

## Partner:



# MA in International Business Students Provide Building Blocks to Grow a Culture of Innovation

## Background

Graepels is an Irish run family business, manufacturing engineered metal products for a large and diverse range of industry sectors. Graepels perforate sheet metal, rubber and woven wire mesh.

Established in 1959, Graepels HQ is in Kinsale with locations in Dublin, Belfast and Warrington in the UK. Graepels are leaders in manufacturing bespoke and standard products and aim to continually research new ideas, working closely with their customers to provide efficient, innovative solutions for only the highest quality products.

## The Need

Graepels acknowledge that innovation is fundamental to the company's long-term growth and prosperity. However, ensuring customer satisfaction, a steady stream of business and problem solving while maintaining cashflow leaves little time for the company to focus on innovation. Without the resources for a full-time product development team, Graepels needed assistance in creating a culture of innovation without disrupting the day-to-day running of the business.

## The Solution

CIT Masters in International Business students took on the role of Innovation Consultants for Graepels. To fully immerse themselves in the business, students spent a day on-site at the Graepels plant, attending the early morning work-in-progress meeting and familiarising themselves with the factory floor.

They also undertook face-to-face interviews



with management and staff, investigating how innovation happens at Graepels and the culture that supports it. This research enabled students to evaluate the presence of the innovation building blocks that underpin all successful innovative organisations. These include vision, leadership and the will to innovate, an innovation-friendly organisational structure, innovation champions, a culture of learning and permission to fail, and acknowledgement and reward for creativity.

Students referred to academic theories of organisational innovation culture that could be practically applied to the business. They also undertook secondary research exploring how world-class innovators build innovation cultures, and how best practice might offer Graepels opportunities for improvement.

In their final meeting with the company, students presented Graepels with a detailed programme for instilling a culture of innovation over time, breaking it down into a staged approach focusing on quick wins and long-term goals.

## Benefits of the Engagement

Graepels' collaboration with CIT provided

an invaluable experiential learning opportunity for these MA students. Lisa Murphy, lecturer in Entrepreneurship and Innovation at CIT said, "Graepels' generosity and openness in allowing students to get the 'unvarnished' truth about how innovation currently plays out, delivered practical actionable insights and recommendations, making a real difference in how the company manages innovation and builds an innovation culture".

Graepels General Manager, Tony O'Connor said, "The fresh ideas and insights the students came up with, made us think a little differently about our business; our strengths, our weaknesses and most importantly the opportunities that we had heretofore not realised".

*"I would strongly encourage any business that is interested in gaining new insights into how they do things to get involved with this programme. I can promise you that whatever small effort is required at the beginning is more than repaid by the end of this wholly enlightening experience."*

- Tony O'Connor, General Manager, Graepels



Contact us to connect your Enterprise with CIT. #CollaboratewithCIT

Call us today on +353 21 433 5302 to discuss a collaboration to suit your needs!