



Accelerating business growth with ambitious scale up companies

## GROWING UP FAST: NEXT STEPS AFTER COMING OF AGE



**When MAXX Design celebrated a landmark birthday it was toasting over two decades of success. When the Newbury-based design and marketing company marked its 21st birthday the team celebrated in Hawaiian style (as you can see from the photo!)**

The birthday was a significant milestone for the 20+ strong agency, which started as a graphic design service for print before expanding to include digital development and marketing promotion. Although a long-established business, the company had ambitious growth plans and this, combined with some planned changes in the business, encouraged the directors to seek some business advice to support its growth strategy.

Catherine Jenkins, Business Development Director, became aware of the Berkshire Business Accelerator whilst attending the Business Forum networking group that meets in Sindlesham. Here she met Susan Elliott, managing director of VitalSix, who explained the benefit of this strategic and leadership programme to support MAXX Design in its development.

Catherine explained: "We were very focused on growing the business and had achieved our first major milestone which was £1 million turnover. We had put in place our own five-year plan for growth but achieving the level of turnover we wanted within the timescales we had set ourselves was proving challenging. As we grew, staff costs naturally increased and a key challenge was to scale the business, but also to increase profitability."

Another factor was that MAXX's Founder and Managing Director, Dermot de Courcy Robinson, was approaching retirement and looking to reduce

his time in the business. Part of the five year plan was to ensure a robust management team was in place, as well as developing a strong junior management layer that would be able to take on some of the directors' workload. Following a conversation with Susan, in-house coaching was introduced to help develop key members of the MAXX team.

A significant game-changer for MAXX was attending the Berkshire Business Accelerator programme delivered by VitalSix in partnership with Henley Business School. The three-day course gives small businesses a better understanding of their markets and clarity around their own aims and objectives. MAXX was so impressed after attending a taster session that the three business owners, Dermot, Catherine and co-director Jackie Blaker went on to do the full course.



"The Accelerator programme was absolutely fantastic. It has revolutionised the way we look at our business."

*Catherine Jenkins, Business Development Director, MAXX Design*

Our clients are high growth innovative businesses led and managed by people who value objective input to work alongside their management teams to address strategic and tactical issues as the business scales up.

Visit [www.vitalsix.co.uk](http://www.vitalsix.co.uk) or call 0118 304 0660 to find out more

VitalSix Ltd | Gateway, 1 Collegiate Square, Thames Valley Science Park, Shinfield, Reading, RG2 9LH



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**The business:**

MAXX Design, 2 Toomers Wharf, Canal Walk,  
Newbury, RG14 1DY

[www.maxx-design.co.uk](http://www.maxx-design.co.uk), 01635 521224

**The problem:**

Growing the business whilst improving  
turnover and increasing profitability.

**Support delivered:**

The Berkshire Business Accelerator course at  
Henley Business School, one-to-one coaching,  
financial consultancy, recruitment advice,  
sales consultancy.

**What next:**

Building up the team to move the business  
forward to the next level of growth.

"It was absolutely fantastic. It revolutionised the way we look at our business. Just taking three days out, to focus on every aspect of the business and to really talk about what we were trying to achieve and how we were doing it, was just what we needed. We made some key business decisions and we're still in the midst of it all," said Catherine.

"It really opened our eyes. When you're working in the business, you are often blinkered to new ideas. On a course like this, you're open to other perspectives and alternative ways of doing things. We needed to spend time on strategy and this was the perfect opportunity."

The experience helped the MAXX Directors recognise areas where they may need to employ new members of staff to expand their offering. It has also inspired them to bring in consultants to help them interrogate their accounts, to improve proposals, strengthen sales across the whole business, as well as advice on recruitment. A branding tweak, and a website revamp have followed. Crucially, as a direct result of advice received, the Directors appointed a financial controller.

Taking on more staff meant an office move was necessary. The company moved to modern offices, branded in MAXX colours in a superb position in central Newbury on the banks of the canal. The team is convinced that the rebrand and the move has been central in securing some major new contracts, including the UK digital marketing contract for stylish Italian electrical appliance company Smeg and a deal with leading mobile marketing company TextAnywhere. MAXX is also maintaining valuable relationships with many and varied long-term clients such as 3i, Highclere Castle, Crowcon and Westminster School.

"I believe this is ultimately a result of the course," said Catherine. "The VitalSix team opened our eyes to the different way we could approach business situations and challenges. It helped us realise which steps we needed to take to achieve our objectives and gave us practical advice to get started. It has revolutionised the way we have managed the company over the past eighteen months. The good thing is, even though we have used all the funding open to us, we have recognised the benefit of good business advice and are still working to grow and improve our business."



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