

Business Plan Competition Winner 2008

Claire Baker – PoeticEarth Ltd

Overview

Ceramics student, Claire Baker, who set up her own pottery business *PoeticEarth Ltd*, became the winner of Bath Spa University's first business plan competition in 2008. She was awarded the £1,000 top prize, which enabled her to go ahead with sales and marketing media, including a fully-designed website for the business.

About the Project

PoeticEarth Ltd is a ceramics company set up by Claire Baker to produce ceramic prayer pots based on her knowledge of Tibetan prayer flags and the Shamanic practice of digging holes into the earth in which to release dreams, wishes and prayers.

The *PoeticEarth Ltd* prayer pot was designed specifically for the growing spiritual-concept market. A two-tier product range offers both a 'bespoke' prayer pot, tailored to meet the needs of individual occasions and ceremonies, and a mass-produced version. The prayer pot is sourced from West Country suppliers and is then Raku-glazed and hand-finished by Claire.

PoeticEarth Ltd has the advantage of being based in a triangle between the well-established spiritual centres of Avebury, Stonehenge and Glastonbury. The background wealth of Celtic and pagan history of these areas has been put to positive practice in the marketing and communication messages for developing the business in the South West of England and ultimately beyond to the rest of the UK, Europe and America.

PoeticEarth Ltd's ethics echo the fact that it will be operating in a world that is eco-aware on both personal and government levels. Recycled packaging is integral to the brand image and is used on all products.

There appears to be no similar prayer pot product in the market place. To minimise potential plagiarism by other companies, *PoeticEarth Ltd* implemented an intellectual property agreement with its sourcing agents and manufacturers before they were given access to the designs. An important part of *PoeticEarth Ltd*'s design-led business is the protection of its design rights. Therefore, *PoeticEarth Ltd* is a registered member of Anti-Copying in Design (ACID), with which it has registered its prayer pot design.



Claire at Bath Spa awards

Fast Facts

- *PoeticEarth Ltd* was the winning finalist out of an overall 17 entries to the competition
- Winning the £1,000 enabled Claire to market and promote her business
- *PoeticEarth Ltd* went on to be Bath Spa University's entry to the regional universities' enterprise competition
- Claire had also previously received a travel bursary from the University's Business Support Office to visit the Guangdong province in China, to set up a deal with a ceramics factory to mass-produce the prayer pots

Benefits

Claire had never written a business plan or prepared a Powerpoint presentation. By entering the business plan competition, Claire was able to access supporting workshops in 'Structuring a Business Plan' and 'Presentation Skills for Pitching'. These developed new skills that Claire has been able to use in many business situations beyond the competition environment.

Additionally, Claire received intensive one-to-one advice and guidance from both the Business Support Office and the University's Subject Leader for Business & Management during the development of her business plan for entry to the regional universities' enterprise competition. The Business Support Office also supported her with coaching sessions by an executive recruitment expert, in preparation for the judging panel.

Although this was a new and rigorous process for Claire to undertake, she rose to the challenge and used it all as a valuable learning experience.

Outcomes

Entering the business plan competition brought Claire Baker and *Poetic Earth Ltd* a great deal of useful publicity, as well as tangible items that Claire can use in other situations. For example, her business plan has been branded and formatted by a professional graphic designer and can be used to attract investment through traditional funding sources. Additionally, the sponsors of the regional competition funded a pop-up display stand for each finalist and Claire's has been used at many other functions and festivals to raise awareness of her business and prompt sales.

Since participating in and winning Bath Spa University's business plan competition, Claire Baker has been offered free studio space at the University's postgraduate centre, selling exhibition space at MADE in Bath and Open Studio week at The Pound Arts Centre in Corsham, Wiltshire.

Claire has also been able to access advice and guidance from the renowned ceramicist and entrepreneur, Emma Bridgewater, on aspects of running a business and being a successful female entrepreneur.

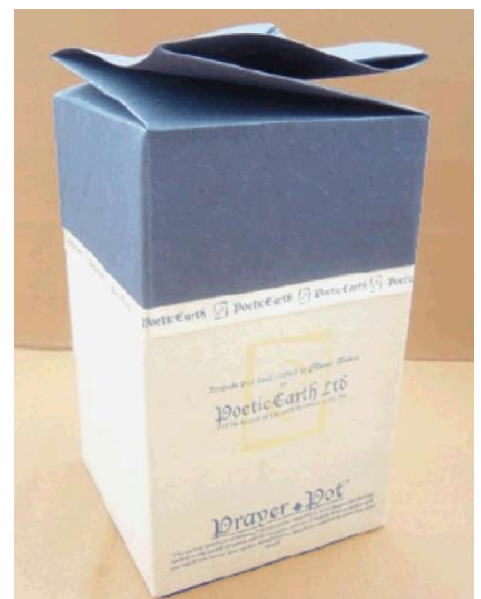
Perspective

“Winning the prize is fantastic because it boosts my confidence and shows that all the hard work has paid off.”

Claire Baker
Business Plan Competition Winner 2008



Claire at KWEA awards



Prayer pot packaging



Poetic Earth Ltd prayer pots