

Crimson Consultants

Microsoft partner uses innovation funding to push boundaries



(L to R) John Drew, Gary Williams and Lee Parton of Crimson Consultants

Swansea-based **Crimson Consultants** has operated a successful software business for more than a decade, acting as a partner for Microsoft's popular *Dynamics* business software, as well as developing and implementing its own software solutions, principally for clients in the education and not-for-profit sectors. Microsoft's decision to radically upgrade its leading customer relationship management platform acted as a catalyst for a transformational project. Innovation funding enabled the business to adapt its existing software portfolio, as well as developing a range of 'accelerators' that have opened up some exciting new markets.

As an official Microsoft partner, Crimson had built a successful business around supporting its flagship customer relationship management software, building its own products that work in conjunction with the platform and implementing bespoke solutions for clients that required additional functionality.

Although the *Dynamics 2013* upgrade presented challenges for businesses like Crimson, partner Gary Williams also saw it as an opportunity to develop a new suite of products that would help his clients in post-16 education to adapt to the challenges facing

Crimson Consultants Key Achievements:

- Re-wrote core products in response to radical platform upgrade
- Created new products that helped clients meet key industry challenges
- Doubled turnover and grew workforce from 20 to more than 50 in just over two years
- Far East expansion through joint venture company in China

the sector. The business approached the Welsh Government's Innovation team and was supported in a successful application for funding under the EU-backed SMART CYMRU initiative. This enabled the business to engage in the development of some innovative new software solutions, while freeing other resources to 're-write' some of its existing software.

Crimson went to market with a new range of software, designed to help universities and FE colleges to deliver against some of their key objectives. This included managing increasingly important relationships with agents that drive recruitment of overseas students and tracking the growing numbers of work placements delivered by UK institutions as part of the employability agenda. New modules also supported the effective delivery of education for all, through the management of facilities, services and support for students with disabilities.

The long-term benefits and range of outputs from the project had synergy with the goals of the 2015 Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, particularly the drive to create a prosperous and more equal Wales. Initial sales enabled Crimson to more than double its turnover and grow its workforce from around 20 to more than 50 staff in just over two years. The project also helped the business to win new clients in the independent sector, including several international schools, and support its expansion into the Far East through a joint venture partnership with Wellington College, Swansea University and Microsoft in Wuxi (near Shanghai, China).

"The innovation funding was vital in enabling Crimson to deliver a very bold, innovative response to the challenges presented by the evolving HE/FE environment. It helped us to take our knowledge of the post-16 education market and deliver a business strategy that has strengthened our off-the-shelf product range, at the same time as meeting many of our customers' critical requirements."

Gary Williams, Partner, Crimson Consultants.

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