

# Research-based strategy tools help specialist manufacturer Ceramicx grow its business



**Dr Derek Ford, Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing**

**A 160kW retrofit oven and control system designed and manufactured by Ceramicx for Linpac Saving 40% of energy over previous system has been short-listed for the plastics industry awards 2016**

Ceramicx, based in Ballydehob, County Cork, designs and manufactures ceramic infrared heating elements and complete infrared heating systems for sectors such as packaging, automotive and aerospace, and for applications such as thermoforming, welding and numerous other industrial processes. It has grown consistently since 2009 but felt it could achieve more with expert help from IfM Education and Consultancy Services (IfM ECS), a company which transfers new ideas from the University of Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing to industry and government.

IfM ECS used business tools based on research to help the firm achieve a 40% increase in turn-

over in just three years – projected to double by 2020 – as well as invest more in R&D and offer a higher-value product.

Frank Wilson, Managing Director and Founder at Ceramicx, said: “The holistic wealth-orientated approach to company development is the number one attribute of the IfM methodology and conclusions. The academic and practical backgrounds of IfM’s people breaks down barriers to com-



munication, which in turn generates results.”

Dr Derek Ford, Senior Industrial Fellow at IfM ECS, commented: “When Ceramicx approached us, it was on a stable path of growth but wanted to explore ways to work more efficiently and broaden its market. For an SME to remain competitive in an ever-changing global marketplace, it is vital not to settle when it is doing well, but continuously ask itself: is there a better

way of doing what we do? Are we exploiting our full potential? Are there any new markets we should explore? This is how you ensure your presence in the market in the long-term and achieve exponential growth.”

IfM ECS first used its Prioritisation Diagnostic tool to help Ceramicx establish its strategic priorities and align and focus senior management direction. This resulted in a development and

improvement programme which ultimately led to the company redefining their product offering and shifting towards selling higher-value complete solutions. The Business Strategy Tool was then used to conduct an external and internal analysis of the business, navigate different scenarios in order to make strategic choices and put together an action plan which included timings, KPIs, roles and responsibilities.

As a result of the Business Strategy workshop, Ceramicx began to implement an R&D strategy which invests heavily in people and equipment. It is currently recruiting, and is adding a 2200m<sup>2</sup> facility to enable the company to take on larger machine manufacturing projects and provide an improved R&D facility.

Encouraged by the experience, Ceramicx later asked IfM ECS to run a Strategy Refresh workshop which allowed the company to further refine their business focus.

■ *To read the full case study please visit:*  
<http://bit.ly/Ceramicx>