit supplies primarily knife making steel and die making accessories to carton converters and printers and has seen significant growth over the last few years as wider access to the market has been secured.

The directors of Partwell recognised that a major threat to the business during this time of growth was the ability of the company's own systems to cope with increases in demand. They conducted a review of the current internal systems and processes to identify the weaknesses, highlight performance issues and make recommendations for improvements.

With the assistance of the DDU, Third Arm Logistics Ltd was commissioned to undertake this task. Partwell implemented the recommendations from this DDU commissioned review.

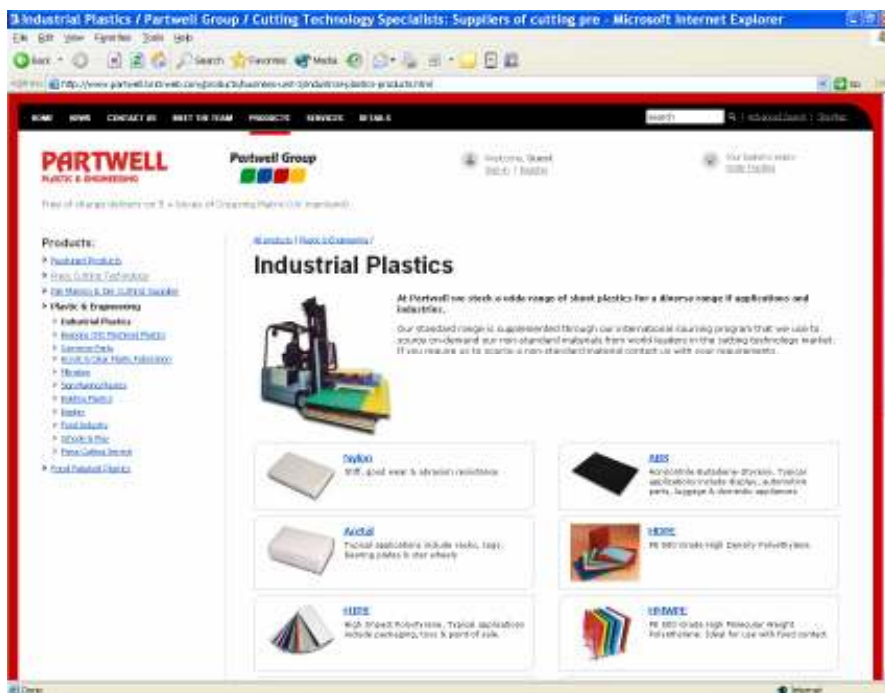
The project then addressed the issues identified in the systems and processes review and put in place solutions to address the ongoing business requirements. The work focused on operational processes through the ISO 9000 system to eliminate picking errors and achieving zero "stock out" of grade A products.

The project has created an increase in sales of £500k in year 1 and by £250k in year 2, a margin improvement of some 5% year on year and a safeguarding of 5 jobs.

Following the extensive work described above to improve the efficiency of the internal business management and operation systems Partwell saw the opportunity to attract new business with confidence. The new systems helped them to make radical changes to the customer facing side of the business and offer customers more than just a product and delivery at a reasonable price.

With advice and support from the e-business advisors at the Digital Development Unit they invested in a function rich web site. This web site provides their customers with a complete self service package; their internal sales team and their outside sales staff with a comprehensive and up to date catalogue. The system is based on a database driven, content managed e-business system which includes, an e-mail management system with capabilities for serving html e-mails, (this is an important service to support the active sales operation). The system provides secure client access, through a registration and login function, enables client and sales staff to

view order process, despatch information, order history and library content. The e-mail engine provides address segmentation and data cleaning; bounce back and automatic unsubscribe handling.



Site URL/Domain: www.partwell.com

The Catering Centre - Blackburn

The Catering Centre was formed in January 2003 by Shaun Mahony, Managing Director and Sandro Wulkan.

The company designs, supplies and installs both new and refitted kitchens and provides both a planned and reactive field maintenance service.

Turnover for 2004 was at £1.5 million with stall levels at 18. Turnover was split evenly with equipment sales, projects and service/spares all contributing £500k each.

The company wished to expand the field servicing operation and had the opportunity to develop its business with Gala into a 3 year rolling partnership. However the directors recognised the need to improve the performance of field servicing if these objectives were to be met.

The first stage of this was to improve the on site performance of the service engineers by providing them with a diagnostic hand help unit. This will result in faster and better prepared client feedback reports, increased and more productive on site time for the field engineer and data which will allow a move towards planned maintenance.

Concurrent with this the company were looking to develop a job costing and data retrieval system for field servicing again as part of this move towards expanding field servicing and providing a better service to customers. It was expected that data from the diagnostic unit will flow seamlessly into this system.

The company identified Gabriel Scientific Consultancy as a company that can develop and provide the hand held unit and develop the software for the job costing and control system. In 2005 we commissioned Gabriel Scientific Consultancy Ltd to develop and supply a remote PDA system and a job costing and control system.

The benefits to the company of this new way of working has been to:

- provide better and more timely client feedback reports
- increase the on site utilisation of service engineers
- generate more accurate and timely costing information
- establish more and more comprehensive information on customer equipment
- retrieve this information much quicker
- make the move towards planned maintenance

The outcomes from the investment in the business was to have:

- an increase in sales of £80k
- jobs safeguarded 4
- jobs created 5

3B's Brewery - Blackburn

Three B's Brewery was founded in 2001 by Robert Bell although Robert had been brewing and selling beer on a part time basis since 1999. The business first operated from premises in Hamilton Street before moving to its impressive facilities in StockClough Lane Feniscowles.

The brewery offers a range of four cased beers plus some specials and supplies to a number of pub chains and resellers. The business has grown steadily and turnover is projected for this year at about £100k. Robert is now full time in the business with 1 further part time employee.

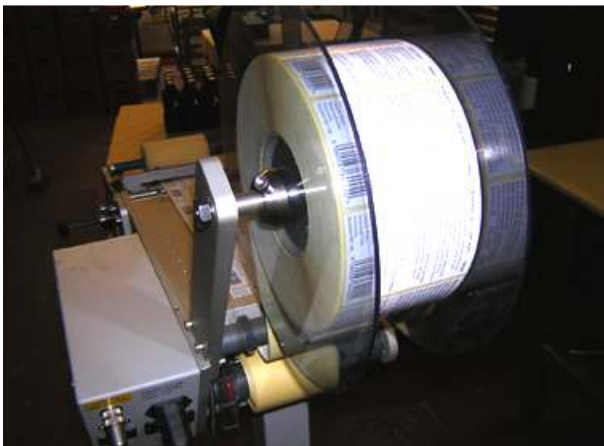
The company decided to diversify into bottled beer and examined using a third party bottler but this proved not to be cost effective due to the low economies of scale. They acquired a unit adjacent to their current premises and have installed their own bottling and packaging plant. They worked closely with two other companies on Stockclough Lane to develop ideas and concepts for the plant and layout. Cowie and Riding were used for piping and storage of beer prior to bottling and for materials handling and packaging.

Two beers are now sold in bottles, Knocker Up and Tacklers Tipple primarily through cash sales, Booths and a wholesaler. The wholesaler is exporting Knocker Up to Denmark with great success. This has resulted in an increase in turnover of about 20% per annum and the addition of 0.5 of a job. Demand is now outstripping supply and in addition the brewery have been asked to bottle a further 2 beers, Doffcocker and Shuttle Ale. They also intend to produce a 3 and 6 bottle Christmas pack.

The company is forecasting an increase in demand from 1500 bottles per month to over 4000 bottles per month due to these new sales initiatives. In order to meet this increase in demand the company has decided to.

- automate the labelling of bottled beer
- incorporate the labelling machine into a flow line from bottling through to packing
- increase the number of storage tanks and associated pipe work

With the assistance of the DDU, the company purchased an automatic labelling machine and would like to use the services again of Cowie and Riding to design and install the additional storage and piping required for increasing capacity and the extended material transfer system.



The automated labelling machine

Supply Link Systems - Burnley

ML Systems Services Ltd, a Blackburn-based company, had been developing a new product opportunity from an existing product called the Scan Ban System. This product was designed by Hurst Green Plastics for holding and replenishing stock of fasteners and other small components in the aerospace industry. The system provides traceability, prevents cross contamination of the stock and uses bar coding technology for weekly cycle replenishment. Current customers include British Aerospace, Lufthansa and Boeing.

ML has updated the technology used in the product and has extend its application both in terms of stock coverage and to a wider market beyond Aerospace. They have used RFID technology to replace bar coding and the system has been extended to cover all line stock items eliminating the need for multiple systems. The new system will provide more direct integration to the main ERP system offering more efficiency benefits.

Supply Link Systems Ltd, a new company, again in Blackburn, has been established to exploit the commercial benefits of this new technology. The company will be run by Joe Norris who has considerable experience in supply line management and four other directors all with experience in this market and with this technology.

Two pilot sites have been agreed with Airbus Industries at Broughton and Filton for June and September respectively and a full Beta Control site in Q1 2006. A business plan has been prepared with the help of Blackburn Enterprise Trust. Both technical and management and control software now needs to be developed in order to prepare the product for the two pilot projects.

The supplier chosen to carry out this work was Waverley Systems of Halifax. Waverley has experience of both SAMSys RFID readers, and general bar code systems and technology. The company also have significant experience of PDA software development and interfacing. The director who will be responsible for the work – Malcolm Germain – is a long term associate of the Supply Link personnel and is a respected and trusted colleague with an impressive track record. The DDU commissioned Waverly Business Services Ltd to develop the Pilot site Technical and Management Control software.

It is expected that the business will achieve

- sales of £200k by year 2 rising to £400k in year 3
- staff levels of 6 at the end of year 3, all highly skilled positions.



Stock Boxes
fitted with RFID
tags

DeaCom Ltd - Church

DeaCom Limited was established in 1999 by Chris Deaville to provide contracting facilities to the telecommunications industry and which he initially operated from his home in Hyndburn. In 2004 he moved the company to its current premises in Church. Annual turnover is now at £170k per annum and staff levels are at 4.

Over the years DeaCom has developed the services it can offer to the telecommunications industry and now has a wide range of contracting and project management capabilities including microwave radio installation, PCN snagging, fibre optic splicing and final sign off audits.

They have built a good name within the industry for providing an efficient and cost effective service to the customer which is reflected in their preferred supplier status with the mobile phone company O2'. Network Rail has recently announced their own nationwide telecommunications roll out programme it is their intention to hire in specialist companies to help them achieve this. DeaCom have been encouraged to bid for parts of this work.

In order to get on the tender list for this work DeaCom must demonstrate compliance to ISO 9001:2000 for all its internal and external working procedures and practices. TSW Quality Consultancy will be contracted to work with the company to complete this task.

In addition and due to the specific nature of the work, it will be necessary to comply with the regulatory rail work procedures as set by Link Up for the Core Module Product group. Strategic Rail Solutions has been selected to work with the company to undertake this task.

The DDU, via the Eureka project helped the company select the right supplier and access funding to allow the company to go ahead. ISO 9000 has been achieved and the company expect to create 8 new jobs as new contracts are won.



DeaCom engineers at work



ISO certificate at last

F W Bramwell Ltd - Colne

F W Bramwell was formed in 1965 by Neville Bramwell selling industrial yarns to the knitwear industry. Neville had had many years experience in the textile industry prior to establishing the business on Whalley New Road, Blackburn. In the early 1970's the company diversified into domestic knitting yarn selling through independent retailers and in 1983 they stopped supplying industrial yarn. In 1992 they launched a range of fabric paints and started to diversify again into the hobby craft market.

They now distribute 10 hobby craft named brands accounting for some 10,000 product lines. Their customers include many independent retailers along with WH Smith and John Lewis. Turnover is split 90% craft and 10% yarn.

In 1999 the company moved to its current premises in Colne and in 2005 Neville Bramwell retired. The company is now run by his children Tony, Alison and Peter. Current turnover is £2.3 million and staffing levels are at 19. Whist the company has a good reputation in the market, sales have been falling and margins were under pressure.

The directors conducted a thorough review of the operations and concluded they were failing to meet their customer's expectations particularly in the areas of order delivery times, stock availability, and order picking accuracy. In addition stock write offs are having a significant impact on profits.

The DDU have worked closely with the company to help them decide on the best approach to resolving these issues. A three strand approach was agreed.

- Improving the efficiency and layout of the warehouse
- Upgrading or replacing the current business management system
- Introducing bar coding for stock movement recording

The company supported by the DDU commissioned the work proposed by Blackburn based Third Arm Logistics for making the required improvements in the warehouse.

The project has now been completed.

As Alison Park, Managing Director, of Bramwell's commented 'The support from the DDU has helped focus the company on making changes to the warehouse process and as such improving efficiencies. This has helped return the company back to profitability.'

It is expected that 3 new jobs will be created in the company in the next 2 years.

Recoy Ltd - Blackburn

Recoy Limited was established by Alex Markham and Sam Thompson in 2004 and relocated to new premises on the Shadsworth Business Park, Blackburn in August 2007 with help from the Council's Economic Regeneration Unit. Annual turnover is £600k and staffing levels 3.

Recoy specialise in the import and distribution of Rubber Floor Coverings in both sheet and tile form; 60% coming in from Italy and 30% from Sweden. They serve markets in both the UK and Republic of Ireland through a network of 400 retailers and contractors including Harrods and Arighi Bianchi of Macclesfield. The company has seen growing interest in its product offering since the move to Blackburn and since the recruitment of a full time sales manager.

However it was struggling to meet the increased demand for samples due to the lack of appropriate equipment and this had been identified by the directors as the main barrier to growth. The directors contacted the DDU to help them resolve the problem.

The supply of good quality samples to retailers for display in their shops is an important part of the company's marketing mix. These samples were cut to size by hand and edge finished by hand. This is time consuming and the finished product is of a poor quality and inconsistent in size. The directors identified this part of their production process as the main barrier to growth of the company.

With advice and assistance from the DDU they decided to automate this process and purchase a Polar 72 Guillotine for this purpose. The price of this machine new is about £12k so a completely rebuilt machine with a 12 months parts and labour warranty was sourced for £4250 plus Vat. In addition to reducing the time it takes to produce samples the machine produces samples of both a consistent size and consistent quality.

The project was completed in December 2007. Alex Markham, Managing Director, commented the support we have had from the DDU has allowed us to grow our business and present a much more professional appearance to our customer.' Since the project started staffing levels have increased by 1. The company now expects an increase in annual turnover of about £650,000 over 2 years and 3 new jobs being created.

Polar 72 Guillotine.....



Data Sanctuary Ltd - Blackburn

The directors of Data Sanctuary Limited Mr Ilyas Ismail and Mr Mubarak Ismail have been manufacturing ladies fashion wear in Blackburn for the last 20 years and have previously employed over 120 staff. Due to the high level of cheap imported garments from the Far East the business was unable to compete and was closed down. A decision was made to diversify into the Records Management industry.

Data Sanctuary Limited trading as the Depository is a new business specialising in the storage and archiving of documents and other office material. The critical factor in the success of the business is the service delivery and beating the benchmarks already set by the market leaders, hence, process engineering and quality people will be key. In the long term once the company becomes established the potential for growth and to enlarge the facility is a real possibility.

In today's environment businesses generate vast amounts of information both paper based and digital. Regulations and security mandates are becoming more stringent, making companies increasingly aware of the need to manage and protect their information.

The target markets for the Depository are local SME's. Furthermore plans have been made to approach facilities managers of large corporate organisations with large archive stocks. The specific types of organisations of greatest interest include financial and legal practices, media companies, architectural practices and multinational conglomerates.

The DDU have been involved in helping the company establish a strategy for investing in the appropriate technology to move the company forward.

The Project

Requirement

The Depository wished to offer an electronic bar code tracking facility for all client archive boxes, files and media tapes and wants to sell live tracking of valuable client archives as a key service for the business.

To accommodate this service a dedicated piece of software was required to allow the business to function and develop in the future.

The software required the ability to be scalable as the business needs of The Depository grow in the future.

The software also needed the ability to be customised to the exact requirements of The Depository and its' client industries.

After exhaustive trails a decision was made to adopt the Andrews Software solution – VCK (Virtual Corporate Keeper).

ICT/e-Business

Gilbraith Haulage - Blackburn

Gilbraith Haulage of Blackburn (Gilbraith (TS) Ltd) operates the only freight rail terminal in the North West from a site on Bolton Road. Along with 100,000 square feet of warehousing and a fleet of some 40 vehicles, the company is able to offer a comprehensive service of bulk storage, stock handling and distribution to a wide variety of customers.

In the summer of 2005 the company contacted the DDU for advice on upgrading its stock control system. As a first step we proposed and they agreed to seek outside help to develop and produce a requirements specification to be used by potential suppliers when quoting for the new system.

At the same time and through discussion with Gilbraith's we suggested that the stock control system should be linked to web communications technology that would allow customer access to on line stock data.

The concept of bringing together the back end technology i.e. the stock control system with front end web technology was new to the company. After assurances on costs and after working through the potential benefits to customers and for the company they decided to go ahead with the plan.

A local supplier was commissioned to undertake both the development of the integrated stock control system and web based front end interface.

Steve Gibson MD of Gilbraith has commented

"The benefits of this investment have far exceeded what we expected. It has allowed us to:

- offer a more responsive service to customers
- integrate into other customer systems giving transparency of stock movements
- take on more business
- operate the system more easily

Customers have been very excited with these developments in improved on line service – our major Swiss customer remarked "you now have the best technology in Europe."

As a result Gilbraith's have won further large contracts.

Global Experiences Ltd - Blackburn

Global Experiences Limited is based in the Blackburn Business Development Centre at Eanam Wharf. It is a recruitment company specialising in the maritime industry and in particular the cruising industry. The company directors have significant experience in maritime human relations and recruitment management and set up an on-line recruitment service for the cruise industry. As this is essentially a seasonal or short contract industry, staffs churn is a constant problem and locating good experienced staff a premium. Global Experiences Limited was aiming to provide recruitment services to the cruise industry for all levels of staff from senior officers to waiter and domestic staff.

With the assistance of the DDU providing support for the requirements specifications, tender documents and tender assessment, Global Experiences Limited have invested in a web site development, which meets all their criteria. The content management system (CMS) allows the client to operate a Web based service to help them in the registration, collection and distribution of electronic CV and job vacancies. The site also helps them to track the activities of candidates and job vacancies as they are in progress.

The web site serves two purposes; it is marketing and information web site for potential clients and a customer services site on which clients can track their CV's and locate possible vacancies. Client organisations can use this to look for and advertise for staff and support their recruitment drives.

The website is a database driven content managed system with an administration section allowing administration staff to add and update a) employer client data b) Vacancies c) collect candidate data and d) send CV's to clients. There are personalised admin permissions to allow candidates to enter their CV, update information and send their CV to advertised vacancies. Client hospitals will also have admin access to submit vacancies and employment contract details. The site will also display information and details of the required qualifications for registration and an active vacancies board. All admin areas are user and password protected.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.globalexperience.org>

Barnes Plastic Welding Equipment - Blackburn

Barnes Plastic Welding Equipment Limited is a long-standing Blackburn based business. They sell and hire new and used plastic repair welding kits for all thermo plastics work from tarpaulin making and repair to plastic pipe, tanks and barrier repairs. They identified a key objective as being the development of a website to have a very professional look and feel and to portray the client as an industry leader and sell the company's product range over the Internet. Non-technical staff needed to have the facility to update the product sections of the website and to manage the status of stock items.

Following advice from the DDU, Barnes Plastic Welding Equipment Limited commissioned the development of a fully content managed, scalable e-commerce web site to provide the full flexibility of future development.

The site incorporates a shopping cart and the admin suite will allow non-technical staff to update the product sections of the website and to manage the status of stock items. It also incorporates a search facility with the site being searchable by product type, manufacturer or product industry - with easy navigation. The site also promotes the company's hire services and repair services along with the spare parts division of the business. This site is very quickly producing UK and export sales.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.plasticweldingequipment.co.uk>

Unit 8 Performance Parts - Darwin

Unit 8 Performance Parts is based in Darwin and specialises in sourcing and supplying parts for Japanese performance cars. Market research undertaken by Unit 8, indicated that there is a growing market for the Japanese performance car with an increasing demand in the tuning parts business. With only one major online competitor, Unit 8 saw an opportunity to fit into a niche and growing market.

Building on a well established strong reputation in the field, Unit 8 planned to use the Internet as its primary sales channel. The business also has premises for warehousing and limited workshop facilities.

In developing the website Unit 8 sought the advice of the Digital Development Unit. An advisor provided independent opinion and advice relevant to the clients needs for the development of an e-commerce web site and also provided e-marketing advice. Along with the online performance parts catalogue, the completed site also functions as a shop window for other services that Unit 8 provides on site such as privacy glass installation

The result of the web site development has left the Unit 8 performance parts business with a fully e-commerce enabled web site with catalogue and pricing; shopping trolley, check out and payment gateway functions. The web site also includes a secure registration and login function, which helps Unit 8 to develop a database of clients for target marketing with special offers.

Owner Stevie Baron said “We received business and technical support plus a grant towards the cost of our e-commerce site. This helped us a great deal and was an easy process to follow with great results. Very happy”



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.unit-8.co.uk>

Neales Waste Management - Blackburn

Established in 1991 Neales Waste Management specialises in a range of waste management services. They are an independent company operating from licensed sites in the North West and provide services for customers including public and private sector, multi-national and family businesses. They are also accredited to the environmental standard BS EN ISO 14001:2004 and quality management standard BS ISO EN 9001:2000, which gives them a strong position in the waste management industry. The business has evolved to adopt new technology and saw an opportunity to develop a website which would promote the company services and act as an online information centre and data point for existing and future clients. Neales were keen to be able to manage the site in house and control as much of its content as possible.

Support from the DDU included advice on managing a corporate website, content management systems, and finding a suitable supplier to work with them. Grant funding for the development was also provided.

Neales now have a professionally designed corporate website with full content management allowing them to manage the site on a daily basis. The company has seen strong growth over the first 6 months with the website netting £10,000 worth of revenue. Developments continue and the company is now utilising the site to showcase their new promotional videos.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.neales-waste.co.uk>

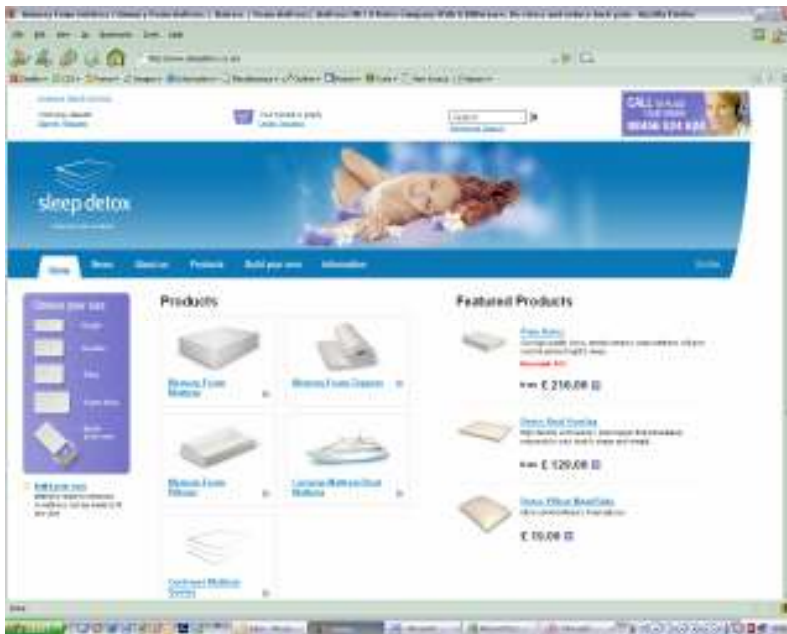
New Feeling - Blackburn

New Feeling was a start-up business aiming to retail home furnishings, bedroom accessories, and a range of memory foam products. The client had established some excellent relations with suppliers and by trading online with few overheads, felt that they had a very competitive route into this market.

The client wanted to establish an e-commerce website to carry an extensive range of bedroom furniture and sleep assistance products. The client also wanted to offer a bespoke service for the memory foam cushions and mattresses. This is to cater for those with non standard size bed bases and appeal to bespoke applications such as caravans, boats, and replacing cushions on other interior furniture.

Support from the DDU included advice on specifying the requirements of the site and ensuring that the client was aware of all the issues concerning the management of an e-commerce website. New Feeling now have a fully e-commerce, professionally branded, website that will be the main revenue stream for this new business. Using the site's CMS system the client is able to manage this resource in house and use it as an online promotional tool.

The project has had an impressive start and in the first month after launch took orders worth over £4000 from the site.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.sleepdetox.co.uk>

MAC One Linens - Oswaldtwistle

Started in 2006, Mac One Linens is a small private limited company that supplies bed, bath, and tableware linen. They supply to commercial organisations such as Bed and Breakfasts, Hotels, and Laundries. The business is also an exclusive seller in the UK for several European manufacturers.

The business has grown well and the client is keen to sustain this expansion. A lot of the client's competition is from larger organisations and the client felt that it was important to project a similar image for their company, and to have a structured marketing strategy. It is here the client saw an opportunity to use a website to project a positive image of the company, provide up to date information, and collect data from visitors to aid future marketing.

With support from the DDU the client has developed a content managed website that will be used to tender for contracts and collect data from potential customers.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.maconelinens.co.uk>

Babywise Ltd - Darwen

This Darwen based business specialises in the design, manufacture, development and production of specialist mattresses for use in baby care. They supply a number of high street chains and well known baby brands including ASDA, Mothercare, Silver Cross with bespoke mattresses to fit prams, cots and baby carriers. They can also supply changing mats printed with the unique designs for each outlet.

Baby Wise decided to develop their own on-line retail store and approached the DDU for advice and assistance. Babywise Ltd invested in a database driven, fully content managed e-commerce web site which met these criteria.

The site has recently had an excellent report from a mystery shopper, reported in the Baby Magazine as the best web site of the independent retailers.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.babymattressesonline.co.uk>

Silicone Engineering Ltd - Blackburn

Silicone Engineering has been trading since 1960. The business was subject of a management buyout in 2005. They currently have a turnover of £8.9m and employ 100 staff.

Silicone Engineering manufactures and distributes through licensed distributor's specialist silicone products from flat sheet to moulded profiles and tubing. These products are used for a large variety of purposes but the larger clients are in the automotive and aerospace industries. Due to increasing international competition, reducing margins and income Silicone Engineering has developed a new pro-active marketing strategy, this includes the influencing of end users; Silicone Engineering is now pursuing a highly visible active marketing and digital marketing tactic to drive international business to them. Following consultation with the Digital Development Unit the client recognised the need to replace the current static web site with the proposed function rich e-business site which forms stage one of a two stage integrated e-business system.

- Full content management
- Registration and log-in
- Marketing Database collation
- E-mail management
- On-line order processing, tracking and customer service access (web site based)

This site will provide a dynamic and active digital marketing platform which will integrate with a "back office" system in the second stage of development so that the order processing, tracking and customer service data is dynamically updated from the back office process.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.silicone.co.uk>

Controls 4 Steam - Blackburn

Started in 2002, Controls 4 Steam is a company that provides design, technical support and controls to the industrial steam market.

A major new opportunity within the business is their recent partnership with company Aquanet. This is a company that provides chemical control systems to run boilers more efficiently and reliably. Although the Aquanet technology is very successful it is currently only applied to the marine industry for use on large ships such as the Queen Mary 2. Controls for steam have brought this to an industrial market.

Controls4Steam's partnership with Acquanet has meant that this technology is now applicable to general industry and the client has developed systems that can be installed in manufacturing and processing plants. With its cost reducing benefits there is a real opportunity for success with this technology. The client needed an online presence to showcase their technology, collect data, and highlight the cost benefits of the system.

With help of the DDU the client has developed a content managed website that they are able to practically show the advantage of their technology and interact with customers. This will form the backbone of their marketing strategy for the future.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.controls4steam.co.uk/>

Alert Security Systems - Burnley

Alert Security Systems was established 1994. Since then they have become one of the north's fastest developing and award winning security companies. They offer a range of solutions for commercial and personal customers and provide management services for these solutions.

A technologically advanced company, Alert is already making use of an extensive client resource management system and mobile technology to automate processes with clients and their engineers. As part of their development strategy the company is about to expand the capabilities of the CRM system to exploit marketing opportunities and allow customers direct access to manage their security accounts. The development of a new website was an integral part of exploiting this marketing functionality and providing a portal through which customers will interact with Alert. The firm also worked with staff from Burnley's business support team with the Finance for Growth project who are helping to fund the upgrade to the client resource management system and IT infrastructure on which it sits. Technical evaluation, approval, and assistance have been provided by a DDU advisor on this aspect of the project too.

Alert now have a content managed website that connects to their marketing systems and provides access for customers to managed their security accounts



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.alertfireandsecurity.co.uk/>



For more details contact:

**Digital Development Unit
Blackburn Technology Management Centre
Challenge Way
Blackburn
BB1 5QB**

**Tel: 01254 582426
Email: ddu@blackburn.gov.uk
Web: www.blackburnbusiness.net**