

DIGITAL GARAGE

Starting out in a small garage, Digital Garage have transformed into a leading technology company who deliver innovative equipment and service-led solutions.

Banbury based business, Digital Garage, are a broadcast and post production solutions expert, acting as both a value-added reseller and a highly experienced systems integrator. Offering workflow design, equipment supply, deployment, testing, training and ongoing technical support for the public sector - with a big focus on educational institutions – and the private sector.

Digital Garage's founder, Mike Whelan, tells us their story "Digital Garage started life in 2001, so 22 years ago now, when we worked out of my garage – hence the name. Back then things looked quite different. We were predominantly a supplier of equipment, we would buy it, supply it, plug it in and do the wiring. And over the years we've grown into a full service technology business with 15,000 square foot of space in Banbury and 16 full time staff. We now, not only supply equipment, but offer end-to-end solutions and services to the television industry and allied creative sectors. For example, if you're a University and are expanding your teaching facility for new media, we'll help design the space, work with your architects and consultants to create an appropriate environment for filming, control and storage. We then completely fit it out, put all the equipment in and continue to maintain it. But on the other side, if you were a freelance videographer, for example, we could also supply you with a new editing suite or a new camera if you needed it. So, we're a broad business working with a wide spectrum of companies, worldwide."

Connecting with Oxfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership, OxLEP

Mike tells us why he first wanted to work with OxLEP "I'd heard other people talking about all this help they were receiving from LEP's around the country. I knew there was a LEP in Oxfordshire so why wasn't I using them. So, I first connected with OxLEP during Covid and realised there was a whole raft of initiatives we could benefit from.

I engaged with the Peer-to-Peer networking which was initiated towards the end of lock down. It can be quite a lonely place running your own business, especially at that time, so it was great to be able to share ideas and chat about the daily stresses of being a director. A really nice thing that came out of it was one of the businesses was sending out parcels of beer and crisps to it's staff during lock down, and they'd all get together on a Friday afternoon over Zoom.

So that's something we implemented here, which was great for team morale. It was also good that I could be there for others, help them with any issues they may have that I've dealt with in the past. It was great to be part of something like this."



Mike continues "I also work with OxLEP on a one-to-one basis. Chatting to their experts and working out solutions to help deal with challenges has been really useful. And, being on their mailing list and finding out about webinars and other support they can offer is great. We've also just contacted them if we have a problem. And if they don't have the answers, they always know someone who does and point you in the right direction. They've also opened up other connections for us, for example we are now members of a wider technology group that is giving us opportunities."

OxLEP's funding support helped save the day

Alongside the support offering from OxLEP, Mike also was successful in being awarded a grant from Cherwell District Council's Business Adaptation Fund (CBAF) delivered by OxLEP Business. He tells us of his experience with this "We were informed about the funding opportunity and went for it. We originally designated the funding to create a technology research space within our offices. But, at the time we won a project with a university to design and build a suite of new recording studios. The timetable was extremely tight and the normal supply chain we use to manufacture our furniture were unable to meet the deadline. There was a risk here that we would not be able to deliver the furniture and acoustic treatments for the spaces in time. So, we said 'Well what if we can use the grant funding to purchase the right tools so we can bring the manufacturing in house?'. We asked OxLEP and they were great. They told us to submit a variation, put some justification in and they will consider it. They did and they accepted it and we were able to proceed with the purchase of this equipment, which we did within a week. We met the deadlines and the project was a massive success.

Having this equipment means that we're now able to do exactly what we want, because we know the design process inside out and we can now manufacture the furniture to suit our designs as we want them, including ergonomics, user positions etc. OxLEP facilitated that because having that money enabled us to push forward with our in-house manufacturing. It was great all round, well worth the time spent during the application process. We got an immediate return on our investment."

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Rounding up a great experience

Mike sums up his experience working closely with OxLEP over the past few years and how it's helped Digital Garage expand its offering "It's been hugely positive working with OxLEP, it's made us stop and think about what we are doing in our business. And, being able to tee into that network and feel part of something. They have been there to help us. It can be quite a lonely place running your own business. You'd think after 20 years of running a business you should know it all, but you never do. There's always someone out there that can help if you're open to it.

We've now got more jobs coming in and can now tell our clients we can design and build what they want, at any size. We've also started other elements of manufacturing including some innovative lighting installations and 3D services. It's onwards and upwards for us at Digital Garage and we're looking forward to where the future takes us."



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
digitalgarage.tv

If you are looking for support for your business get in touch with us to find out how our team of specialists at OxLEP Business can help you.

01865 897 181

e: business@oxfordshireLEP.com

w: oxlepbusiness.co.uk