



Grow

Making It Happen:

Change of direction brings glass screening and tinting specialist Coatek out of the shade.

A decision to rebrand and focus on buildings rather than vehicles heralded a bright future for glass coating and tinting specialist Coatek.

Hugh Kenny's company began in Gorey, Co. Wexford, as 'A-Tint' in 2004 and steadily built up a strong client base among car dealerships and private clients in the Leinster and Munster area.

Soon it was tinting the windows of 20 or 30 vehicles per week, however, Hugh knew that he had to step away from tools if the business was going to fulfil its potential. "I knew the company had the potential to grow but not while I was doing all the fitting work myself," Hugh says. "I knew if I got people to fit the film, I could bring in the business because sales is my background."

Hugh's wife, Martina, who is now the Financial Controller, joined the company in 2009 and

together they ensured that Coatek weathered the recession well. As the wider economy started to pick up, Hugh contacted his Local Enterprise Office in Wexford and signed up to do a course on How To Tender Successfully. That initial engagement grew over time.

A key moment came in 2016 when Hugh went on the LEO-run Owner/Manager Programme and worked with a very experienced business consultant to develop his business plan and strategy.

"The owner/manager course was probably the best thing I've done in business," Hugh says. "It was a 25-week course and every night I got something out of it – something practical that had real value." Hugh made the decision to pivot the business away from private vehicles and towards commercial buildings and vehicles.



Business Expansion Grants from LEO Wexford in 2016 and 2017 were key to providing the funding for the company to rebrand as Coatek, and to support the rapid growth which followed.

“The rebrand, turning from A-Tint to Coatek, was hugely successful – a real game changer for us. It started opening doors with architects and building companies that were looking at A-Tint and thinking that we just did cars. Coatek gave a different message which encapsulated everything we do.

“The Business Expansion Grant helped us with that because there was a lot of expense involved in rebranding. It also allowed us to purchase some equipment that we needed to provide different products, and also helped us bring on extra staff. We also applied for the Trading Online Voucher and got the website redone. It was a lot of money, a lot of investment but the payback was almost instantaneous.”

Coatek’s range of products now cover glass and window coating products for solar control, privacy and security, as well as wall graphics. The company works closely with architects, construction and fit-out companies, interior designers, engineers and facility management teams to deliver their products. Clients include Google, Microsoft, Amazon, the OPW and many more leading Irish and multinational companies.

Last year, Coatek moved into the UK market with projects in and around London. With 16 people now employed and plans to recruit another two staff, the company is in the process of moving to bigger premises.

The focus remains the Irish market but Hugh is also keeping a close eye on opportunities elsewhere.

Hugh says: “A lot of the clients we work with, big construction companies, are in the UK and some are also operating in Germany and France and other parts of Europe, and we would not be afraid to travel or build a network of freelance installers in those markets.”

Tom Banville, Head of Enterprise with LEO Wexford, believes that engagement with the Local Enterprise Office helped Hugh see the potential of his business.

“Hugh was on some of our training programmes and mentoring programmes, then he came in with an application for a Business Expansion Grant,” Tom says. “He was looking to really gear up into the commercial buildings space. That was a much more scalable business and a much

bigger opportunity, so we were able to really start engaging on a more meaningful level.”

In 2018, Coatek was named Wexford’s Enterprise Company of the year. It might seem like overnight success but for Hugh, his company’s growth is the product of hard work from all his team and great support from his local enterprise office.

He says: “The crucial thing about the LEO is that the advice and support you get is practical – I can put it into place in work the next morning and see the results of it straight away. It’s also knowing that I can just be able to pick up phone sometimes and ask them if they can help.”

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