



ADAPTING WITH DIGITAL - WSX

Company: Pasta Rasta

Programme: Adapting with Digital

Participant name: Henry Horton

Video case study: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dh6nOReylXw>



Based in Gillingham, Kent, Pasta Rasta is the creation of business partners, Henry Horton and Licio Vario offering a unique take on authentic Italian cuisine with a fusion twist using Afro-Caribbean and Asian flavours. The innovative twist has proven to be incredibly popular with customers.

"Pasta Rasta gives you the authenticity of Italian food made using real Italian ingredients from Italian wholesalers combined with locally produced ingredients. Italian food by tradition was the food for the people and should work in the context of wherever you are"

The Impact of Covid-19

"The biggest impact of the pandemic outside of not being able to trade was staffing. A lot of chefs left the industry, and a lot of Italian chefs went home to be closer to their families in Italy and have not come back. The knock-on effect of that is that we haven't been able to develop and grow as quickly as we would like without the right skillset in our chefs. So, what we have decided was to train young people to be pasta chefs and give them the opportunity to build a career."

Why they signed up to the Adapting with Digital Programme

"We're registered with the Kent Growth Hub newsletter and there are always some great nuggets on there. I saw some items come through, one of which was the Adapting with Digital programme. There were a few others too, but the difference with the Adapting with Digital programme was that from the beginning, it looked like there was more nous with what they were doing."

"When you saw the content online, you could sense the support team and Business Advisors knew what they were talking about. They had industry experience and commanded authority with what they were saying. With this subject area, 'Digital' you know when someone knows their subject and when someone is just touching on the sides of it. With the business support team and their advisors, it was definitely the former."

The Impact of the Programme

Henry was delighted to benefit from such concise, well-articulated and relevant business support through the resources available on the portal to the live events and the added value of free support from the business team led by Robyn Brookes and the Business Advisor.



ADAPTING WITH DIGITAL - WSX

“The sort of content that was available is the sort of content you usually only hope to get to work with. You don’t need all of it, you just need to take what works for you and develop it with your business. And its quick, not heavily bogged down – it was succinct which was really nice.

The Business Advisor and other support was great, particularly with the grant application process. The advice helped make sure I maintained the best possible mindset and create structure in the business so that the task was never overwhelming, and I was always able to break things down into chunks, so they were more manageable.”

Applying for the Business Support Grant

“There was great support all the way through the grant process. The team did so well to keep everything simple. It wasn’t a tricky form with essay questions needing in depth answers, but you had to show that what you were saying actually related to what you were trying to do. Our application was successful which was really good.

What was really great, was part of the grant approval process was to use the online content that was available so you were compelled to explore what was there and noticing things that you might not have ordinarily like writing your business plan. These are business-fundamentals that many people shy away from like it’s not for them, but the way it was presented gave you enough to work with and apply it to your situation.”

Being successful in applying for the business grant will prove greatly beneficial for Henry, Licio and Pasta Rasta giving them the financial resources to develop their online presence with a new website which will be used to drive their growth.

“The grant will have direct impact because we’re working on the website now. We’ve had a holding page for over a year and we need to think about growth with all the channels that will drive that. The website will massively enhance the positive experience while giving us a saving with not needing to use the take-away food portals.

We can say what we want to say and target our customers and they can start engaging with us more so they can be part of our journey helping us grow. Our website will be a direct tool that will allow us to do that. “

Recommending the Programme

“Coming on board and opening dialogue with the programme would be good for anyone looking to start a new business or grow their business. This is a must – you need to talk to somebody and the advice and support available with this programme is great. There’s a lot of good advice from people, mentors who have been where we are. What this programme does is give you little nuggets that will set you on your way to achieving what you want to achieve for your business.”



STARTING AND SUCCEEDING IN BUSINESS - WSX

Company: Boost Academy

Programme: Starting and Succeeding in Business

Participant name: Tam Hobbs

Video case study: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiULCKRw1qE>



Boost Academy is a new start-up founded by English Teacher, Tam Hobbs. Boost is an online school for adult learners of English language, offering non-native speakers group classes of English on Zoom.

"The idea behind Boost Academy came about 2-years ago during the pandemic when I was made redundant from my job. I'd always loved English language and I decided to teach English because I'd always dreamed of doing so since my 20's. I love the fact that other people love the English language as I do, and I love all the idioms, the expressions, and proverbs we have in English.

I have a huge passion for the language, and I love to be able to equip people with the skill which will open doors for them and give them something useful to take forward and create opportunities in their lives for themselves."

The Impact of Covid-19

When the pandemic hit, a lot of people like me, teaching English as a foreign language lost their jobs because people could no longer travel to the UK. So, I decided to take matter into my own hands and became an independent, freelance teacher working online on various short-term contracts, nothing sustainable so I took the decision to create my own online school.

I was struggling to make ends meet and so I thought 'why not make something for myself?' It's been difficult, the pandemic meant that I didn't have a living, but it also created the opportunity to build something even more worthwhile."

Talking about the Starting and Succeeding in Business Programme

"I found that there were a lot of courses that I could sign up for including the SELEP Starting and Succeeding in Business programme. When I saw the programme and explored more, it seemed ideally timed and exactly what I was looking for my business.

What was ideal was the range of courses covering a wide range of business areas that I could sign up for with everything from finance, legal, marketing – all the sorts of things you need to think about when starting your business. It came at just the right time. I thought the resources were absolutely brilliant and I found them incredibly helpful. I do have a certain amount of commercial awareness but not enough to have gotten to the point where I am now."



STARTING AND SUCCEEDING IN BUSINESS - WSX

"The Business Advisors have been really good. What's important is when you've got an idea and you think it's great, that's all well and good but you need somebody with expertise to give you a reality check and to say; 'what about this?'."

"These are things you might have shied away from to avoid discomfort. When you meet with an Advisor you can go through that process and thrash it out. I found working with the Business Advisor on financial forecasting particularly useful as well as being able to do a mock pitch so I can take my proposition to prospective clients with confidence."

Applying for the Business Support Grant

Tam was delighted to have been able to apply for the full grant available and to have been successful. The grant will help Tam to purchase high quality learning materials that will benefit learners and the entire Boost Academy user experience.

"I'm so please because its going to give me the ability to buy the things I need to take Boost to the next level. For example, in order to teach group classes, I've been able to purchase presentation materials from Oxford University Press which are some of the best materials available. These will allow me to deliver the highest quality classes. Most importantly, the grant has allowed me to fund the Boost Academy website to drive new business."

"Even though some of the submission requirements and grant conditions could be complex for someone not used to dealing with them, I have to say that all the business advisors and the leader, Robyn have been absolutely fantastic about the whole process. What I would say to people is don't be intimidated by the forms and information required because you will get the support you need."

Recommending the Programme

When it comes to recommending the Starting and Succeeding in Business programme, Tam is unequivocal in her support.

"It's definitely taking Boost to the next level. I wouldn't have been able to go to this next point in the journey with the website, resources and opportunities. It's gone from a small-scale operation to something much bigger and more sustainable."

"I would say 100%, don't hesitate, it's really worth doing – we're very lucky that these opportunities are in place. When I first started the programme, Boost was just a small idea, but having actively participated in the course, Boost has been able to grow to what it is now and will keep growing."

"Go for it and you'll get all the support you need which is really helpful and great."



ADAPTING WITH DIGITAL - WSX

Company: Piperoni

Programme: Adapting with Digital

Participant name: Simon Taylor

Video case study: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Z6kKJ3JV8k>



Piperoni is a mobile artisan pizza business based in Southend-on-Sea, making authentic wood fired pizza in a wood fire oven installed in a Landrover Defender. Piperoni cater predominantly for private events weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and other family celebrations. Simon and Piperoni also attend a monthly farmer's market in Chelmsford.

The Impact of Covid-19

2020 was meant to be the year when Piperoni kicked on in the next stage of its growth, but as Covid-19 began to take hold, the business began to experience significant challenges.

"I had a private booking in January with a charity and they felt there may be some health concerns with the vulnerable clientele – as we began to hear more news of the pandemic unfolding, the alarm bells began to ring. That year I had already had a summer of bookings for the VE day celebrations, my calendar was full, with those celebrations as well as weddings and parties that were all booked. The year was supposed to be the turning point for the businesses and I had expected it to grow quite rapidly.

Come March, my whole diary was wiped out completely and I had no other source of income.

Why they signed up to the Adapting with Digital Programme

With the business struggling, Simon sought out support to keep Piperoni going through these difficult times. He found that Southend Council were offering funding for 80% of the membership fee for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). Having signed up to this offer and joining for the FSB for the first time, Simon was able to receive a weekly members bulletin of schemes, programmes and initiatives that were available to help businesses, and in one of those bulletins was information regarding the Adapting with Digital programme and business support grant.

"The programme offered the courses and support that I felt I needed for my businesses and the grant felt like added motivation."

The Impact of the Programme

"The programme has been great, and the online resources are brilliant and were perfect for me. I have been able to take advantage of all the resources of which there's a whole range.



ADAPTING WITH DIGITAL - WSX

There's been a great series on social media, how to plan, organise and deliver your social media in a professional way. There's been another series on professional photography, and it has all been so helpful while I wasn't able to go out cater for events in public."

In addition to the resources available on demand, online, Simon also found the interaction with the Business Advisor especially beneficial.

"I had fantastic online meetings with my Business Advisor. You don't often get a chance to sit down and think only of your business very often and that has helped think that I need that more often. It's been so valuable to identify weaknesses in my operation.

Because of the whole pandemic, I've struggled to find opportunities to grow my business but the Business Advisor, Tony and the support of the team have really allowed me to do that. I don't have staff, it's just me and having that support has been brilliant.

Before the pandemic I hadn't really needed to use social media in any big way but since the pandemic, social media has become massively important to my businesses and the brilliant resources and support have played a big role in making that happen."

Applying for the Business Support Grant

Simon found the process of applying for a grant quick, easy, and most importantly resulting in a successful application.

"The support has been absolutely amazing during my application process. Everything was done by Zoom which was really useful. Coming to the end of my application, I was unsure of having done everything, so I had a really helpful call with my Business Advisor who helped me go through everything.

I am dyslexic so all this support in writing my submission was incredibly valuable to me.

The Adapting to Digital programme was about me improving my digital output so applying for and getting the grant has allowed me to invest in camera equipment which will allow me to improve my digital output inspired by the learning resources on the Adapting to Digital programme. I hate being in front of the camera! But the feedback online and the learnings taken from the programme have helped with that and moving forward will help the business immeasurably."

Recommending the Programme

"I would absolutely recommend the programme. It's been a really easy process and if you need to change the way you develop and grow your business, the Adapting to Digital programme will be invaluable in helping you to do that. The support team are brilliant and always on hand to help whenever needed."



STARTING AND SUCCEEDING IN BUSINESS - WSX

Company: Callala

Programme: Starting and Succeeding in Business

Participant name: Andrew Iwanoczko

Video case study: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp0Xd-MQYRg>



Callala are an environmental consultancy working with companies (predominantly in the tech sector) to develop their understanding of their environmental responsibilities. Callala ensure that their clients are both legislatively compliant and also ethically responsible when it comes to the carbon neutral agenda.

“Technology organisations typically find themselves creating products because they can, sometimes less about what the market is looking for, and whilst there might be a conceptual link between what a company is aiming to achieve and what users require, we look to push organisations to look at the impact of their manufacturing/ product creation and their impact on the environment.”

The Impact of Covid-19

Like many people during the pandemic, Andrew’s principal employment ended. Andrew reflected on where he was in his life personally and professionally, and with the support of his close network and professional relationships, the green shoots of Callala emerged.

Why they signed up to the Starting and Succeeding in Business Programme

With the concept of Callala in mind, Andrew sought out the support needed to mobilise his idea into a fully-fledged start-up enterprise.

“The information was initially provided to me via a colleague who pointed me towards Southend-on-Sea Council’s website with a speculative view of finding opportunities where support might be available. The most appealing form of support came from the Starting and Succeeding in Business Programme offered by South East LEP and WSX Enterprise.”

The Impact of the Programme

Of all the support programmes available, it was clear to Andrew that *“the South East LEP’s Starting and Succeeding in Business programme would be the most advantageous giving the kinds of material and understanding of how to start a business that I was going to need”*

From his professional experience, Andrew was confident in many aspects of entrepreneurship, but also recognised that he didn’t know elements and identified the programme as the one most worth pursuing.



STARTING AND SUCCEEDING IN BUSINESS - WSX

"The videos, the group interactions and personal support has been really excellent in helping me identify where there are areas of vulnerability and weakness and start to address those. It's been very, very good. I've been delighted with the support this programme has provided me – it's free! It's also non-trivial and provided in key aspects, key vulnerabilities that I would have had, had I not taken part."

Andrew also took great comfort from having a dedicated Business Advisor to work with as part of the programme.

"I've worked with Tony, my Business Advisor on the programme and it's been really, really strong. He's really made a point of trying to understand where I'm coming from, where my mark is and where my thinking was. He challenged me in a number of areas and every time, I've taken his advice and run forward with it. I really feel that the impact that Tony has had on key facets of my business plan, on my pricing and the which I should consider the direction the business should take in terms of cash-flow for example -these are needs for all businesses."

Tony was excellent and reaching in and understanding what I was looking to achieve, what that was going to look like in the future from a pure numbers game, and provide intelligent, supportive and very positive advice."

The programme has also helped Andrew and Callala on a practical level.

"The programme has inspired my branding which I love, and the grant has allowed me to commission the development of explainer videos with a view to simplifying what our offering looks like. I hope this will help to create more leads for the business, reduce the sales cycle and demonstrate the competence of the organisation in delivering its ambitions."

The group sessions have helped me build some really great relationships, open doors and develop some great business resilience much quicker than I would have thought possible if I had tried to do it alone."

Applying for the Business Support Grant

Andrew found the grant process incredibly in depth in how it sought to look at the plans and forecasting in place for the business, but the process was made smooth and as stress free as possible with the support always available both from the support team and Business Advisor.

"Most of the necessary steps in applying for the grant had already been taken with the Advisor as part of the programme, the grant application process verified that work and was straightforward. Any elements that hadn't yet been covered as part of the programme allowed me to identify useful gaps that would be important to the business."

The grant is excellent, it's enabled me to speed up my sales process, without the need for a loan to support a bumpier journey. The grant also really delivers the ability to work with other consultants whose services would be useful to the business without having to employ people just yet."

Recommending the Programme



STARTING AND SUCCEEDING IN BUSINESS - WSX

“Realistically, I would encourage every business owner in Essex, Kent and East-Sussex to take a look at this South East LEP programme, and challenge them to look at themselves to think about whether there are any areas in their business they need to improve upon in their own understanding beyond where it is today. Because these programmes will help with that and help their business to thrive.”

COVID RECOVERY ACADEMY CASE STUDY - SHAW TRUST

PARTICIPANT STORY:

- I left my job in June 2021 due to mental health issues including Anxiety and Depression, and from this point I was on universal credit which generated my referral to Jets and then subsequently the covid recovery academy. I attended hot job sessions and a work placement induction- which was absolutely fantastic.
- Personally, I was even more isolated than I already was. This program has widened my support network from my family and given me the preparation to re-enter the world of work.
- I had a work experience induction and interview skills prep to prepare me for upcoming interviews, so that I could perform to my capabilities.
- Both Evie and Eric made it very clear that they were always there to support me throughout, and this was very reassuring.
- Overall, the program is brilliant- it has helped me to get back on my feet with the support and resources I needed to secure long term employment.
- This has been a positive experience- I encourage anyone to accept this help and support.