

YORKSHIRE INNOVATION FUND CASE STUDY:

Emkay Engineering



Founder: Martyn Hollings
Location: Leeds
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Partner: The University of Bradford
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The Business...

Established in 1998, Emkay Engineering has a proven track record in thermo-plastic engineering. Emkay's diverse product portfolio includes industrial machine guards, carcasses for asbestos air removal equipment and arm boards used by theatre staff during surgical procedures.

For two years, founder Martyn Hollings has steadfastly prepared Emkay for the launch of his **bubble tube – a sensory device popular with both adults and children with special needs**. After gradually increasing sales of traditional product lines and appointing a handful of key staff, Emkay is now poised for the launch of their bubble tube range.



The Need for Innovation...

Frequently approached by bubble tube manufacturers to produce the plastic components, Martyn has long harboured the idea of producing his own bubble tube range.

After spending a rainy Saturday afternoon dismantling one, Martyn realised that, with the right technical expertise, Emkay could produce the entire product at a more competitive price than the current market.

The Role of the Yorkshire Innovation Fund...

With no previous experience of working with an academic institution, a chance meeting with members of the University of Bradford's School of Engineering soon led to the successful application for a Small Innovation Project (SIP).

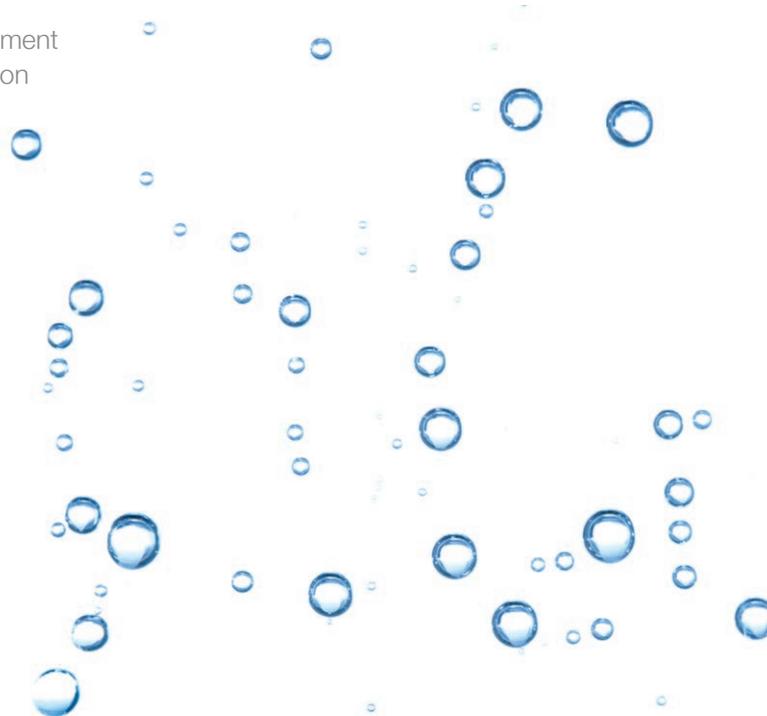
The SIP provided access to **technical expertise in wireless technology** from the University of Bradford's School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

In October 2014, Emkay was awarded a Research & Development Project – a more substantive, longer-term package of innovation support. This enabled the development team to make refinements to the original design and to develop an App for operating tubes from a mobile device as an alternative to remote control.

“The team at the University of Bradford provided fantastic support – their technical expertise was second to none”, says Martyn.

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MARTYN HOLLINGS



The Impact...

With the first prototype due to be tested in June 2015, **Emkay are poised for a phased product launch to the UK special needs sector** in the summer of 2015. Martyn's plans include promotion through advertising, social media and trade shows and the development of a dedicated after-sales service.

The recent appointment of a marketing assistant has further prepared Emkay to enter new markets. Martyn has also sourced larger premises which incorporate office and showroom facilities as well as a workshop and assembly area.



The Future...

Martyn plans to develop the bubble tube arm of the business under a separate brand with a long term aim of becoming a market leader.

He is currently exploring opportunities to supply bubble tubes to special needs centres, enhancing his offer with complementary accessories including fibre optic ropes and soft play products.

Meanwhile, his bubble walls are destined for bars, restaurants, doctor's surgeries and other waiting areas.



About The Yorkshire Innovation Fund...

The Yorkshire Innovation Fund brings together ten of the region's higher education institutions to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Yorkshire and Humber region to grow.

Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the fund helps small businesses to develop ideas for new products, services or processes by funding collaborative projects with the region's universities, drawing on their expertise, specialist equipment or facilities to develop ideas which result in business growth.

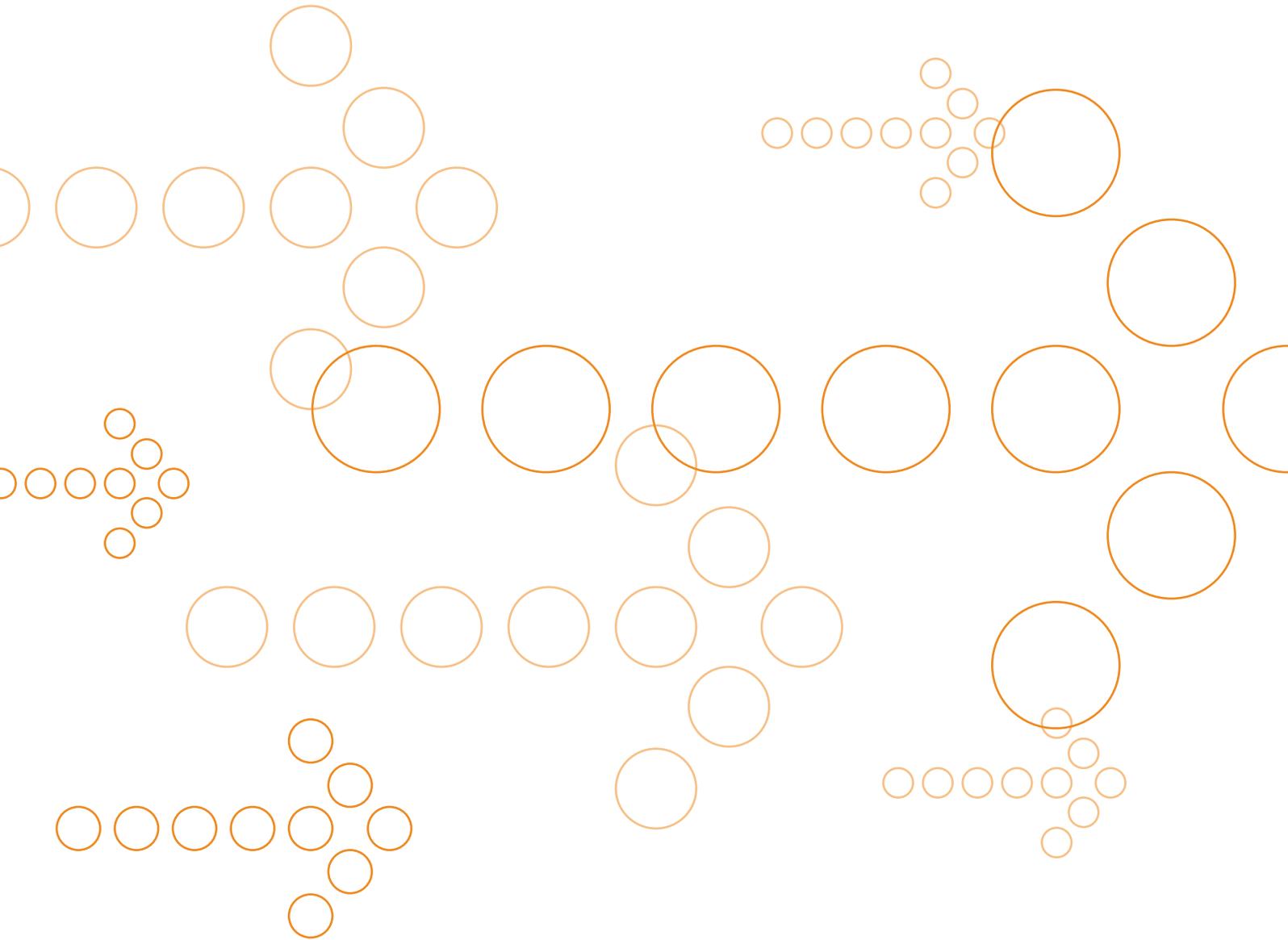
The project has attracted £3.06million of investment from the ERDF as part of Europe's support for local economic development through the Yorkshire and Humber ERDF Programme 2007-13. Partner universities contributed a further £1.87m, bringing the total investment to £4.93m. The project team are based at the University of Bradford.

The delivery partners are: The University of Bradford, The University of Huddersfield, The University of Hull, The University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds College of Music, Leeds Trinity University, Sheffield Hallam University, The University of York, York St John University. The University of Sheffield is a strategic partner.

Yorkshire Innovation Fund

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Funding access to University
Research and Innovation

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