

Digital Upscaler

Case Study

MICRO-FRESH®

Sector: Manufacturing

District: Leicester City

Support Accessed: 1-to-1 Digital Technology Advice

Making a material difference: How engaging with the Digital Upscaler project helped Micro-Fresh® significantly transform its stock management systems to support future growth.

Micro-Fresh®, an innovator in the field of developing antibacterial coatings first engaged with Digital Upscaler at a pivotal point in their digital transformation journey.

Having seen a meteoric rise in demand for their products across the globe, the business needed to modernise and elevate its digital systems, to better support international shipping and stock control management across its rapidly growing network of international offices, as Managing Director, James Bowie said:

"For a long time we had been relying on outdated systems, including manually updated spreadsheets, it became critical for our growth plans to gain a more consolidated view of stock levels."

The focus of the support provided by Digital Upscaler was funding and mentoring. This included in-depth tech advice and helping Micro-Fresh® access funding, enabling them to procure and implement a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to modernise their approach.



Summary of Outcomes:

- **New bespoke ERP system scoped, procured, and integrated.** This has already improved performance and efficiency, reduced errors, and elevated customer experience.
- **Additional human resource investment** supported the appointment of several new recruits, including an additional Business Development Manager.

About the business

Micro-Fresh® International was founded in 2006 by CEO, Byron Dixon OBE, a specialist chemist who had held senior roles at some of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies.

Having specialised in leather finishing, Mr Dixon recognised the hygiene challenges caused by mould growth in footwear and developed Micro-Fresh®, an innovative material treatment, which suppresses bacterial development and reduces odour. Its award-winning invisible technology, which contains natural active ingredients and blocks the growth of harmful and odour causing bacteria, is now available around the world and used across a range of applications. Beyond footwear, it can be applied to almost any product during the manufacturing process, making it ideal for scaling into new markets. Thanks to continual innovation, the company, which is headquartered in Leicester, has seen steady continual growth through the years and today employs ten staff in the UK alone.

A pivotal moment for Micro-Fresh® came when De Montfort University, the UK's centre for excellence in textile analysis, conducted a range of robust tests on the technology, proving that it was effective in reducing the transferability of viruses, including COVID-19. This offered several commercial benefits, including reducing the spread of the virus during handling and transportation of textile-based products. As a result, the business has seen significant growth across multiple sectors, including footwear, textile, hospitality, health care and sportswear, and now enjoys revenues of over £6 million worldwide.

Why did Micro-Fresh® decide to seek support from the Digital Upscaler Project?

Micro-Fresh®'s Managing Director, James Bowie had identified the need to modernise their digital systems to keep pace with their growth plans, fundamentally this included a plan to source and implement a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, James Bowie told us:

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The business was using an outdated supply chain management system, alongside a mixture of resources and systems which were largely disjointed. We knew it simply wouldn't be fit for purpose as the company continued to expand and only a state-of-the art ERP would support our international shipping and stock movement operation.

James Bowie, Managing Director ”

James knew that investment in a bespoke system was crucial as this would give Micro-Fresh® complete visibility of process flow and their planning and reporting capabilities, elevating customer experience and driving efficiencies across the business. He explained how he first heard about the Digital Upscaler project and why he chose to engage with the project:

“To mobilise the ambitious improvements we had planned, we needed expert guidance and mentoring. The Digital Upscaler project was signposted to us by the East Midlands Chamber and the team there highlighted it as a great opportunity for us to access 1-to-1 digital technology advice and technology grant funding to support our plans. The timing was perfectly in-line with our need to accelerate our digital transformation journey and invest in the tech we needed to grow the business further.”



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At all stages, the input from the Digital Upscaler team has been positive, clear, and supportive. They have helped ensure we are in the best position to optimise the system that's been created for us. I'd rate the advice provided very highly indeed.

James Bowie, Managing Director ”

What results have Micro-Fresh® seen as a result of engaging with the Digital Upscaler Project?

- **Funding secured:** With support from the Digital Upscaler team, Micro-Fresh® successfully acquired grant funding and were fully supported throughout the process. James told us:

“Our account Manager, Natalie provided a great deal of support with the grant application process. She was extremely supportive and provided clear direction throughout.”

- **The right supplier selected, the right system supplied:** A key aspect of the guidance provided by our Digital Upscaler adviser, was to ensure that grant funding delivered optimum benefit. Having taken the time to understand the business' objectives and challenges, they helped them appoint their solution vendor, based on best engagement and best long-term stability, ensuring provision of a bespoke build that perfectly suited their business needs. James Bowie explained:

“Our adviser was very good – he was extremely thorough and knowledgeable. Helped us ask the right questions to source and configure a system that would meet all our commercial aspirations.”

- **Automation has been harnessed:** The new ERP system is configured to alert the UK team when supply levels begin to drop in any of their offices internationally and automatically 'feed' the required stock without delay. It also allows us to instantaneously 'track back' throughout the supply chain, preventing production delays and ensuring stock is ready to ship when needed. This has significantly reduced the labour intensiveness of



processing, driven greater efficiency and freed up more time for internal teams to focus in other areas. This has already benefited the Micro-Fresh® team, as James Bowie highlighted:

“Our sales processing and logistics executive has already reported seeing an improvement in efficiency and has noticed the new ERP has been instrumental in Micro-Fresh® taking a huge leap forward, in terms of processing and reporting.”

What's next for Micro-Fresh® ?

The new ERP system is now rolling out internationally. In the near future, this will allow Micro-Fresh® to give its 'direct' customer base more control. Micro-Fresh® will have the capabilities to set them customers up with individual user accounts, empowering them to directly order themselves, freeing up valuable internal resources at their head office.

Collectively, this will accelerate Micro-Fresh®'s sales globally, increasing their reach and driving growth in key territories, including Latin America and the Caribbean (LATAC) and India.

Summary from Paul Humphreys, Head of Scale Up Services: *“The focus for Digital Upscaler, is to work with our region's most ambitious and innovative SME's, helping them grow and scale through better placed technologies. Working alongside the team at Micro-Fresh®, we've provided the guidance, framework, and funding for them to digitalise their entire business processes.”*

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