



  
 Local Enterprise Office  
 Making It Happen

# Grow: PESTLE & MORTAR

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE KILDARE HELPS SKINCARE COMPANY GLOW  
 - AND GROW

**Making It Happen:**  
 Sonia Deasy, founder of Pestle & Mortar

*In 2017 Sonia Deasy thought that her Local Enterprise Office couldn't help her because her skincare company, Pestle & Mortar, was already up and running.*

She didn't realise it supports growing businesses too. "Now I tell people 'Go to your Local Enterprise Office'," she says.

### Acting on opportunity

The Newbridge woman had already run a successful photographic studio with her husband Pdraic from 2006 to 2017, but knew they couldn't scale it. They decided to close it and focus on Pestle & Mortar, which they had launched in 2014 and hoped to build into a global skincare brand.

At an international photography conference, Sonia noticed make-up artists were using creams containing hyaluronic acid, which had a transformative effect on models' skin. Spotting a gap in the market, she worked with laboratories in Asia, Germany and Ireland, to develop Pestle & Mortar's first product, a serum.

Sonia applied for a slot on QVC in America, the first Irish skincare brand to do so. "We sold out in seven minutes – less than 1% of new brands do that. It was monumental but we didn't realise it, probably because we didn't come from this industry."

### Proactive business support

Following her QVC appearance, Sonia got a congratulatory letter from Jacqui McNabb, Head of Enterprise at Local Enterprise Office Kildare, inviting her to meet.

"We don't wait for business people to come in the door of our offices. We go out and connect with business people. Too often, businesses don't know that they may need us or indeed about the range of government support available to them," says Jacqui.

Sonia was initially unsure of how the Local Enterprise Office could help her. "But Jacqui is really commercially-minded. She 'got' me and asked what area of my business did I need to expand?"



**Making It Happen:** Jacqui McNabb from LEO Kildare and Sonia Deasy of Pestle & Mortar, pictured at the National Enterprise Awards.

## TOP TIPS FROM PESTLE & MORTAR

- Apply for support. The Local Enterprise Offices are a community of people who want to help, advise and mentor start-ups. You will feel safe, supported and energised.
- Break projects into manageable chunks. Pestle & Mortar made the most of the supports available by breaking its business expansion plans into micro-steps. For each step, Sonia asked herself, "What do I need to complete this step?"

### Right supports, right time

At that point Pestle & Mortar needed more staff. Local Enterprise Office Kildare worked with the company to help facilitate its rapid growth, which included financial supports.

"The Business Priming Grant helped us employ the next eight staff members, by contributing to the cost of their first year's salaries. That was hugely helpful," says Sonia.

The company later received a Business Expansion Grant to invest significantly in its ICT infrastructure.

"Local Enterprise Office Kildare helped reaffirm that we had something special," says Sonia. "They really believed in the business and they knew we could go global."

### Going global

Since then, Pestle & Mortar has moved into new premises with a purpose fit-out and warehouse space.

It was also the only skincare brand to launch with Marks & Spencer in 2019 and its products sold out there within a week.

Today the company has nearly 30 staff. Its products are stocked in 21 countries and it has moved from being a client of the Local Enterprise Office to becoming one of Enterprise Ireland.

"That is very much the role of the Local Enterprise Office from the first moment we meet a company," says Jacqui, "assessing if they have the capability to grow in the global market and then transfer to Enterprise Ireland, where they can then access greater investment and expertise around global markets."

### Award-winning growth

It was also through the Local Enterprise Office that Sonia entered, and won, the overall title at the National Enterprise Awards. "I started Pestle & Mortar just five years earlier with one single product and no employees – I didn't dream of winning an award like this at the time!" says Sonia.

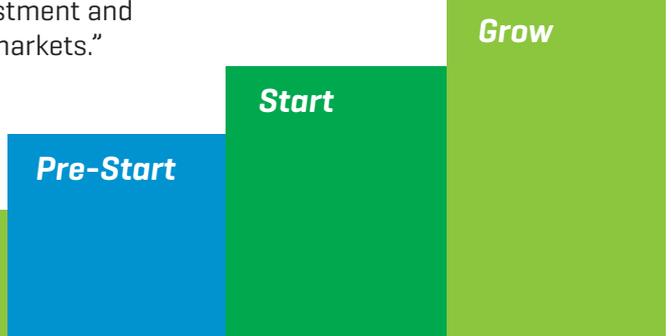
**"Local Enterprise Office Kildare really believed in the business and they knew we could go global."**

*Sonia Deasy, Pestle & Mortar*

Jacqui says Local Enterprise Office Kildare is extremely proud and honoured to have played a part in Pestle & Mortar's journey, saying she and her team always look to build long-term personal relationships with client companies. "We simply offered a listening ear and a range of supports at critical times in their growth. It's not until you sit and talk with the entrepreneur that you get an understanding of their business model, their business stage and the challenges and opportunities which face them in scaling the business. It's only then that we can offer valuable support."

"So many entrepreneurs are so busy in the trenches, but sometimes you need to come out of the trenches to take an hour and see how the Local Enterprise Office can assist you," says Jacqui.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN. TALK TO YOUR LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE TODAY.**



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