




Local Enterprise Office
Making It Happen

STARTUP STORIES: MECHANICAL MODULAR SOLUTIONS

MMS TAKES LEO STEPS TO SUCCESS - HOW LEO KILKENNY IS HELPING AN OFF SITE MODULAR SPECIALIST CLEAN UP AROUND THE WORLD

Startup Success: Michael McGuire of Mechanical Modular Solutions

WORKING IN AN INDUSTRY CAN BE THE BEST WAY TO SPOT AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO THINGS BETTER. IT'S HOW MICHAEL MCGUIRE CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR MECHANICAL MODULAR SOLUTIONS (MMS).

Many years working in the mechanical industry, helping to build cleanrooms for technology, pharma and biotech companies, showed him a gap in the market for off-site modular construction solutions.

He reckoned he could deliver a faster, more cost effective and superior product to customers through the offsite construction of a factory made, fully turnkey unit.

"I knew everybody was looking for the offsite construction of full turnkey solutions," says Michael.

Together with co-founders Alan Filan and John Comerford, he set up MMS in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, in 2016.

He got in touch with staff at Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny, who outlined the supports available and told him which ones were most appropriate for him.

For many startups a Feasibility Study Grant, which supports early stage market research or the development of a prototype, is the best option.

In his case, because he had already validated the market, his Local Enterprise Office recommended a Business Priming Grant. This is funding which can be used by a new business for salaries and equipment.

It all helped. The early days of a business can be costly, particularly if it takes time

to make sales. In Michael's case, he also had to acquire a 115,000 sq ft workshop.

But it isn't just financial supports LEOs offer. LEO Kilkenny provided training in LEAN manufacturing techniques, to boost efficiency and productivity among the company's growing staff. This helped MMS achieve all the industry quality standards and accreditations it needs to compete.

"Accreditations alone cost us €100,000, but we wouldn't even get to tender without them," he explains.

"Throughout all of this LEO was a very significant help. For example, its Business Priming Grant helped me to afford a design manager for six months, by which time we were up and running. We wouldn't have had enough resources to pay for a full time person like that ourselves," he says.

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Helping Make It Happen: Fiona Deegan of Local Enterprise Office Kilkenny

MMS also received capital funding for plant and equipment. In its manufacturing facility, it now has €250,000 worth of such equipment, says McGuire.

“The Priming Grant made a massive difference to us, the difference between being able to start the business or not,” he says.

It allowed the company to put in the foundations for success. MMS now exports most of its goods and has offices in Manchester and Amsterdam.

It’s on track for further growth too. “In the next three years we plan to have a €10m turnover and employ 100 people. We’re already exceeding every target we set ourselves.”

He is keen to make sure other early stage entrepreneurs get the same support he did.

“The best business advice anyone gave me was to get in touch with my LEO,” says McGuire. “A lot of people might not realise all these supports are out there but as soon as you are thinking of starting a business, you need to sit down with LEO and tell them your plans. They will come back to you with proposals as to how they can help with funding.”

Fiona Deegan, Head of Enterprise at LEO Kilkenny sees on a daily basis the difference LEOs can make to an entrepreneur’s startup journey.

“LEOs are the first port of call for anyone even considering starting a business. We can make you aware of all the supports that are out there, both from ourselves and from elsewhere,” she says.

The Feasibility Study Grant can help at the earliest stage. “Research is a very important part of any pre-startup.

The more information you can gather at the early stages the more it will benefit you in the long run. It’s all about making an informed decision,” she says.

With Business Priming Grants, it’s important to realise that there is no equity taken and no repayment required, she points out.

“Of course financial supports are not a reason to set up a business but they can help at a costly time. As part of the process, we can help you work on your business plan, which provides you with a road map that will help you focus.”

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