



John McCourt of Midland Precision Tool and Die Ltd (MPTD)

CLIENT FOCUS

GETTING BACK ON TRACK AFTER THE CRISIS

USING A COMBINATION OF INGENUITY, HARD WORK, DETERMINATION AND SUPPORT FROM THEIR LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE, MANY SMALL BUSINESSES HAD TO INNOVATE OR PIVOT DURING THE

COVID-19 CRISIS. NOW THAT THE ECONOMY IS RE-OPENING, THESE THREE BUSINESSES ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THEIR SALES GET BACK ON TRACK AND IN SOME CASES – EVEN GROW.

MIDLAND PRECISION TOOL AND DIE LTD (MPTD), County Roscommon

Established in 1999, by John McCourt, MPTD is a leading supplier of thermoforming tooling in Ireland for the plastics industry and caters for a wide range of sectors including medical, pharmaceutical, electronics, retail, and food companies.

A client of Local Enterprise Office Roscommon, MPTD has received various supports over the years and more recently has availed of mentoring and a Business Continuity Voucher.

Founder John McCourt says the company has kept going during the lockdown by providing high volume production tooling for the manufacture of PPE [Personal Protective Equipment].

“We have been kept very busy throughout the recent months as we have been supplying various pieces for PPE and tooling to the medical industry,” he says. “Our production levels were not reduced at all - in fact the only issue we had was in the transport of our products during the period when there were travel restrictions and check-points.

“But the drivers carried letters with them from customers which proved we were an essential business providing necessary medical equipment.”

It continues to be business as usual for the seven staff at the Roscommon plant and McCourt says he knew that the company needed to be on top of things when the lockdown began.

“Before Brexit hit us, customers got on to me looking for 12 months’ supply of certain products and it was the same pre-Covid, so I knew something was happening before it really took hold,” he says.

“I got the lads together and said although I didn’t know what was going to happen, we needed to try and be prepared as everyone would be affected in some way or other. By being aware of this before it happened, we were able to adapt to what was needed and focus on providing all the necessary products for the medical sector as work in other areas was slowing down.”

Since its founding, MPTD has received several grants from its Local Enterprise Office, and McCourt says this has been very helpful as it is a competitive industry to be in. And he would advise others to make sure to understand that hard work and determination is key when it comes to survival.

“I had grants from my Local Enterprise Office on several occasions over the years including a Feasibility Study Grant and ongoing grants to buy machines,” he says.

“If I could give any advice to other companies, I would say that the engineering business is not easy, but stay firm and be strong, and you should succeed.”

mptd-online.com



KUDOSHEALTH County Sligo

Declan Trumble of KudosHealth

Founded in 2016 by Declan Trumble, KudosHealth aims to reward employees who practice healthy behaviour and activities.

The digital health platform, accessed through the KudosHealth app, serves to motivate staff to track, manage and improve their health by using wearable devices or health apps to earn points - which can be redeemed in local stores - and annual discounts worth between €500 and €1,000.

With supports from Local Enterprise Office Sligo, including a Business Priming Grant in 2016 and Trading Online Voucher in 2018, the company had a successful start but reduced its marketing activity during the pandemic and is now trying to get back on track.

“With the whole impact of the pandemic, our business is trying to get back to some form of normality,” he says. “But as we were forced to hit the pause button on our product development along with sales and marketing activities, restarting is a much slower process, and it also means we have to seek further funding sooner than expected.

“But as other businesses are now getting back on track, some are in a position to start looking at new employee health & wellness solutions, particularly as many of the solutions they had previously used may now be impacted by social distancing measures.”

During the lockdown, the company also decided to roll out a free programme aimed at helping those working in the public healthcare system. And as well as looking for corporate sponsorship, it has set up a GoFundMe campaign to raise money to fund the project, estimated to cost €100,000, to provide the service at cost price for around 100,000 health care workers.

The support received from their Local Enterprise Office has been invaluable in getting the venture off the ground.

“We received a Business Priming Grant from the team in our Local Enterprise Office in Sligo and progressed on to other funding supports,” he says. “They have been a fantastic help from the start and have also offered many different types of support for other businesses during the COVID-19 crisis.

Currently, the start-up is part of Enterprise Ireland HPSU [High Potential Start-up] programme, receiving investment under the Competitive Start Fund in 2018. In addition to investment, Enterprise Ireland provides mentorship, and access to market networks and business development resources. The company’s next future target is to deliver milestones to secure seed funding where typically Enterprise Ireland co-funds with private or third-party investors in an HPSU investment round.

“This adds an extra incentive for investors, knowing that EI invests in the seed round alongside other investors to maximise runway and strengthen cash reserves before it will require any additional funding. Also, EI support services can enable acceleration of growth in international markets,” says Trumble, who would encourage other businesses to research what funding and services may be available to them.

“My advice to companies trying to recover after this is to make sure they are fully up to date with all the initiatives available to support businesses trying to get back to normal trading,” he says. “But I’d also say, that as difficult as it has been over the last five months, there is a lesson for every type of business in how to deal with these sort of events, as we may face similar in the future - hopefully not, but at least we’ll all be better prepared if it does.”

kudoshealth.com/

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PLEASE VISIT [LOCALENTERPRISE.IE/RESPONSE](https://localenterprise.ie/response)**



SATURDAY PIZZAS South Cork

Philip Dennhardt of Saturday Pizzas with **Ciara McGee** of Local Enterprise Office South Cork

Saturday Pizzas was founded as a pop-up pizza restaurant in 2007 by German food entrepreneur and Ballymaloe Cookery School trainer, Philip Dennhardt.

Helped with a Business Expansion Grant from Local Enterprise Office South Cork, the company has recently opened a new 2,000 square foot factory in Little Island as throughout the lockdown period, sales of its frozen pizzas jumped by 150%.

The hand-made pizzas are produced by a staff of eight and overseen by Dennhardt, who learned the trade in Italy, and are now producing 750 pizzas a day - a huge increase on the 300 per day which were being made at the original food production unit in Shanagarry.

“We have been incredibly lucky that we have actually seen a huge increase in sales during this difficult period,” says the founder. “In fact, we have had to hire three more members of staff to be able to keep up with the demand.

“I saw a gap in the frozen pizza market for a high-quality product and the demand was there thanks to local support. So, what started as a few local shops, quickly spread to a more national stage and our vision is to expand the brand into overseas markets. This growth can be uncomfortable but leaving the comfort zone is a challenge we are happy to face.”

While the business expanded and moved into a much larger premises during Lockdown, they were also very careful to comply with health and safety regulations and staff have been working, and continue to, in two shifts to minimise contact.

“Separating the shifts has been a simple task to implement and has had a positive effect on the quality of work done in each shift,” says Dennhardt. “We have lots of plans in the works about getting into more stores across Ireland and Europe - and hopefully we will have some big news in the coming weeks.”

The entrepreneur says the success of his pizza business has been aided by his Local Enterprise Office and he would encourage other businesses to avail of support and look at ways in which they can diversify, if necessary.

“We are very excited for the business to continue prospering and the support of our Local Enterprise Office has been invaluable,” he says.

“They were able to give us capital and employment funding towards the building work which needed to be done in the new facility. In fact, we wouldn’t have been able to expand without them and it is very reassuring to know that others believe in our business too - and that has given us the confidence to invest and grow.”

“My advice to other businesses coming out of this crisis would be to have a good cash flow forecast and make well thought-out, rational decisions. And as we have all seen during this weird and difficult time, there are often ways to adapt your business in order to get the most out of a bad situation.”

www.saturdaypizzas.com

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