



Case Study: Esk Laundry

In October 2005, Grahame Muir and Sarah Ward took over the Esk Laundry business, which had been closed for several months. Since then they have upgraded the ironing facilities, developed their offering to local hoteliers and other businesses and extended their home delivery service.

"There are various areas of the laundry business where our flexibility and the quality of our hand finishing give us an edge in terms of service. We do everything from washing the Longtown FC kit each week of the season through to top notch ironing of table linens for local hotels."

Sarah Ward

Esk Laundry also employs two part-time staff, Demi and Tracey, to cover the busiest times towards the end of each week and Saturdays.

Longtown Market Town Initiative involvement

Esk Laundry learnt about the support available from the MTI through a discussion with Business & Training Adviser, Bev Bamford. As well as broad business advice and access to local networks, the MTI connection has also helped Grahame and Sarah to improve their accounts and financial management.

In October 2006, Esk Laundry was awarded a grant towards the costs of a new, more reliable and spacious van.

"The new van has made a big difference and creates a good impression. For a start, the work that Sign Art in Carlisle did on the graphics means that we have a permanent advertisement travelling round the area all the time. A reliable vehicle is essential for the business when you think that, on my longest run of the week on Saturday mornings, I can cover up to 140 miles from Gretna and Newcastletown down to Wetheral."

Grahame Muir

Achievements

Turnover and profitability of the business have both improved significantly since the first months and a majority of the business is repeat orders and regular visitors, an indication of customer service and a good reputation.

Esk Laundry has gradually increased its opening hours so that it is now open on Mondays, on Wednesday afternoons and on Sundays. These were all traditionally quiet times in Longtown but a number of businesses have started opening and Esk Laundry has seen trade develop and a growth in the numbers of people bringing in laundry, doing some local shopping and using the local facilities.

"We have tried to make the way we work as convenient for our customers as we can and they appreciate it. By gradually improving the services we offer, extending the home delivery and developing new things like the Rug Doctor carpet cleaning, we are growing the business in a manageable way."

Grahame Muir

Challenges

One of the main challenges facing Esk Laundry is energy availability and costs. With no mains gas supply to Longtown, the Laundry is reliant on gas cylinders for both water heating and the commercial dryers and Graham is very conscious of the environmental impact of the Laundry.

The other challenge is reaching new business customers with clear information on how the Esk Laundry service can benefit them.

"A majority of our work is still brought into the Laundry by domestic customers. However, local businesses are beginning to see that we can help them to tackle their washing and ironing efficiently, reliably and cost-effectively with the added attraction of convenient collection and delivery."

Grahame Muir

Future plans

Esk Laundry may be thriving but Grahame and Sarah continue to look at options for future growth such as new niche markets or expansion into other areas.

"We like being in Longtown and have enjoyed getting to know our customers here. The MTI advisers have been a big practical help in the past and it is reassuring to know that we can talk to them about the pros and cons of some of our ideas for the future."

If you run a business or a local organisation that creates washing and ironing, please contact Graham or Sarah on 01228 791126 to find out how Esk Laundry can help you.

Nature of business: Laundrette, domestic and commercial laundry, ironing and carpet cleaning services, dry cleaning agency
Address: 5 Swan Street, Longtown, CA6 5UY
Telephone number: 01228 791126
e-mail/website: esklaundry@aol.com

