

Special EU Programmes Body

Project Case Study—

Programme:
INTERREG IVA

Theme:
Enterprise

Funding:
€2,479,370.00

Lead Partner:
**Dundalk Institute of
Technology**

Website:
www.iceprogramme.com

Project contact:
Irene.mccausland@dkit.ie

Geographical area:
**Northern Ireland and Bor-
der Region of Ireland**

Innovation for Competitive Enterprise (ICE)

Presenting a radically new way of enabling companies to enhance their competitiveness the 'Innovation for Competitive Enterprise' programme helped its participants to develop new business models, products and services and to increase their profitability.

The 'Innovation for Competitive Enterprise' (ICE) project was awarded €2.49 million worth of funding under the enterprise theme of the European Union's INTERREG IVA Programme.

Spearheaded by the Dundalk Institute of Technology, with University of Ulster, University of Glasgow and Glasgow Caledonian University as partners, the three year project saw experts engage with local companies through an intensive twelve month 'learning by doing' programme.

Speaking about the benefits of the programme, Irene McCausland, External Services Manager at DkIT said: "The core aim of the ICE project is to encourage the development of an innovation culture focused on creating commercial reward and supported by a strong network. The project is particularly relevant in the current economic climate as SME's have tremendous potential to help lay the foundations for economic recovery."

This project epitomises one of the core themes of the INTERREG IVA Programme, which aims to support enterprises on a cross-border basis.

By encouraging greater co-operation between firms operating within different regions it is able to enhance their collective ability to compete at a global level. Innovation lies at the heart of this approach and must be supported in order for businesses to grow and prosper in a challenging economic landscape.



Pictured (l-r) Irene McCausland, DkIT; Professor Richard Harris, University of Glasgow; Professor Renee Reid, University of Glasgow Caledonian; Ariane De Vriendt SEUPB; and Professor Rodney McAdam, University of Ulster.

Business Mentoring Lifts Company to New Heights of Success

MIM Northern Ireland, based in Londonderry, is one of the companies which took full advantage of the support offered under the ICE programme to boost its profitability and diversify its product line. Set-up in 1994, the company specialises in the installation of production machinery for a range of different business sectors.

Over the past two decades, it has amassed a wealth of experience in

the field and employs equipment such as a specialist modular air bearing system, which uses cushions of air to move weights of up to 20 tonnes. Access to this type of equipment, combined with a thorough understanding of the logistics required in complex installation processes, has allowed the company to grow steadily since its creation.

However, MIM NI's Chief Executive John Deery knew there was room

for improvement. After attending an innovation seminar run by ICE, he decided to apply and was quickly accepted onto the programme.

"We were assigned a business mentor who came into the organisation and conducted a detailed review of how we were running the business. They examined all aspects of our work and made suggestions that we quickly implemented, which has led to tangible results", said John.

"The mentoring we received from the ICE programme gave us a different perspective on how we went about our day-to-day work."

John Deery, Chief Executive of
MIM Northern Ireland.
Photo Michael Cooper.



In order to help John build upon his business' strengths, the ICE mentor suggested that he should diversify his existing product offering. This led to the development of a revolutionary new product called 'LowerLoad', which is unique to the market place and has now reached 'Patent Pending' stage. MIM launched "LowerLoad" at the IMHX trade show at the NEC Birmingham in March 2013. Other business improvement suggestions included

the recruitment of a full-time sales person; the creation of a business-lead tracker system; and the successful completion of public sector recognised business accreditations. The latter has allowed the company to improve its tendering capacity and bid for new and lucrative business contracts.

"The mentoring we received from the ICE programme gave us a different perspective on how we went about our day-to-day work. We

had been very successful to date, but this outside perspective helped us to explore new business development avenues that have given us that extra edge," said John.

The mentoring lasted approximately 11 months and led to some real changes in how MIM Northern Ireland operates. Looking to the future John hopes to utilise the skills gained to further diversify his business offering, secure new clients and recruit additional staff.

SL Controls—Maximising Exporting Potential

Established in 2002, SL Controls has grown from a small Sligo based company into an international business with offices in Dublin and Galway.

Since its incorporation the business has grown to become one of the leading companies in the provision of 'Manufacturing Equipment Systems Integration' and 'Systems Support', assisting their customers in achieving their Six Sigma and Overall Equipment Effectiveness targets. This process involves a critical assessment of how businesses involved in all types of manufacturing put together their product lines for mass production.

SL Controls partner with their customers on new or existing manufacturing systems and strive to increase the overall equipment effectiveness by addressing the critical steps at the Design, Integration, Validation, Operation and Maintenance project phases.

The company offers support in ensuring their clients' pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing systems are 'validated' and are maintained in the validated status within FDA compliance guidelines. Working with a number of blue chip companies such as Hewlett Packard, Intel, Vistakon and Amgen, SL Controls has amassed a wealth of expertise in this field and now employs a total of 26 staff.

Wanting to build upon his business' profitability Keith Moran, Managing

Director with SL Controls contacted the ICE Programme, after seeing an advert in his local paper.

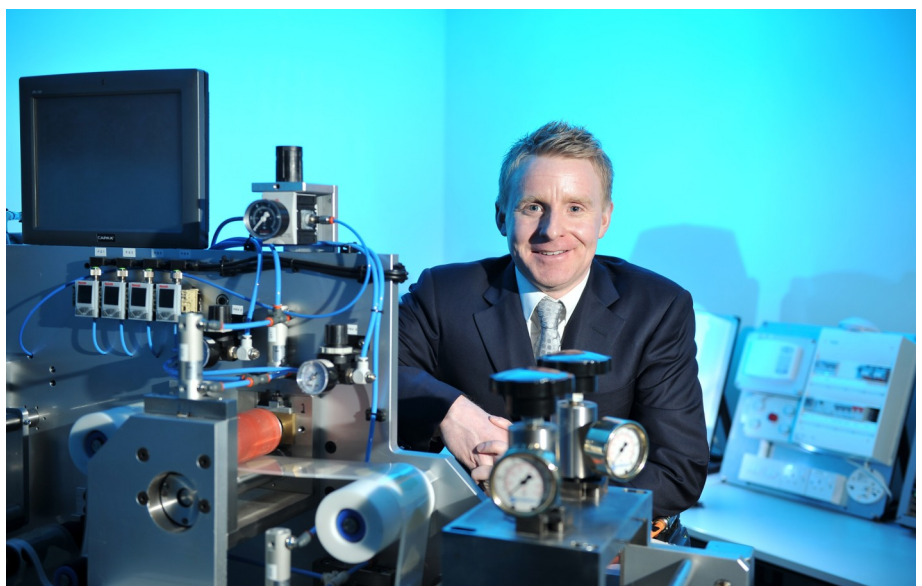
Upon being accepted onto the programme Keith and his team were given detailed advice on commercialisation for their unique product offering called, DiVOM' (Design for, Integration, Validation, Operation and Maintenance). The support Keith received was offered over a 12 month period and included professional support on a wide-range of licensing issues as well as new measurement systems to help monitor and track the company's revenue streams.

Commenting on the support offered Keith Moran, said: "The guidance we received from the ICE Programme has helped bring us up to the next level. It has made a tangible impact on our bottom line and will allow us to enhance our current business offering.

It has given us a competitive edge that we have every intention of capitalising on."

Keith has some definite plans to export the DiVOM process and is already looking at new market opportunities in the UK and the US: "We already have some clients in these markets but are seeking to build upon our client base and move into new sectors", he said.

"It has made a tangible impact on our bottom line and will allow us to enhance our current business offering."



Keith Moran, Managing Director with SL Controls.
Photo: Michael Cooper.