

PULHAM

FAMILY BUSINESS

INTERNET-BASED

EXPORT

Case study

Flyte so Fancy



Making chicken houses in a workshop at the bottom of their garden started off as a hobby for husband and wife team Phillip and Anne Weymouth in 2001.

Now they employ 18 staff, their workshop has expanded to cope with the huge demand, a new office has been built and they are looking to achieve a turnover of £1.5 million.

Flyte so Fancy, based in Pulham, near Dorchester, has grown year-on-year due to the Weymouths spotting a gap in the market, but crucially also by catching the crest of the first wave of online shopping and e-commerce.

From the start, the Weymouths, who have run several businesses, structured Flyte so Fancy so it could cope with nationwide distribution of their chicken houses, bird tables, dovecotes and poultry supplies. At one point, they were sending out 600 parcels and 40 to 60 hen houses a week.

Anne said: "We started off with the idea of doing something at a slower pace and Phillip suggested making bird tables and dovecotes.

“But it soon became clear that there was a demand for quality chicken houses which didn’t cost a fortune. At the time you could buy something very expensive or a cheap plywood product, so we were able to fill the gap.”

Phillip added: “Although we took a hit last year, like many businesses, our sales have been 40 per cent up this year. Our challenge now is how to cope with all the work we have.”

BUSINESS ISSUES

Anne, who looks after internet sales and marketing, attended a Business Link seminar to find out about support on offer. She felt the business was getting snowed under and needed help.

While being extremely busy is a problem the couple are pleased to have, they recognised they needed to find new ways of servicing the demand. They met Business Link adviser Robin McGowan who quickly got to grips with the challenges and was able to provide objective, impartial advice on how to keep the business moving forward.

OBJECTIVE SUPPORT OFFERED BY BUSINESS LINK

Business Link adviser Robin McGowan reviewed the business, working closely with Anne to analyse its strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan to manage its growth. This included building a dedicated office, expanding the workshop and recruiting additional staff.

Robin said: “One issue was how to export the products into Europe. I introduced them to a colleague at UK Trade & Investment and together we came up with a plan for achieving their objectives.

“I also analysed the website’s weaknesses, putting it forward for review by experts in a scheme we run with Bournemouth University. Our recommendations enabled Anne to implement the necessary changes.”

Phillip said: “The support we had from Business Link was fantastic and gave us the chance to work with people genuinely interested in providing impartial advice which would make a real difference to our business.

“A problem we have found in the past, particularly with doing business online, is that there are a lot of people who claim to be expert consultants when in fact many are failed business people with limited abilities and a vested interest. With Business Link you know you are getting effective and objective support.”

EVALUATING SUCCESS

With Business Link’s help, Flyte so Fancy developed a 12-month action plan interspersed with regular targets to make each next step possible.

Anne said: “Phillip project managed the building of our new office, which was completed in just 12 weeks. Shortly after meeting Robin we recruited six more employees, bringing our total to 18.”

FUTURE PLANS

Despite the business already growing beyond the Weymouths’ initial expectations, they are looking forward to further expansion in the months ahead. Working closely with Business Link, they have developed a new marketing plan. They have built three new websites and are gearing up for a major marketing push.

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