



POSH LEATHER

The leather seat cover for a classic sports car with its contrasting panels is immaculate. The work of Chris Dukes of Posh Leather, the drivers' is just one example of the craftsmanship which has seen his business grow steadily from a standing start in under a year.

Before the pandemic and lockdowns decimated the events and entertainment industries, Chris was a DJ and music event promoter in Oxford, enjoying a really good career with international as well as local links. Overnight that life came to a shuddering halt.

Not one to sit back, Chris turned to his other love, specialist leather seating which he had learned through a love of cars.

"I'd discovered a talent for this through restoring my own car interiors, but had never imagined it would become a business" Chris told me at his workshop in Cowley. "But, I thought I'd give it a go. So, with a few phone calls to restoration garages and posts on Facebook, I found myself with lots of orders and Posh Leather was born."

It would be a mistake to think it all sounded easy. Chris was working from his back bedroom with a young child in the house and not enough room to really make things work.

"The biggest challenge was that I had never really run a business before. I knew nothing about accounts, tax, being an employer, regulations, laws. They were all new to me."

He discovered there was much more help and support available than he could have imagined after speaking to OxLEP Business, the Oxfordshire Growth Hub. With a range of services aimed at helping small and medium enterprises to start, grow and prosper he gained the confidence he needed as a new business owner.

“It was great. To know I could get someone to help me create a business and do it properly. I’ve had conversations with them about having a business plan... and knowing what to put in it, as well as talking through the challenge of managing cashflow and all the other things I will need to think about as I get established.”



Through OxLEP Business, Chris is looking at grant funding to help with taking Posh Leather to the next level.

His confidence in the future is clear. He has just invested in a very high-end sewing machine capable of doing more complex things required to really produce to the highest standards his customers demand.

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He is also feeling lucky. It was originally Oxford’s music scene which brought him from London to the city. Now he realises it’s the kind of community where word of mouth can really help with a new business. “Covid-19 could have wiped me out, but instead, I have started a business and really look forward to getting bigger, paying taxes and, one day, training more people with a passion for cars to learn from my me and become skilled themselves.”



For more information:

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