



EUREKA

Project Overview and Client Case Studies

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The Digital Development Unit

The DDU is the innovation and technology service of Regenerate Pennine Lancashire and delivers the Eureka project as part of the No Limits Programme.

The project helps Pennine Lancashire 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 No Limits funding is provided via the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and enables the support to be made available in the boroughs 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.

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Product Development

Capsool Ltd - Burnley

Background

Capsool Limited has been established to provide a unique internet based service for customers across the world. The basis of the Capsool offering is a website that enables manipulation and storing of multimedia content into digital time capsules. These digital time capsules, or capsools, can be constructed, stored and delivered to recipients in a number of different ways.

In the rapidly expanding world of 'web 2.0' websites, Capsool aims to offer something a little different instead of focussing on the myriad of ways of immediately connecting to other people, Capsool will allow people to use time itself, and to manage it to their best effect.

Users will be able to select when in the future messages are received. Capsool will seek to tap into the emotional side of the content that people retain. Digital photographs, video, blog posts and audio often have an emotional, sentimental meaning attached to them by the owner and they also often represent an event in life that is embedded in the human emotion. Birthdays, feast days, life events, coming together and breaking up, all present opportunities for the use of a system that is concerned with more than just the here and now.

The Project

The company identified an opportunity to offer the service via internet enabled mobile devices and specifically via a pilot using an application for the Apple i Phone. Improved Internet access, higher resolution screens, improved touch technology and the integration of standard browser technology into mobile devices made this a key area for development. The project would also target younger users who make extensive use of the Internet via mobile phones.

Capsool believed that the iPhone development would provide a vital new offering and enable the company to bring an entirely new channel to the service.

The DDU helped the company to access local specialist resources and made introductions to sources of start up capital. Click Lab Limited, a Burnley based company, were selected to undertake the development work and the DDU helped the partners define the project specification and project plan. Funding under Eureka was granted to enable the project to go ahead.

Outcome

Paul Caruthers a director of Capsool said 'the support we have had from the DDU has helped us to develop the project and the company faster than expected.'

CSA Consulting Services Ltd - Burnley

Background

CSA Consulting is an electronics design and consultancy firm run by Martin Watson-Levack. Martin has developed considerable expertise in LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting, and has developed a new concept in the technology for use in public lighting (eg streetlamps) and for road sign and traffic bollard illumination. Basically, the technology revolves around the capability of running an extended array of LED lamps at lower wattages, and re-design of the electronic driver circuits to match the array.

Also included are tripled wire circuits to reduce losses in the system. This arrangement ensures substantially lower energy consumption (40% savings) and longer life, as well as cooler running and therefore saving on expensive heat dissipation elements.

The Project

Eureka was called in first of all to assess and advise on the intellectual property cover, and to test and progress the commercial application of the technology.

Two successes have been achieved. The first was an introduction to Ian Darlington of Capita, who is responsible for street lighting in Blackburn and Darwen. He agreed to carry out a trial installation of the lighting in prototype form in 25 bollards and 5 street signs within the Borough, mainly on the Ring Road.

As a result of this agreement, further assistance from Eureka was given to produce the prototype gear trays for these tests. The prototype gear trays for use in the bollards needed to be tested according to standards set by UMSUG (Unmetered Supplies User Group), a committee of the UK wholesale electricity market managers.

Outcome

The above actions were undertaken and the 3 month test commenced in January 2010. The test results should provide a sound basis from which to license the technology to one of the major suppliers, and continue the development of further applications.

Kershaws Rubber Stamps - Darwen

Background

Kershaws Rubber Stamps has been operating in Darwen for 40 years and specialises in supplying bespoke rubber stamps of all types for clients throughout the UK. Key customers include NHS, Local Authorities, library services, schools and colleges, HM Prisons and many businesses in the UK.

The Project

Classmates is a popular range of Kershaw's stamps which are sold primarily into schools to help motivate pupils with their work. The parts for the current design of the stamp called were sourced from the Far East with only 3 colours available.

The company believed there was an opportunity to increase the demand for Classmates but only if they addressed weaknesses in the design of the product particularly its strength and ease of assembly, labelling and packaging.

David Kershaw had been collaborating with another Darwen based company Newrad Mouldings to produce a new design for Classmates. The DDU has been supporting the partners, in particular examining the commercial viability of the project. Newrad were able to offer a much wider colour choice at order quantities much lower than the Far East. The company wished to move ahead with the design and manufacture of the injection moulding tool needed to produce the piece parts of the new design. The DDU were able to provide some financial support to enable the project to go ahead. The company is expecting an increase in sales of Classmates of £90,000 per annum by the end of 2010 mainly from export opportunities and is expecting to create 2 new jobs in a similar period.

Outcome

David Kershaw Managing Director of Kershaw's said "The ability of the DDU to part fund the tool has provided us with an opening in what was a closed market. This could lead to further opportunities for us in this market place. DDU support and assistance has made this happen".



Previous design v new design



The new rubber stamp

Phlash Products - Blackburn

Background

Phlash Products Ltd is a start-up company and has been built around a new garden product, called the Polanter.

This is an injection moulded plastic modular, vertically oriented planter, which can build into a tall column of floral display. Different heights can be achieved through adding units in a modular type construction. Hand-made prototypes had already been built and exhibited and created a great deal of interest from the market, and contributed to the finalisation of the design.

The Project

Eureka advised on intellectual property protection possibilities, introducing the company to a patent attorney and assisting them to set out a brief. An application has subsequently been made for a European Registered Design for the product. Eureka has also put the client in contact with Myerscough College, which incorporates the National Arboricultural Centre, a Plant Centre with tropical and temperate greenhouses, and Myerscough Gardens and Arboreta. The College is supporting the product with an endorsement and approval. Eureka also made introductions to several promising distribution outlets for the product. The product is being produced by Blackburn-based Verifyne Plastics, who also advised on the detail design when adapting the product for efficient injection moulding.

At its first exhibition, at the national GLEE show, (Gardening and Leisure, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham), orders were taken on the stand for 500 units, and initial production estimates have already had to be revised upwards. To date (February 2010) 8,000 products have been made and sold and demand is still increasing, good for Phlash and for Verifyne Plastics.

Outcome

The product is creating one new job for the start up company, plus preserving another at Verifyne. A Eureka grant of £5,000 was awarded to the project for prototype tooling.



Polanter



Polanter with floral display

Process Innovation

Axiom Imports Ltd – Colne

Background

Axiom Imports Limited was formed in October 2004 and supplies professional procurement services to the engineering sector, through project management, specialist parts sourcing and multiple discipline manufacturing. In the third year the directors started to become concerned in their sub contractors ability to service their requirements. It was at this point that they decided the only way they could guarantee the required service and quality their customers demanded was to set up their own manufacturing facility.

The company relocated to a modern 3500 sq ft building in Trawden which has been gradually filled with 3 new CNC lathes, 2 CNC vertical machining centres and an assortment of second hand sheet metal and welding equipment. The company has also achieved ISO9001:2000 accreditation.

The Project

In the second half of 2008, the directors decided on a strategic move into the aerospace sector, because of the stability of this market, and because the financial returns are generally higher than in their traditional markets.

Their CNC equipment had the capability of manufacturing this type of work but most parts needed to be programmed offline using 3 dimensional software. The company wanted to purchase and develop more effective software to enable this strategic move to go ahead. The DDU worked with the company to determine how best this might be achieved.

The company researched the market to find the most appropriate specialist software to achieve this ; the best of which on both price and features was XR3 Mill Advantage from OneCNC UK .

The company wished to commission OneCNC UK to customise and implement XR3 Mill Advantage to suit their own particular requirements. With the help of the DDU they applied and were provided with funding under Eureka to allow this to progress.

Outcome

The investment has helped safeguard 2 jobs at the company.

As Craig Harper MD of Axiom said ‘this software capability has enabled us to open up new markets and significantly reduce machine cycle times.’

Le Monde Petit - Burnley

Background

Le Monde Petit Ltd is a children's day nursery opened in May 1990. The team of 25 staff look after 110 registered places ranging from babies to toddlers and pre-school. Le Monde Petit is an eligible provider of government funded free childcare. It assists parents to maximise the free funded childcare and can advise on the tax implications.

In September 2009 the Government increased the free entitlement for 3 year olds from 2.5 hours a day to 3 hours a day, and in 2010 the provision of free entitlement will be extended to 2 year olds.

The Project

To capitalise on the legislative changes, the company needed to improve its business management systems to provide better planning and scheduling facilities. Capacity planning and space utilisation posed a challenge due to the number of variables that need to be factored in. For example age, sessions required, changes to sessions required, new enquiries and staffing (new starters, rota planning, holidays, absences). As a result of this the occupancy rate rarely rose above 92%.

The directors wished to invest in a new software based business management in order to achieve the benefits of improved capacity planning and scheduling. In addition the system would need to facilitate payment monitoring & collection, milk allocation & returns and data collection, storage & reporting.

Working with the DDU the company refined its requirements and selected Connect Software to develop a bespoke business management system based on the core of their standard nursery software package. As well as the impartial advice and specialist support, partial financial assistance was provided via the Eureka project.

Outcome

The investment has helped safeguard 3 jobs at the company.

As Peter Hindle Chairman of Le Monde Petit said ' The support from the DDU has helped to move the project on faster than would have been possible otherwise and the process has been very smooth and involved little form filling time'.

Performance Fluids - Nelson

Background

Performance Fluids Ltd is a world leader in the design, development and supply of specialist lubricants. The main customers are the rubber industry, food industry and the chemical industry. In the rubber industry the company provides release agents and lubricants for both formed (shaped) hoses and injection moulding. The products give major cost benefits, have excellent lubricity, cleanliness and are environmentally friendly. Supplied to the food industry is a complete range of food grade products including Fomblin® CL1800F, which is the only PFPE (perfluoropolyether) lubricant that has OEM approval from UK tunnel oven manufacturers. In the chemical industry the company provides technical advice and design products to meet specific problems encountered. This includes the provision of chemically inert (PFPE) greases and oils. Also supplied are the full range of Fomblin® greases and fluids manufactured by Solvay Solexis.

The Project

As the company and its products become well known in the various markets which they supply, it has become increasingly important to protect as much of their intellectual property as possible. The issue became particularly pressing due to expansion of the business into taking place into South American markets.

In this case, patenting was not the best option as many of the formulations could be kept secret. However, the company name and formulation trade names were becoming increasingly well known and relied upon by the customer and it had become essential to protect these. Trademark applications, legal re-drafting of various international agency and licensing agreements were necessary to take account of the increased importance of protection of the company and product marks.

To this end, Eureka assisted the company to commission Forbes Solicitors to carry out the legal review and drafting work, and Appleyard Lees to carry out the application and registration of the trademarks, a total of three in number. Eureka part-funded this work.

Outcome

The project protected sales of existing and future products and safeguarded the jobs associated with them. The company can now more confidently exploit export market opportunities with consequent new job opportunities in the future.

Ultra Finishing Ltd - Burnley

Background

Ultra Finishing Limited has been in operation since 1982 and currently employs 93 people, making it one of the largest employers in Burnley

The company trades in bathroom brassware fittings. It processes, customises and distributes a variety of bathroom and kitchen fittings, including taps, showers, heated towel rails, mirrors, cabinets and a variety of other accessories. Ultra Finishing brands products to meet specific customer needs and then distributes them from their computerised distribution centre to both UK and overseas customers.

The Project

The DDU was approached by the company for assistance to solve a packaging problem. It had been suffering unacceptable returns costs from goods damaged in transit and had attempted to solve this by increasing the packaging. This had added cost to all shipments and created a bottleneck restricting output.

An improved solution was sought via semi automation of the packing operation to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction. After working with the company to define the exact nature of the packaging problem the DDU help identify a Great Harwood company who subsequently offered to design a special purpose machine. The cost of the design work was partly supported through the Eureka project

Outcome

- Productivity improvement
- Reduced rework and scrap
- Health and safety improvement
- Environmental improvement
- Local job security – 2 jobs will be safeguarded.

ICT/e-Business

Curtis Law Solicitors - Blackburn

Background

Curtis Law Solicitors is a relatively new company formed by a successful Personal Injury Lawyer and operating from the centre of Blackburn.

The Project

The manual systems in use since start up were no longer proving effective as the company handled an increasing client load. The company also faced accommodation issues due to the need to expand the team. The No Limits Eureka and Finance For Growth projects worked closely together to support the company.

The office accommodation was expanded to meet the company expansion plans. Specialist advice was provided on overall ICT strategy, business continuity planning and the specialist software required to computerise the firm's case management. The latter included the functionality for clients, agents and referrers to be able to track the progress of a given case in a secure environment.

Outcome

The company have a case management system in place with secure access through a new website, a new computer server with several new PCs, upgraded network infrastructure and significant building alterations. The business operates more efficiently via a workflow-based database system used internally, which will maintain progress of cases and produce a range of company documents including standard letters and invoices. In addition, the website enables the business to be found via the internet and case information to be viewed through a secure account system by clients and business partners.

The support has enabled the company to double in size with the creation of seven new jobs.



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

Direct Wallpaper (Retail) Ltd - Burnley

Background

The Directors of Direct Wallpapers (Retail) Ltd started trading in Burnley in 2007 following the sale of a previously successful wholesale business. They specialise in the retail sales of specialist, character and designer wallpapers sourced from the UK and Europe. The business has grown successful sales from their warehouse on Plumbe St Burnley. The business management team recognised an opportunity to create demand for their products on the Internet but were keen to ensure that it was a success and that they choose the best way of approaching this new route to market.

The Project

Direct Wallpapers (Retail) Ltd approached the Digital Development Unit for advice and assistance to help them to develop a successful on-line retail business. The Digital Development Unit helped them to develop a requirements specification and find the best web site developer to meet their needs

To ensure success Direct Wallpaper commissioned the supplier to provide a functional rich e-commerce web site with full content management and e-mail marketing campaign management capabilities. One of the key objectives for Direct Wallpaper is to broaden their market reach by e-mailing special offers on character and specialist, hard to find wallpapers. The system allows Direct Wallpapers to engage in viral marketing techniques through an e-mail management and “Recommend a friend” electronic ticketing system.

Outcome

Direct Wallpapers (Retail) Ltd report that in the first six months of operation, the site has increased sales by 14% over 2008. The new site has been successful beyond the initial target market and is now attracting visitors from some of the exclusive European wallpaper manufactures who want to be featured on the site.



Site URL/Domain: www.directwallpaper.co.uk

Gloven Ltd - Accrington

Background

Gloven is a start-up company that designs, manufactures and sells a range of home ware. The main product is a range of highly flexible oven gloves that are innovative and use high specification materials more commonly used in motor racing overalls. In addition, there is a wide range of bought-in home-ware available for sale to householders via the internet.

The Project

The DDU helped with the initial patent searches / application and trademark registration. These products are now being sold wholesale to large department stores and outlets and have created considerable interest.

The DDU were called in again to give advice on internet marketing, ecommerce and potential future system development. In addition, The DDU provided financial assistance to support the development of an ecommerce website that will promote their products, market the company and provide a secure means of selling the products to consumers. The site includes a shopping cart environment with easy navigation, sufficient content to enable it to be found on the internet and marketing information, including a list of outlets where the products may also be bought to given potential customers confidence in the products. The website is backed by a database which contains wholesale (with appropriate security) and retail prices. Stock levels will be maintained with "out of stock" messages being displayed when necessary. The site also markets the Gloven brand, which will also be used for other planned innovative products in the future.

Outcome

The DDU has helped a start-up company to patent their product, register their trademark, bring a range of products to market, given considerable advice and part-financed an ecommerce website, which is being used to sell the products. Two new jobs have already been created and there are likely to be several more as manufacturing volumes increase.



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

Mobo Innovations - Blackburn

Background

Based at Greenbank Technology Park Blackburn, Mobo Innovations offers a new range of mobile and internet solutions to help businesses improve the efficiency of their processes. The company has several solutions that provide an innovative use of mobile technology such as Mobo2go. This is a mobile phone / internet based ordering and payment system designed specifically for the hospitality and food service industry. Customers order products directly from their mobile phone or computer and choose when they want to collect it. The system handles the order taking and delivers a preparation order for the food at the correct time. To run the system all the food vendor needs to a portable printer connected to a GPRS (mobile) network to print receipts from the central system.

The Project

Mobo Innovations had developed their product offerings but were struggling to bring them to market. With advice from the Digital Development Unit an opportunity was seen to utilise a website as a sales and information resource and an opportunity to provide a trial of the service to visitors. As the site takes enquiries these are processed via a small back end client resource management system. This tracks the follow up to the enquiry, the outcomes and the service level of the resposdee.

Outcome

With help from the Digital Development Unit Mobo Innovations has developed a content managed website that promotes their solutions, manages sales enquires and provides information on the performance of these enquiries. Since launch the site has been responsible for over £200,000 worth of enquiries which represents many times the return on the original investment of the technology.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.moboinnovations.com/>

Mercers Toy Shop - Blackburn

Background

The closure of Mercers department store in Blackburn has given rise to a new independent toy shop on Darwen Street which will keep the famous retail name alive. Mercers Toystore is confident that the new store will be a success and is the only dedicated toy retailer in the town centre.

The Project

Opening at the new premises also presented an opportunity to improve the way the store operated and in particular, how it managed and handled its stock. Mercers Toystore approached the Digital Development Unit for advice and guidance on all aspects of stock control and online trading. The Digital Development Unit helped to source a local supplier and with advice and guidance the business has developed a complete end to end retail management system. This system is able to control all aspects of the business such as stock levels, reordering, loyalty cards, point of sale, Christmas club and provide readily available management information. This technology represented a new innovation in retail management and went live as the shop opened its doors in April 2009.

Outcome

Company Director, Rose Fowler commented “Without the fantastic help we have received from the DDU we could not have done it as quick or as well. It is great to have such stock control with EPOS and we are looking forward to the integration with our web site which will make things much easier for us and our online customers. Since opening sales have been higher than were expected and in particular the Christmas Club scheme has been more popular than in any other year.”



SJA Film Technologies Ltd - Altham

Background

SJA Film Technologies Ltd is an Altham based plastic film slitting and converting business established in 2002. The client provides slitting and spooling of plastic film substrates, paper and plastic film materials to approx 250 customers. SJA Films Technologies have facilities to slit, rewind, spool, salvage, perforate and fold many filmic substrate materials from stock. They supply industries including: printing, converting, cable, telecommunications, health and hygiene, security, bakery, fruit vegetables and herbs, magazines, textiles, stationery gift wrap and greetings, etc and provide off-the – shelf materials and bespoke slitting/ spooling services.

The business provides a wide range of materials that can't be handled by many of their competitors, materials which are used in very diverse processes from underground cable manufacture, food wrapping, draught excluder base and weed suppressants.

The Project

SJA Film Technologies Ltd has developed its market on word of mouth, however the management team have embarked on a new strategic marketing programme supported by web based business process, which identified a need to improve the world wide profile, target new markets and exploit export opportunities. Following the Digital Development Unit's advice they realised that the current web development was not adequate for their needs. The Digital Development Unit conducted a health check on their web site and identified a number of requirements which would provide a strong platform to operate a proactive internet based marketing strategy. Importantly they needed a system to provide them with active social media and e-mail marketing campaign capabilities. As the original web site had been developed in relatively new and scalable technology; therefore it was readily updatable and the new functions easily added.

Outcome

The Digital Development Unit assisted SJA Film Technologies with their requirements specification, attended meetings with the e-business agency. SJA now has the Internet marketing tools to support pro-active marketing.



Site URL/Domain: <http://www.sjafilmtech.com/>



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