Love My Car

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Stay safe with style ...

Redundancy coupled with the need to be a responsible parent lead Sally Dickinson to design a range of car safety packs specifically for female drivers; and the creation of Love My Car .....

Overview

Sally Dickinson identified a gap in the market when her two daughters passed their driving test and she found there was little available in providing practical car accessories for women, sowing the seeds for a business idea that has become "Love My Car".

Sally explains "when my first daughter passed her test I went out to buy her a little gift to celebrate. I thought something for her car would be perfect, but couldn't find anything that would really appeal to a teenage girl. Everything was very male orientated. The same happened again with my second daughter a few years later and it got me thinking, perhaps there was business opportunity."

Having spoken to a number of people Sally saw potential for a business, however working full time it was difficult to take the concept forward. A few months later Sally's circumstances changed, providing her the opportunity to see if her business idea had any mileage. Sally entered a competition in the Daily Telegraph run by Cornwall Pure Business and Business Link, resulting in business mentoring.

"I knew very little about cars so needed to know where to start. Speaking to Business Link in Maidenhead I established the next steps. I carried out focus groups to develop a brand and wrote a business plan around the concept to enter into The Daily Telegraph competition." The concept was short listed and Sally found herself pitching her idea to Lord George, former Bank of England Governor, Sir John Banham, Daily Telegraph, IBM and Henry Ashworth of Watergate Bay.

Love My Car was identified as the most marketable business with a high growth potential to achieve a turnover of £1m in five years. As a winner of the competition Sally received mentoring from Sir John Banham, who gave invaluable advice and encouragement to turn the concept into a business.

Sally explains "I took the decision I wanted to invest some of my own capital and spent a year putting the business together. This involved identifying what would go into a Love My Car gift pack, sourcing suppliers, designing the packs, undertaking customer research and considering distribution methods. It was a really exciting, yet a terrifying time, as I could see the potential but there was so much to do to make it a reality!"

Sally also received financial support and guidance from a former work colleague, Alison Harrison, who is now a business partner in the company. When deciding where to set up the company, she saw an opportunity to move to Cornwall.

"We have always loved Cornwall and my partner has a house in Boscastle, so we couldn't see any reason not to make the move. I have been hugely impressed by the business spirit that exists in the county, and there is such strong support down here. I feel so lucky to be able to run the business from such a beautiful environment."

Support

Love My Car received significant support and guidance from Cornish support agencies and used the services of a number of local businesses including: Business Link Devon & Cornwall; Sir John Banham as a business mentor; N J Akers, IP practitioners, who secured the company's trademark; Follett Stock, who assisted with the company's terms and conditions; and Winter Rule, the firm's accountants.

Sally concludes: "Cornwall has an abundance of support agencies and professionals, which have all helped make the launch of the business that much easier."

The product

The first Love My Car product is the "Make Me Safer" pack, which contains practical products such as a map book, oil, windscreen washer, advice sheet, safety hammer, emergency phone charger, air freshener, de-icer and ice scraper. Customers have the opportunity to choose from a number of different gift box options.

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