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supporting business growth

Case Study



Football America UK

Part-funded by:



European Union
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Development Fund



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Steve McKenzie,
Finance &
Operations
Manager

Football America UK is (super) bowled over by grant support

Whilst there was no American football, or any other sport, being played during lockdowns in 2020/21 Football America UK took advantage of this quiet time to make big changes. The business has invested nearly £28,000 in a bid to diversify and expand its current offer. The bold move was facilitated by a grant from the Business Gateway.

Football America UK was started in 2008 by former Leicester Panthers player, David Hagger. David spotted a gap in the market, regarding access to affordable American football equipment, after helping to arrange a charity football match with members of his old team. Today, the business is the main supplier for university and senior teams across the UK, with plans to expand throughout Europe.

The business supplies 350 American football teams with all forms of equipment, including helmets, shoulder pads and gloves manufactured in the USA. They also supply official NFL merchandise to fans.

Another part of the business is team wear – personalised clothing for players and fans including shirts, hoodies, caps and shorts. Customising these products with their current machines was a labour-intensive process involving vinyl which was heat pressed onto garments. The cutting out of the design and ‘weeding’ bits of vinyl that aren’t needed takes 15 - 20 minutes per garment. When orders went up, this process was becoming untenable and compromising their 10-day turnaround delivery promise.

Finance & Operations Manager, Steve McKenzie explained: “We had to offer relatively simple designs on the team wear products otherwise it made the process more costly and even more labour intensive. The other issue was, though we knew about the ‘direct to garment’ printers that could make things a lot more efficient, they were really expensive. Pre-Covid we’d just not had the time to look into it.”

With the help of a £9,600 grant from the Business Gateway and support from Business Adviser, Aruna Bhagwan, Football America UK made the biggest single purchase of equipment in its history, investing £28,000 for the new printer. They have also taken on one full-time employee and hope to create another part-time role as a result of the investment.

Lead time per garment has been cut by 80%, dropping to 3 – 5 minutes. This means that instead of 22.5 pieces, they now have the capacity to create around 90 items a day.

Steve continued: “Now we can create just about any design and don’t have to turn teams away if they require more colours or complexity. We are also looking to diversify into apparel for other American sports in the UK, and other countries, which could potentially see our sales doubling to approximately £40,000 a month.”

He added: “We really appreciate this funding. The grant has allowed us to move forward with a part of the business that we’ve not been able to change for years. Having someone like Aruna to walk us through everything at each point has been so helpful. And because of her support, there were changes made, particularly around the printer quotations which gave us a better chance of success.”

Contact the Business Gateway for help and support to grow your business.

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Support: Grant and advice
Impact: Increased capacity, ability to diversify
Area: Hinckley and Bosworth
Employees: 8

Delivered in partnership with:



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