

Case Study - Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd

Introduction

Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Limited was set up in 2006 in response to customer demand. www.willowchem.ie. Willowchem supplies passivation and sanitisation services for the Pharmaceutical, Medical, Food and Beverage and Engineering industries. Passivation removes free iron contamination left behind on the surface of stainless steel as a result of machining and fabricating processes. These contaminations are potential corrosion site, which if not removed, result in premature corrosion and ultimately result in deterioration of the component. In addition, the passivation process facilitates the formation of a very thin, transparent oxide film, which protects the stainless steel from selective oxidation. The sanitisation provides a chemical cleaning service for pharmaceutical clean rooms, hospitals and food and beverage industries. Willowchem had been outsourcing much of the passivation and sanititation processes and applied to Ballyhoura Development Ltd in 2010 for Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) funding to upgrade their facilities in order to purchase equipment to expand this part of the business in order to offer a complete product portfolio to customers.

Activities

In order to make a Rural Development Programme (2007-2013) application one of the documents required was a Business Plan. Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd embarked on a Mentoring process 80% funded by Ballyhoura Development Ltd. This involved a mentor visiting the site on three occasions to understand the product, process and people involved. The mentor assigned tasks to the client to have completed before the following meeting. At the end of the process Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd had a concrete and solid Business Plan. This accompanied all the other required documentation in order to make an application for capital and equipment funding to Ballyhoura Development Ltd. Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd were successful in their funding application and subsequently purchased the equipment to allow them to meet the market demands.

Lessons Learned

Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd put in place one person solely responsible for the compiling of the grant application which proved more streamline from the point of paperwork trial and time management. This person had an Accounts background and an understanding for detail which was crucial to the efficient processing of the application.

The importance of the mentor ensured that a business plan was completed which was of relevance. The enterprise officer advised the promoter of the steps involved in completing an application and also discussed the documents to be included with the application.

Success

Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd was in a position to tender for more business from existing and new customers including lucrative contracts from big pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer's, Genzyme in Belgium, Schering Plough. There was an unprecedented demand for their products due to word of mouth within the industry and also from achieving the ISO award. In 2011, Willowchem Technology (Ireland) Ltd realised that it did not have the capacity to meet requirement from the new customer base and was outsourcing some of the work. They made another application for additional capital and equipment to meet the capacity issues to allow them to be more competitive by doing all the work in-house. The equipment also allowed Willowchem increase the speed and efficiency at which work is completed.

Conclusion

The ISO award was a testament to the facility to the high quality standards required in such rigorous industries. Willowchem has been growing steadily over the past three years (in recessionary times) by listening to customers, meeting and exceeding customer expectations and retaining customers. The RDP funding will enable a rural micro enterprise compete on a very competitive and large scale.

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