

Made Smarter support spices up Coventry food manufacturer

An Indian-inspired snack and sauce manufacturer in Coventry is excited for the future after Made Smarter West Midlands helped it spice up its productivity.

Auntie's, based on the Red Lane Industrial Estate, was founded in 2018 by Gregory and Shireen Dhaliwal-Davies and 'Auntie' Mrs Pannum.

Inspired by the sauces created by Mrs Pannum – Shireen's grandmother, also known simply as 'Auntie' – the couple turned her delicious recipes into a business bearing her name.

After initial success selling the sauces to the wholesale market, the pandemic brought a change in direction for the business. Auntie's branched out into making Indian snack boxes, including samosas, to sell direct to customers.

Made Smarter West Midlands was able to help Auntie's improve the samosa making process and boost its productivity significantly. Greg said: "Demand for our Indian snacks – especially our samosas – has shot up recently, and the changes we've made after Made Smarter's advice is enabling us to meet that demand and grow our business.

"Made Smarter's expertise has really helped us, and we're very excited for what the future holds for Auntie's."

The Challenge

When Auntie's decided to branch out into snack production, success came quickly for the business.

Greg said: "We originally produced the samosas as a one-off for one of our customers, butchers Aubrey

Allen. They were so impressed that they asked if they could purchase them regularly.

"So we decided to make samosas in the factory and sell them in boxes to customers, and they soon became very popular."

However, Auntie's samosas became a victim of their own success. Traditional approaches to samosa-making are somewhat inefficient when applied at scale, and the methods Auntie's were using saw them hit a barrier in terms of how quickly they could be made to meet demand.

Greg realised he needed help to solve this problem and heard about the support Made Smarter West Midlands offers through Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub.

He got in touch with the team who arranged a meeting at Auntie's factory to talk things through.

The Solution

Greg was visited by Paul Sullivan, Digital Transformation Specialist at Made Smarter West Midlands, alongside Made Smarter strategic partner WMG at the University of Warwick.

They assessed Auntie's processes and factory layout, and analysed the areas where time was being lost and if any new equipment could speed up the processes.

They produced a 'digital roadmap' outlining the initial steps Auntie's could take to improve

its efficiency, and then steps for further improvement once the business had grown.

Paul said: "We came in and identified that there was real potential for growth if Auntie's could get the proper machinery and lean processes in place to upscale production.

"The roadmap we produced for Auntie's gave a clear indication as to what steps it needed to take in the first instance to move them forward, and also detailed later steps to improve things even further.

"And while some of the businesses we work with require grants to help them buy the equipment they need, Auntie's simply used the roadmap to guide them and used its own money to make the purchases.

"Ultimately, the roadmap is the most important element we produce for the businesses we visit."

Using the roadmap as a guide, Auntie's purchased several new machines, such as a large dough mixer, a vegetable cutter, a roti press and several new racks for storing cooked products.

It also rearranged the factory's layout to ensure each machine was located in the best position, saving as much time as possible between different steps in the production process.

Shireen said: "Simple solutions like moving machines to more efficient places is not something we had necessarily thought about, but Made Smarter helped us realise that we didn't need to struggle by doing things the same way.

"The roadmap is very clear, but also has plenty of detail, so we feel reassured that we are taking the right measures to improve our business."

The Results

Although some of Made Smarter's recommendations have still to be adopted by Auntie's, the company is already seeing fantastic results.

"The new machines and layout of the factory floor has boosted our productivity significantly and our bottom line too," Greg added.

"We're now making a concerted effort to focus on the direct-to-customer market through our samosas and snack boxes rather than wholesalers, as we make much more profit per sale that way.

"We're selling at so many markets, events and shops in and around Coventry now thanks to scaling up our samosa production.

"Sales are flying at the moment, which feels fantastic, and we would not have got to this point without Made Smarter's advice.

Onur Eren of WMG said: "It's brilliant to hear just how much Auntie's has grown as a result of our recommendations.

"A few targeted purchases and a fresh look at processes can sometimes be all it takes to increase a business's productivity."

The Future

Auntie's is hopeful of further increasing the output of its samosa production before a renewed push towards wholesalers.

Greg added: "We're already looking into purchasing a further machine to speed up the portioning of the dough for the samosas which would turn a three-hour process into a one-hour job, and would not need direct supervision.

"If we can scale our samosa production even further, the hope is to reinvest the profit back into selling our sauces to the wholesale market once again.

"A mix of direct-to-customer and wholesale would give us the best of both worlds and make the business more resilient should one side falter.

"We have to thank Made Smarter who were fantastic right from the word go – they were incredibly thorough with their analysis and the team is welcome here for samosas any time!

"We're really excited about the future and to share our delicious products with more and more customers all over the UK and the world."



From left: Shireen Dhaliwal-Davies, Paul Sullivan, 'Auntie' Mrs Pannum, Gregory Davies, and Helen Dhaliwal in Auntie's kitchen

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW MADE SMARTER CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS AT [MADESMARTER.UK](https://www.madesmarter.uk)