

Case study

Industry: Food and Drink

Expertise sought: Chemistry

Solution: Innovation Voucher



"It is with no exaggeration that the progress and development of the UWI Label would not be where it is today if it was not for the help and ever patient assistance of the Interface team....The Interface team are incredibly professional, tentative to your needs and have proved invaluable when looking for guidance or simple reassurance."

PETE HIGGINS,
UWI TECHNOLOGY LTD

UWI Technology definitely not past its sell by date!

UWI Technology Ltd was set up in 2009 to develop a patent pending elapsed time indicator (ETI) known as the UWI Label (pronounced yoo-wee), an original concept created by the company's founder and CEO, Pete Higgins.

Inventor Pete Higgins came up with the idea of a smart label which would indicate how long any jar had been opened for and, therefore, whether or not the food inside had gone off. This would be shown by a clear strip which over time would turn green, denoting how many days, weeks or months had elapsed since the jar was first opened, before finally turning red to show the food had expired and was no longer safe to consume.

Each label would be precalibrated, determined by the product in the container, and would change colour once it had reached this determined 'use within' period.

UWI Labels started life as an electronic solution, but further study indicated that this option would be too expensive to produce for the food sector.

The Business Challenge

The company was looking to establish a collaborative project with an academic

group to help advance the technology of the label and develop its commercial potential, ultimately providing a working demonstration of the UWI label for investors.

The scope of the collaborative project was to evaluate options for the colourmetric reaction that would develop once the product was out of date/going out of date.

The label mechanism needed to be robust, cheap, tamper proof, degradable, and work within domestic storage temperature conditions as well as being refrigerated and not susceptible to light.



The Solution

Through Interface - The knowledge connection for business, UWI was introduced to Heriot-Watt University, who had renowned expertise in micro-engineering and colour chemistry.



twitter 

Linked 

0131 651 4791

www.interface-online.org.uk

info@interface-online.org.uk



Besides having the huge potential to be an effective consumer food waste reduction solution, it was soon realised that the idea had significant global applications such as the pharmaceutical industry, medical science and aeronautical manufacturing. The collaboration received Scottish Funding Council Innovation Voucher funding, followed by further funding support from the EDTC /Product Realisation Centre scheme for expanding the work to meet additional commercial demand.

The Future

Since the initial collaboration, the UWI Label has secured more than £600,000 in new investment. Scottish Enterprise's Scottish Investment Bank has invested £250,000 through its Scottish Seed Fund and a further £288,000 has come from a US private investor syndicate alongside £68,000 from private UK investors.

Higgins comments, 'In what has already been an incredible year for us, this latest investment win proves that people recognise the potential of the UWI Label

and it is testament to the hard work of our team that we have reached this stage.'

Partnership Benefits

Significant progress has been made towards the realisation of the UWI Label with the work undertaken at Heriot-Watt University.

There are four to five potential innovations identified by the UWI patent attorney.

UWI was the beneficiary of £50K from Barclays Take One Small Step competition as well as £600K in new investment.

It is forecasted that staff and turnover for the company will significantly increase.

The idea has significant global applications from food and drink to aeronautical engineering.

"Interface is a very approachable and client focussed organisation, its clients' success is its success."

PETE HIGGINS,
UWI TECHNOLOGY LTD

Interface Fast Facts

- ◆ We match businesses with academics - making available the world class expertise and facilities in Scotland's Universities and Research Institutes
- ◆ We have initiated over 600 company and university collaborations
- ◆ We can help identify suitable funding options to off-set the cost of the collaboration

