



Business Mentoring Scotland is a business growth tool delivered by Scottish Chambers of Commerce in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and is provided at zero cost to mentored businesses. One of the more unique and socially minded businesses to take advantage of mentoring in recent years, is Plan Bee Ltd. Plan Bee lease bee hives to businesses and produce and sell a variety of products with the beeswax - including honey, candles, fudge, and in the near future, craft beer. Owner, Warren Bader, not only aims to grow a profitable, ethical and sustainable business, but also works to increase awareness of the importance of bees to the world's ecosystem - engaging in projects with local schools including through the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games Legacy Project. Warren feels that mentoring "is one of the best things I've ever done." and his mentor Mike Lees described his work with Warren as "an exciting opportunity encompassing the challenge of creating a strategy to get across the ethical message of the plight of bees, whilst also building the Plan Bee brand and operations.". Scottish Chambers' spoke with Warren and he outlined how he and Plan Bee have benefited from tapping into Mike's experience and expertise:

Why did you join Mentoring?

"I felt that I didn't have a helicopter view of my business. Being the owner of a small business you are always at the coal face, it can be a lonely journey and it's not always easy to see the potential mistakes you can make or the opportunities available. I went in looking to improve the performance of the business, to get an external set of eyes on things, and to talk with someone with experience of a large scale operation."

How well did you connect with your mentor, Mike?

"Mentoring is a bit like blind date! You look over someone's CV and have pre-conceived ideas but you never really know someone until you meet. As soon as I met with Mike I knew he was going to be the right guy for us. Carol Anne (of Scottish Chambers) is very perceptive about matching a business with a mentor and it's such an important part of the process."

What business issues did you work on?

"We covered the whole spectrum. We talked about moving the business forward through developing the business' product lines, our financial processes, the marketing of our product offering, and breaking into new international markets – particularly for the new craft beer we are working on."

What have been the effects of mentoring on you and the business?

"On a personal level it's led to a mind change in myself. Mike instilled in me more confidence generally, and also about the business and the products we sell. Practically, we've changed the product formula for our craft beer to improve the taste and make it more appealing. We're also now working at moving into export markets in the Middle East and China for our honey."

Would you recommend Business Mentoring Scotland to other businesses?

"Joining the Glasgow Chamber has been fantastic value for money and joining mentoring was a complete no brainer. Mike has been amazingly pro-active in moving the business forward and I feel that every businessperson should have a mentor - a sage if you like - at some point in their life."