

Owen Foster

Age: 18
Location: Angus, Scotland
Website: Owen's Angus Jams



Main Challenges



Enterprise support for young people



Impact of Covid-19 on businesses

Background

Young entrepreneur, Owen, has been keeping busy during lockdown setting up his new hit farm shop.

Owen began his entrepreneurial journey at age 12, selling free-range eggs in his village. He has since founded his successful jam company, 'Owen's Angus Jams' and is now expanding into new territory with his shop, 'Foster's Farm Shop'. Owen and his family have been working around the clock to provide takeaway food and coffee, as well as all the essentials to keep their customers well fuelled through lockdown. It has been a huge hit.

Self-motivated and resourceful, Owen has always had a good eye for business opportunities. He quickly discovered that by going directly to his customers he was able to charge a little more. With his first egg venture, he bought eggs from a local farmer; "I paid a pound for half a dozen and sold them for £1.50 and I went knocking on doors to find my customers!"

When at age 14 the egg supply dried up, he moved into jams - inspired by his Grandma Joyce Morrison:

"She taught me how to make jam. We did 50 jams in one afternoon and I sold them for £3 a jar and I sold them all within the week just knocking on people's doors."

"I think that is the biggest thing we'll miss because being able to have a laugh and sell directly to the customer is so important."

- Owen Foster

As someone who was eager to get out of the school and expand his ideas, Owen was ready to launch into business immediately but agreed with his mother to complete school and attend business college beforehand. Following this, he went into business full time. Owen's company has grown quickly; he now makes thousands of jars each year for shops, cafes, and restaurants, including Glamis Castle. He has extended his product range to include a variety of preserves and fruit-infused gins.



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Background

Undoubtedly, Owen’s enterprising spirit and dogged commitment are the foundation of his success, but for Owen also cites the intergenerational partnerships he has with his parents and grandmother, as fundamentally important.

Owen recognises the biggest challenge he has faced was financial support: “There is not enough enterprise support for young people to start up businesses in rural areas; I was very lucky because I was able to get funding from my family. If you don’t have access to that – it can be very difficult to come by.” Owen found he was not eligible for any funding available so turned to crowdfunding.

As the first business in his area to be supported by Crowdfunding, Owen was surprised at how willing people were to support him. His tips for crowdfunding are:

“1) Keep pushing it all the time – social media is one of the most powerful tools to get you ‘in front of the crowd’ and it’s free!

“2) Get people to connect with your story then they’re more likely to give.

3) Make it manageable – “If everyone on our Facebook page donated £5 then it would take us to our total!”

Despite the positive reception in the community, Owen’s business has been severely impacted by coronavirus having lost all the catering contracts as well as encountering issues with suppliers, deliveries, and price increases. For Owen, the greatest loss has been the cancellation of all the summer events he would usually attend:

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Owen believes there should be more opportunities in schools for young people to gain an insight into enterprise and see different versions of success; “I was useless at school, I hated it – I wanted to get out there and do something. I want others to see it is possible.”

Solutions

1. **Social media:** “Remember, it is an amazing free tool that can help you access your target market for selling your product or accessing funding support.”

2. **Crowdfunding:** “For those struggling to get support for enterprise start ups through traditional streams, crowdfunding is an amazing resource. It can be surprising how many people want to support you when they connect with your story.”

3. **Connect directly with your customer:** “Key to my success and customer loyalty has been my direct relationships with my customers.”

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