

Special EU Programmes Body

Project Case Study

Programme:
INTERREG IVA

Tradelinks II

Theme:
Enterprise

Funding:
Insert value

Lead Partner:
Enterprise Northern Ireland

Website:
www.tradelinks2.com

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Geographical area:
Northern Ireland and Border Region of Ireland

Tradelinks II, an EU-funded cross-border business development programme, has generated just over £15 million in new sales for firms in the cross-border region.

The initiative was designed to assist and grow the micro-enterprise sector across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

In receipt of nearly £3 million from the INTERREG IVA Programme, it is a partnership initiative delivered by Enterprise NI and the Border County Enterprise Boards in Ireland. The programme's principal aim was to assist 550 micro-businesses on both sides of the border to identify and address barriers to cross-border trade and development. By the end of the implementation phase, the programme had actually supported 580 firms, created

over 250 new jobs, and helped secure over 1200 more jobs.

Through a combination of business mentoring, research and networking the programme focused on increasing skills, knowledge, access to information, developing new contacts and new forms of doing business. Particular emphasis was placed in developing cross-border trade opportunities and linkages.

In the six border counties of Ireland alone there are an estimated 23,000 registered small businesses and in Northern Ireland micro-enterprises account for almost 88% of all businesses. These figures are typical of the situation right across the EU and testament to the importance of projects such as Tradelinks II.

The programme is an excellent example of an EU funded initiative that has created direct benefits for micro-enterprises on a cross-border basis.

Designed to help overcome many of the challenges faced by business owners, particularly in today's tough economic landscape, it has enhanced their competitiveness by providing the support and assistance they needed to grow and develop.

The following pages include some examples of businesses that were supported under this project.



Damien Jackson from SlideRax, one of the businesses supported by the Tradelinks II project.

Climbing the Ladder of Success

“The mentors helped us to create our website and also put us in touch with some distributors in the UK and Ireland. We haven’t looked back since.”

Like most successful entrepreneurs Damien Jackson and Declan Campbell started their business on the back of a great idea.

Declan’s personal experience with the difficulties and insurance risks of using conventional roof racks was the catalyst for the invention of an innovative roof rack product that has set new standards in the industry.

Called ‘SlideRax’ the product has formed the basis of a new business, which allows its customers to dispense with the need for personal safety harnesses and access ladders that are required by the ‘Working at Height’

government regulations. Offering guaranteed safety and time savings the product has proved to be a real hit with tradesmen and women, on both sides of the border.

During the start-up phase of the business Damien & Declan contacted the Dungannon Enterprise Centre for some advice and guidance. The centre put them in touch with the EU funded Tradelinks Programme whose mentors helped them to develop the first ever ‘SlideRax’ prototype.

Speaking about the support Damien said; “The Tradelinks Programme was really helpful. Not only did

they help us to develop a working prototype but they gave us invaluable market research and marketing support. The mentors helped us to create our website and also put us in touch with some distributors in the UK and Ireland. We haven’t looked back since.” After successfully developing their product, establishing good working relationships with distributors was the next key milestone for Damien and Declan’s business.

They have already made some useful local contacts and are currently working on expanding their distribution network, with interest as far afield as the Netherlands.

“Now we are becoming more established I want to focus our efforts on production as much as possible. One of our next goals is to increase our staff numbers. I want to be in a position where I can employ local people and in doing so give back to the local community,” continued Damien.

With a healthy balance sheet and a truly unique product offering, it looks like this goal is becoming more and more a reality for ‘SlideRax’.



Damien Jackson, owner of SlideRax.
Photo: Michael Cooper

Project Case Study

Aruna Sauces—Creating the Right Recipe for Success

Since 2005, Sarah Nic Lochlainn and Sarajit Chanda have been tickling the taste buds of local people living close to their ever popular restaurant 'Fuchsia House' in Ardee, County Louth. The couple's original mission was to change people's perceptions about curry and seduce their palates with authentic family

recipes passed to Sarajit from his mother in Bangladesh. Before long the restaurant was enjoying a roaring trade and demand for their sauces inspired this dynamic duo into entering the 'dining-in' market. Using Sarajit's mother, Aruna's recipes, they developed a range of five sauces. Their new brand, simply named

Aruna, quickly achieved local and national food and business awards. In order to capitalise upon this success Sarah and Sarajit contacted their local County Enterprise Board to enquire about any available business training and mentoring support. The Board introduced them to the Tradelinks Programme.



Sarah Nic Lochlainn and Sarajit Chanda cook up a storm.

Photo: Michael cooper

Under the Programme, the couple were offered the services of four different business development tutors who provided a SWOT analysis of their existing business model; market research of the 'dining-in' sector; website design support as well as additional sales and marketing advice. The last element of this support, lead to an introduction of the

'Aruna' brand to LMI Foods Ltd, which helped to secure a lucrative listing in food distribution outlets including SPAR, Vivo and Dunnes. The couple are also currently in negotiations with supermarket giants Asda and Sainsbury's and will soon appear on Tesco shelves, across Ireland. Commenting on the support they received through the Tradelinks

Programme Sarah, said; "The training and business mentoring advice we received from Tradelinks has been excellent. It helped us to make some crucial contacts, develop our website and gave us a better understanding of the export market". The support also helped the couple to create a rock solid business plan which was tested on a recent appearance of Ireland's 'Dragon's Den'. A fantastic experience, the TV appearance allowed them to secure a mutually beneficial partnership with one of the Dragon's, media supremo Gavin Duffy.

Looking to the future Sarah said; "In five years time we plan to make our mark within the UK and Irish markets and ensure that our restaurant quality product is on sale in all of the major supermarkets. After that we want to move further afield. We are targeting France, but have already made some useful contacts in Sweden, which we hope will reap great rewards".