

BUSINESS READY

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SCIENCE PARK

Gordon Bennett! Online retailer all set for leap in growth after Business Ready help

Sir Gordon Bennett is an online retailer that sells and celebrates a range of British manufacturers' products and is all set for significant growth after receiving support from Business Ready.



Pictured (left to right): Neil Elliott, Gaynor Matthews, Dan Colagiovanni

It was established by Stratford-upon-Avon based entrepreneur Dan Colagiovanni, and his business partner Neil Elliot, to offer a platform for high-quality, well-made British products with the goal of promoting more environmentally sustainable shopping, and supporting UK brands.

The Company

Sir Gordon Bennett was established to sell high-quality, well-made British products with the goal of promoting more environmentally sustainable shopping, and supporting UK brands.

Dan Colagiovanni and his business partner, Neil Elliot, built the company's website in 2017 and then made the first sale in December 2018 and interest has continued to grow.

Dan said: "Neil and I had been discussing starting a business for some time. Neil has a strong background in advertising and that was going to be key to us building a memorable brand.

"We settled on the idea of really celebrating British manufacturing and craftsmanship. It's not in any way jingoistic or anti-overseas-products, but recognition that when you go abroad, people have a real respect for high-quality British-made goods – more so than we do in this country.

"On top of that, we wanted to get back to some of the principles that guided our grandparents where they would make a sustainable choice based on quality not price. We could help the move away from disposable retail that has become the norm in recent years.

"The website gives a platform to manufacturers and makers from all corners of the country and with a whole range of items, from clothing to accessories and from homeware to garden products."

The Challenge

In 2020, the company was on the hunt for investment to help accelerate its growth and met Alex Toft, who heads up Minerva

Business Angels, facilitated out of the University of Warwick Science Park (UWSP).

Whilst the business ultimately secured funding from a different source Toft did make the introduction to the Business Ready programme, also delivered by UWSP, which is financially supported by the European Regional Development Fund and Warwickshire County Council as part of the CW Business: Start, Grow & Scale Programme.

It highlighted a range of other support options available to the company to help the pair move to the next level.

The Solution

The business received one-to-one guidance from Business Ready adviser Gaynor Matthews on a range of areas and also acted as a sounding board for Dan and Neil.

"Gaynor has been hugely supportive," said Dan. "We've been working with her for around 18 months and we have been

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This project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, forming part of the CW Business: Start, Grow and Scale Programme

able to tap into all of her knowledge and experience as an entrepreneur. Gaynor has also got a lot of contacts in this sector too, which has been a big help.

"Building a business can be quite a lonely place at times and having someone who can support you and give you the confidence to let you know you are on track is really helpful and important.

"But Gaynor also knew when we might need that kick up the backside and that was what we needed sometimes!"

The Results

As a result of the Business Ready support, Sir Gordon Bennett is hoping to grow by five times.

It now has 90 brands on the website and is aiming to extend that to 200. The company is also looking to open 'bricks and mortar' stores to complement its online presence.

"We now have hundreds of products on sale and the ambition is to open physical stores because many of the things we sell are very tactile and we want customers to be able to touch and feel them.

"The website will continue to grow alongside that. We're aiming to have 200 brands by the end of December 2022 and we will be the go-to place for beautiful, well-made British craftsmanship goods."

The company is now looking to take on new staff, including through apprenticeships.

Gaynor said: "I love what Neil and Dan are doing through Sir Gordon Bennett and the ethos that it stands for.

"I've really enjoyed working with them and I believe they are on the road to great success with this brand."

For more information on the company go to www.sirgordonbennett.com

Business support for the next level

The Business Ready programme is managed by the business support team at the University of Warwick Science Park. The experienced Business Growth Advisers team have been delivering business growth and support services to technology based businesses for over 30 years.

In addition, the team are supported by a range of specialist mentors who have run their own businesses and have expertise and experience supporting, advising, coaching and mentoring other growth businesses.



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