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Case study – How an Enterprise Zone has helped Hampers.com to be ‘best in class’

It’s hard to believe Patrick Gore when he says he’s the “least creative person in the world”, given that the Hampers.com CEO has overseen the company’s expansion amid a pandemic.

The former employee, who started consulting for the business in 2011, took over as CEO from Ian Longworth in 2019. Ian himself had acquired the business, as Clearwater Hampers, from husband-and-wife team Peter and Rachel Austin in 2007, having been their number two. The business has been running since 1979, when the Austins, owners of a trout lake between Hendred and Wantage, began selling their fish to the local community. They quickly expanded into selling mail order hampers with other food and wine.



In 2012 Ian moved Clearwater to new premises on Milton Park. Moving sites helped the business develop their sales and they grew from a turnover of £3m to £7m in just seven years.

When Patrick bought the business, he was keen to continue Ian’s work to grow the company at a steady pace by building a strong foundation of people, processes and systems. By Christmas of the same year, hampers were exported worldwide to over 150 countries.



During 2020, Patrick observed how the pandemic was having a serious impact on business and commerce. Having just had a successful Christmas period, he saw an opportunity to create work for other businesses who were struggling. Consultants and agencies were appointed to upgrade the company’s IT infrastructure and rebrand with the new name ‘Hampers.com’

In October 2020, the business moved to even larger premises on one of our Science Vale Enterprise Zones in Milton Park. For Patrick, one of the motivations behind this move was the opportunity to apply for a 100 per cent discount on business rates contributions for a five-year period. In addition, all rates contributions collected from our Enterprise Zones are ringfenced to be used for infrastructure investment in the local community, a key incentive for local businesses such as Hampers.com.

Patrick Gore, Clearwater Hampers owner, said: “Being in a Science Vale Enterprise Zone means that we're getting business rates relief over five years and are forming a long-term partnership with the district council team. We are very grateful for their help and for the relief. It makes a big difference in how we can reinvest in the business, helping us to remain best in class at what we do.”



“I am the least creative person on the planet and therefore must have people around me who can deliver that creativity. That's where we're terribly fortunate with the team that we're building and part of why the Enterprise Zone relief is so important. It enables us to look at other ways we can come up with new ideas, diversify and reinvest in the business.”

“We had a busy 2021 figuring out where we go next, another reason why the relief was so important. We've spent 40-41 years being within a stone's throw of our current location. If we are to keep growing, the thing that will be best for the business, for the shareholders, and for all the staff is to stay local. That's why we're looking into continuing to grow our business within the Science Vale Enterprise Zones.”

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships and Place at Vale of White Horse District Council, said: “We are delighted that Hampers.com has continued to grow and create new jobs while located in one of our Enterprise Zones.”

“Both of our Enterprise Zones can help support local businesses and encourage investment. Within the district council, and working with our partners, one of our main aims is help organisations recover from the pandemic, thereby building resilience and strengthening our local economy.”

Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), said: “Clearly, many businesses have been severely impacted by the pandemic. Enterprise zones help to create favourable conditions to support businesses to take positive steps forward, as well as also attract potential investment to Oxfordshire too.”



“Hampers.com are just another example of the opportunities open to businesses through enterprise zones.”

Heading into 2022, the Enterprise Zones team look forward to working with Hampers.com to identify a new location for another expansion, particularly within Enterprise Zone areas.