

Design-based approach as a key for success

PROBLEM

The Quad Shop was established in 1993 at a farm in Ahoghill, Co Antrim, to repair Quad Bikes. While repairing the bikes, Sean Blaney, the company owner, saw that there were aspects with regards to current designs that could be improved. He thus set out to design an improved quad bike to be sold across Europe, through a new company, Blaney Motor Company. But by the mid-nineties, Chinese manufacturers were flooding the European markets with cheaper quads, and the opportunity for the new improved quad of Blaney Motor Company was lost.

SOLUTION

The path set out with the design of an improved quad bike, paved the way for the answer. The capacity to identify aspects to improve the design of an existing products, lead entrepreneurs Sean to initiating the redesign of the product himself. This taught the company about the importance of design and how to work with customers to get the best product design. The “design thinking” based approach formed the basis for the new company established by Sean in 2005: Quad X, a company which provides nowadays more than 100 attachments for quads and tractors, such as aerators, hedge cutters, bale shredders, etc.

Nowadays the company has a significant design team which is working intensively on the innovation in existing products and the design of new ones. This is done together with the potential customers, but the fact that the background of the team is one from agriculture contributes to the understanding of the needs of the customers.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS

The success of Quad-X is based on its ability to innovate and use its design expertise to develop new products. The company has integrated and embedded a design-thinking approach that leads to a continuous process of designing and developing new products to meet the needs of their customers. This approach is embedded in the company through its core values, based on innovation and quality commitment with heavy investment in research and development.

Source: Design-Driven Innovation: Why it Matters for SME Competitiveness.
https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/Design-Driven%20Innovation-Why%20it%20Matters%20for%20SME%20Competitiveness.pdf Last accessed 17.10.2018

QUESTIONS FOR THE LEARNER:

1. Today if you were in Sean his shoes what would you do?
2. What kind of solution would be best for you if a competitor took over your market?
3. How could you apply design thinking (or other creativity techniques) in your own business)?