

Piperoni

BUSINESS SUPPORT CASE STUDY

Company: Piperoni

Programme: Adapting with Digital

Participant name: Simon Taylor

About Piperoni

Piperoni is a mobile artisan pizza business based on 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.

"I started the business 4-years ago, with the idea coming from a love of pizza and a lack of quality pizza options in Southend-on-Sea. I took a course with the Artisan School of Cookery in Worksop who were encouraging the start-up of artisan businesses. I retired to Southend from London where you were spoiled with the options available everywhere and so I thought, 'why not!'"

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 the Covid-19 began to take hold, Simon saw those hopes dissipate and 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 in light of the spreading Covid-19 pandemic 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 my as I travel into London 4 days a week by train and have been able to take advantage of all the resources of which there’s a whole range.

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. If I wasn’t able to find something, a quick call or email resulted in a super-quick response. 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.”