

MSC STUDENTS RELISH THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAMPLE AN INNOVATIVE CULTURE



BACKGROUND

Established in 1990, Ballymaloe Foods is an iconic family-run company producing a tantalising range of preservative-free relishes and sauces for the domestic and international markets. Ballymaloe Foods employs over 35 full-time staff and operates from purpose-built kitchens located in Little Island, Co. Cork.

THE NEED

To maintain a competitive advantage, businesses need to create innovative products and services to satisfy emerging trends and customer demands. Aware of the need for continuous adaptation, Ballymaloe Foods partnered with the MSc in International Business programme on the 'Innovation Management & Creativity' module. The challenge for MSc students was to collate, evaluate and refine new product ideas within the company, in a timely manner, thereby maximising resource utilisation.



THE SOLUTION

As part of their consultancy with Ballymaloe Foods, MSc students initiated primary research on innovation management within the company. The results were compared with current academic literature and benchmarked against international companies with a strong innovative mind-set.

Key findings highlighted that a receptive culture, organisational wide involvement, and a willingness to challenge the status quo were core components of innovation management. Students subsequently presented their recommendations to Ballymaloe Foods based upon the synthesis of case research, industry best practice and relevant theoretical underpinnings. Novel suggestions included exploiting the reach of social media as an idea repository, producing limited edition product, and using Adobe Kickbox as an internal innovation driver. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the module was delivered entirely online, facilitated by blended learning and remote interaction with company management.

BENEFITS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

This collaboration provided MSc students with a grounding in the principles underpinning creative thinking, problem-solving and mapping innovation opportunities within a dynamic family-run company.

Ballymaloe Foods availed of the opportunity to tap into a young and international demographic of tomorrow's business leaders, who presented the company with strategic ideas on how to enhance their existing innovation process.

According to Dr Noel Kelly, lecturer on the MSc programme, the collaboration with Ballymaloe Foods enabled students to recognise the economic footprint of innovation within the business landscape, adding, "the students experienced first-hand the nuances of innovation management and by the end of the module could offer tangible solutions to a real-world scenario".

"IT BROUGHT US A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT WE COULD DO BETTER, AND WHAT MANY INSPIRING BUSINESSES FROM AROUND THE WORLD ARE DOING TO INNOVATE. IT WAS A VERY ENJOYABLE PROJECT, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO MORE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FUTURE WITH MTU."

- Maxine Hyde, General Manager, Ballymaloe Foods.