

Enterprise support helps timber buildings firm move from loss into profit in three months

As the recession deepened, Breezepark founder and managing director Danny Bonner found falling demand for his high-grade timber buildings hitting profits. So he called in Business Link for support to help get his business back on track.

The Challenge

"I've run my own business ever since leaving the army in 1994 after 22 years as a military provost," explains Danny. "I launched Breezepark, which trades as Evergreen Leisure Buildings, to take advantage of the market opportunity to provide high quality timber buildings, when everyone wanted a summerhouse or office in their back garden."

Evergreen now sells a wide range of timber buildings – everything from kennels, sheds, playhouses and beach huts through to offices and summer-houses. The business operates from two sites, with the main one just outside Colchester in Martell Quarry, Ardleigh. The second site, nearby, lets space to other businesses.

Danny has developed an experienced team: "We don't use subcontractors, so all our work is completed by five craftsmen and apprentices, who can build from kits or to order," he explains "We also supply other gardening and landscaping supplies to provide customers with a complete solution."

However, as consumers and businesses cut back on spending as the recession began to bite, Danny saw turnover and profits fall from the timber buildings site. This was accelerated by the fact that his second site started costing him money as some of his tenants' businesses failed. Fortunately, a mailing from Business Link caught Danny's attention, so he called for advice and was put in touch with Adviser Kurt Scheepers.

The Solution

Kurt arranged to visit within a few days and saw immediately that Business Link could offer Danny valuable assistance. "Breezepark was clearly a viable business, and I could see how, with some coaching, Danny could bring it back into profit."

So Kurt referred Danny to the Learning and Skills Council's Leadership and Management programme, which provides funding for training and coaching.

Business Link's intervention resulted in a 50% improvement in my cash position and took my business from loss-making to profit in three months

Danny Bonner, Breezepark

"Having established that Danny was eligible for funding, I provided him with the details of three business coaches from our Supplier Brokerage Service." This is Business Link's regional database that Advisers use to find potential suppliers for their clients.

Danny met with all three coaches and, having chosen Gerhard Crossman of Forester Business Consulting Ltd. in Ipswich as his preferred coach, was delighted with the rapid results. "One of my strengths is sales, so drumming up new leads has never been a problem," Danny says. "But my coach

re-energised me and helped me focus and take action on costs and profits, in addition to my focus on sales. " Plus, according to Danny, the biggest benefit of the cost-cutting and streamlining advice he received from Kurt and his coach was that it did not damage his underlying business.

He explains: "Rather than make one person redundant, potentially losing an employee with difficult-to-replace skills, my coach suggested reducing everyone's hours by three hours per week across the board. I put this to the team and, when they saw that it would secure everyone's jobs and the future of the business, they agreed."


Now, on his coach's recommendation, Danny plans to introduce a profit-sharing scheme based on productivity. He is looking at how he can turn around the loss-making second site, and is considering taking over another business and using space on the second site to return that to profitability.

The Impact

Danny continues to use Gerhard Crossman as his coach, even though the funding has stopped. "Since I started working with Business Link and my coach, I have seen my cash position improve by 50% and my business move from being loss-making back into profit. He concludes: "Business Link's support has been invaluable."

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