

Opportunity knocks as Oxfordshire's innovative businesses win funding

OXFORD Investment Opportunity Network Limited has just completed another successful year in assisting innovative companies to raise funding.

Chris Baker, head of investment services for Oxford Innovation Services, an Oxford-based organisation which supports and develops high growth business throughout the South of England and Europe, announced the results to 90 influential business guests at the network's annual dinner.

OION has also announced a pipeline of new investments recently secured through its first Seed Enterprise Investment Fund (SEIS) in partnership with fund manager Innvotec. The successful business investments came from a range of sectors including: MedTech, FinTech, FMCG and publishing.

Mr Baker said: "OION was one of the first technology business angel networks to be set up in the UK and we are delighted that it remains to the forefront. OION broker's deals for early stage technology companies across the UK, helping them raise finance to develop their businesses to the stage where they can attract the attention of venture capitalists."

Local Oxfordshire companies were included in the OION support this year through Innovation Support for Business Grants, with over 16 companies supported in their expansion through grants. Educake (www.educake.co.uk) was one of these companies, securing a grant for just over £8,000 in January 2015, at crucial time of its expansion to capitalise on a wealth of new business opportunities.

Charley Darbishire, Educake founder and CEO, said: "This funding has enabled me to invest in a full-time education specialist to further drive sales. We are already working with 40 schools in the UK and internationally in Dubai and Bermuda.



Charley Darbishire of Educake, the Oxford-based revision website

"By the end of this year, our target is to sign up 200 schools and to recruit at least two more staff members to build on the Educake team."

OION is part of SQW Group which includes Oxford Innovation, the UK's leading operator of innovation centres and Oxford Innovation Services delivering high growth business support services within the UK and Europe.

Don McLaverty, managing director of Oxford Innovation Services, said: "OION continues to be an important part of Oxford Innovation Services and I would like to congratulate OION's manager, Eileen Modral, on a very successful year of OION, and thank our sponsors for their support.

"With the economy building and technology advances providing an instantly global platform these are exciting times for growth businesses and investors alike and we are delighted with the success of the first OION-SEIS fund and anticipate more to follow"

Guests at the OION annual dinner, including business angels, serial entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, heard from keynote guest speaker, Marco Malacarne, who holds a D.Phil from Oxford University.

Marco's keynote included the latest data and sources for the support of high growth innovation focused UK companies. He shared the news that EU funding now focusses on the commercialisation of innovative concepts and is aimed at high growth businesses.

The funding process has been simplified significantly and SMEs can now apply individually, where previously they had to create multi-country consortia.

• More information on support for securing innovation, commercialisation and high growth can be obtained from Eileen Modral, e-mail e.modral@oxin.co.uk

SPECIALIST luxury retail security firm, Rossi Security, has opened an office at Bicester Innovation Centre thanks to an expanding client base including a number of exclusive brands such as Gucci, Burberry, Roberto Cavalli and Valentino.

Founded by Cesar Rossi (pictured right) in 2009, the company is headquartered in London and is aiming to increase its turnover from £2.5million to £4million this year through winning more luxury retail clients from Bicester Village in addition to further expansion in London and overseas.

Originally from Brazil, Mr Rossi gained hands-on experience in the security industry working as a guard for Gucci when he first came to the UK in 2003 where he was promoted to security manager after just six months.

Mr Rossi said: "When dealing with high-end clients, presentation and first impressions are everything. I am one of the few MDs to have worked on the shop floor and appreciate that for us to grow as a company, it's equally important that we dedicate time to training our guards as well as servicing clients. This approach sets us apart from competitors as we truly appreciate what matters to our team and clients."

Rossi Security provides training to guards on everything from health and safety through to uniforms and currently employs around



150 people during busy periods. The guards are managed from Bicester Innovation Centre by two dedicated quality and operations managers.

Mr Rossi said: "I looked at several offices before choosing Bicester Innovation Centre, which I selected because of the team and price. The team here are extremely professional and very friendly, a combination of skills that I wish I could find in London! The centre is also extremely advantageous for our business

plans. We will make full use of the available meeting rooms and benefit from the flexibility to upgrade our office according to business growth."

Bicester Innovation Centre is the only fully serviced office solution in Bicester and has just over 9,000 sq. ft. of office space ranging from 93 sq. ft. to 1,308 sq. ft. across two floors with a selection of conference and meeting room facilities.

The centre also benefits from close ties with nearby Cherwell Innovation Centre at Heyford Park and both buildings form part of Oxford Innovation's network of seven centres across Oxfordshire (and 20 centres across the UK).

Tom Hanney, centre manager at Bicester Innovation Centre, said: "We welcome the Rossi team to the centre and the employment opportunities the firm will be creating for local people. We look forward to helping the team fulfill their growth ambitions by taking away the headache of costly and disruptive office moves."

With Bicester Village at the heart of Mr Rossi's expansion plans, the firm will be recruiting guards and support staff from the local area later this year.

• For further information, visit the website www.rossiservices.co.uk