



The Sweet Smell of Success

Freshorize 3 in 1 Inventor achieves worldwide recognition

After three long years in the making, in September 2003, Aziz Patel, an inventor from East Ham, London, triumphed by seeing his product 'Freshorize' appear on the shelves of Tesco with the help of Business Link for London.

Aziz spotted his business opportunity on a flight to London in 2000. "I realized there was a problem with air freshening washroom facilities. The air fresheners were not working fast enough at a time when they were needed the most," he explains. "What was needed was a burst of fragrance that could be dispensed without extra effort."

The solution he devised came from linking the habits of washing hands with air freshening, so that a burst of air freshener is simultaneously applied by operating the pump of the handwash, whilst constantly providing fragrance to the room for 30 days.

A patent application was made but to Aziz's shock, the reaction from the industry and supermarkets was less inviting. "The only option I had was to develop the product on my own," explains Aziz. "I had no money, but I had an endless supply of determination and perseverance."

To help him develop and bring the product to market, Patel went to Business Link for London, the small business advice and support service. Due to the unique nature of his idea, Patel was given a dedicated Business Link advisor and signed onto the Up and Running coaching and mentoring programme for fast growth businesses.

"Business Link made me develop a business plan that I kept evolving as events changed. It helped me keep thinking about planning, where the money was coming from and what risks I was taking, which was essential to keep me focused", says Aziz.

However, as he looked for manufacturing support he found problems. Even when some retailers expressed interest, barriers appeared to prevent Patel from getting Freshorize 3 in 1 to market. He explains, "It was a vicious circle because the supermarkets wanted to see industry backing before they would look at this product, but the industry would show little interest for the idea until the supermarkets had".

"My business advisor was great motivational help at this point always being positive and pointing me towards other business angles." Aziz remembers.

His diligence and the continuous advice from his Business Link advisor eventually paid off. “I approached Tesco for the third occasion as I had not been successful in meeting with them previously. This time I was fortunate and arranged a meeting with a new Tesco buyer,” explains Aziz. “She was a different buyer with vision. She listened to what I had to say about inventors not receiving support from industry. She gave me a chance, which meant everything to me.”

With Tesco’s assistance, Patel developed two more prototypes and with their backing the project support from the industry was suddenly a lot easier to obtain. “Today eight British companies are involved in making a Freshorize unit,” he explains.

By late September 2003, Freshorize 3 in 1 was on sale at major Tesco stores and Aziz is continuing to use Business Link to help him with the next stage of the business development. He comments,

“Even now as the first batch of products begins to roll out my business advisor has been assisting me with the admin points of running a manufacturing schedule, to ensure things run smoothly and helping me promote Freshorize. My next step is to develop the distribution of the product and grow sales.”

For further details of the services offered by Business Link for London call them on 0845 6000 787 or visit www.businesslink4london.com for details.