

Case study

RT Promotions



RT Promotions started life in the back of a Mercedes van with owner Richard Mack driving around the region selling promotional gifts and stationery.

Now it has its own showroom on the Stone Lane Industrial Estate in Wimborne, which is also the company's base.

Richard launched RT Promotions from scratch in 2004 with no customers and no contacts, after working in sales and marketing for more than 20 years, building his knowledge and expertise with companies such as Coca Cola, Golden Wonder and E & J Gallo.

RT Promotions now supplies an extensive range of promotional gifts from pens to teddy bears, umbrellas and USB memory sticks, to branded work clothing and mugs.

Despite a volatile market, the company has enjoyed steady growth – trebling its office space – with advice and guidance from Business Link adviser Laura McHarrie.

Richard said: “There’s always demand for our products because people like to use branded stationery for promotional purposes, or to give as gifts or awards at work.”

BUSINESS ISSUES

RT Promotions needed to move out of what Richard described as their “box room” offices. He met Business Link adviser Laura McHarrie to discuss the move, as well as how to achieve the growth he was looking for. He also had ideas which he was eager to put into practice.

SUPPORT FROM BUSINESS LINK

Laura first met Richard five years ago when he joined Business Link’s highly successful BusinessXchange programme – a lively and friendly, non-competitive network that brings together Dorset business owners and directors to share ideas, knowledge and resources and address some of the most important issues facing businesses today.

Laura, who is heavily involved in the BusinessXchange programme, worked closely with Richard on some of the issues he raised during the sessions, including helping plan the move to new premises and highlighting likely issues and challenges during the transition.

Laura also identified training opportunities for Richard, including how to secure a £1,500 grant through the Train to Gain scheme for his own personal development.

Laura said: “Richard and I spent time talking about his vision, his current position in the market place and how he could differentiate his offer.

“We considered the different options, the investment risks and the financial implications before arriving at a plan to drive the business forward and help it cope with expansion.

“When issues are too thorny to discuss at the BusinessXchange meetings, companies will often turn to their allocated Business Link advisers for one-to-one support and advice and that’s what happened with Richard.”

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Richard said: “It’s really important to be able to talk to somebody with extensive experience who doesn’t have a vested interest in what you are doing and who can give honest, objective support.”

EVALUATING SUCCESS

Richard is now on his way to achieving a £500,000 turnover and has two full-time members of staff.

He is an active member of the BusinessXchange programme and now takes a facilitating role at the meetings.

Although the programme is not about cross-selling, a conversation with another member led to Richard striking a deal to source products direct from China.

Richard has also benefited from a Business Link exporting masterclass. “I wasn’t thinking of selling overseas but two months after attending the seminar we started working with a client in Dubai so the knowledge I gained proved to be really helpful.” he said.

“The business is going from strength to strength. It’s a fun industry to be in and I’ve always got a smile on my face,” he added. “I still enjoy packing up small orders for local companies – as well as dealing with the much larger orders for a million pens and 300,000 sweat headbands, for example.”

FUTURE PLANS

Richard is looking forward to further growth and hitting his target of £500,000 turnover.

There are also plans to recruit more staff to cope with the extra demand on the business.

