Funded by UK Government

Accelerator Case Study

Slõ Drinks Ltd

Sector: Manufacturing **Size:** Micro **Location:** High Peak **Turnover:** £450,000

About the business

Slõ Drinks is a manufacturing business based in Glossop, Derbyshire and was established in 2005 by Mathew Done. It makes drinks that flow slowly to help those with dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) to drink safely without choking. Its products include drinks for hydration made with Slõ Syrup – a liquid drinks thickener, and for nutrition there's Slõ Milkshakes+. Both products are available to prescribe by doctors/clinicians and can be purchased through its e-commerce website.

The business employs three people and has an extended team of 10 people who support a range of company activities.

Funded by UK Government

Accelerator Case Study

Challenges faced

Slõ Drinks has been selling to the NHS for several years. However, working with such a large organisation means things move at a very slow pace. To achieve its growth ambitions the business has been looking to export and wanted to target 11 European countries.

Solution - support given

Slõ Drinks has taken advantage of various support services to build the business.

East Midlands Manufacturing Network (EMMN)

It has been a member of the East Midlands Manufacturing Network since 2023 attending the regular forum meetings where founder, Mathew Done has had the opportunity to meet peers, exchange ideas and hear about different ways of running the business. In fact, Mathew will be sharing his exporting experience as guest speaker at the EMMN Regional Meeting later this year.

Made Smarter East Midlands

The business had some advice from the Made Smarter East Midlands programme which helps businesses explore digital technology to improve efficiency and cut costs. They were guided by David Dobson and also signposted to Made Smarter Innovation regarding support with data analysis.

Innovate UK Business Growth

Adviser, Neil McCluskey provided support through the Innovate UK Business Growth High Growth programme. This included an intensive business diagnostic to determine the business support direction.

Following this the business proactively engaged with the Enterprise Europe Network creating a business profile on the EEN Partners and opportunities database. This resulted in interest from a German distribution agent. Slõ Drinks are currently following up on the initial conversations and developing a formal distribution agreement for the German market. It is now hoping to move up to the next level of Innovate UK Business Growth Support – the Scale Up Programme!

East Midlands Chamber International Team

The Chamber's international team has also provided origin consultancy on its commodity code for trade with the EU and the UK under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) earlier this year.

Accelerator Case Study

Accelerator Programme

More recently the business has been supported by the Derbyshire Accelerator project, funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and delivered by East Midlands Chamber. Derbyshire Accelerator provides 1-to-1 advice and coaching, Growth Vouchers up to £2,000 for specialist consultancy and an extensive workshop programme for established businesses.

It was at one of the EMMN meetings, Mathew heard about Accelerator.

Through working with Business Adviser, David Smith and following a business diagnostic Slõ Drinks registered onto the EMCCA funded Export Accelerator project, which supports Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire businesses to explore and enter new markets.

With guidance from David, they applied and were successfully awarded a grant of £7,584 enabling the business to upgrade its website and make it compatible in 11 countries across Europe. This included translations of web pages and downloadable documents. This support will help Slõ Drinks accelerate its export plans.

In addition, the business was also successful in its application for a High Peak Business Development Grant of £10,000, through High Peak Borough Council. This grant has been used to purchase and install a sachet-packing machine to automate the filling and sealing of Slõ Syrup into single serve sachets, making them more convenient for customers.

Mathew and his team have attended a number of training sessions including Lean Manufacturing, Harnessing AI for Business, and were involved in the Peer Network programme.

Impact – the difference it's made

The support has had a significant impact on the business. Its processes have been streamlined saving a great deal of time. The 1-to-1 business advice and international support has increased their knowledge, and they've been able to get a foothold into the countries they wanted to specifically target.

Mathew added:

"Just the support internationalising the web site, has saved us, at the very least 3 months in time! When you factor in all the other support received so far – add another two months - and the time we will save in the future – with the support and guidance I know is available - it will be a multiple of these."

Funded by UK Government

Accelerator Case Study

A word from the business:

"It's this type of support that has bolstered the foundations we have built to give me the confidence for us to take on the challenge of expanding into Europe. Knowing that as the inevitable problems arise, I have somewhere to turn for invaluable advice."

Mathew Done, Founder and MD

Support provided:

- 1-to-1 Business Advice
- Export Accelerator Grant
- East Midlands Manufacturing Network
- Made Smarter East Midlands
- Innovate UK Business Growth
- High Peak Borough Council Grant

Impact to business:

- International expansion
- Time savings
- Upskilling
- Streamlined processes
- Increased confidence

CLAIRE WARD MAYOR OF THE EAST MIDLANDS | East Midlands Combined County Authority | east midlands chamber