



# SUPPORT FOR GUITAR MAKER HITS THE RIGHT CHORD

Neil Haynes has been making guitars for years. What began with a love of music led to starting-up two businesses: Haynes Guitars and Guitar and Bass Build. From his workshop in Banbury, Neil produces very high-quality guitar bodies and necks for electric guitars and basses.

His website [guitarandbassbuild.co.uk](http://guitarandbassbuild.co.uk) sells guitar kits to customers around the world who want to make their own quality instruments. "People like our kits because they can make a guitar worth £3,000 for a fraction of the price" he explains. Neil sells his own, bespoke, handmade guitars through his other business, Haynes Guitars.

"The two businesses really fit together well because I can get the bodies and guitar necks I need to make my bespoke guitars made to exact specifications and use the same equipment to supply other makers around the world. It means that I can justify my outlay on precision engineering equipment."

Being a specialist manufacturer has meant a big investment. Neil's main production machine cost £50,000 and the total investment in the company is around £100,000.

## Thinking differently

The OxLEP Business's Elevate programme of free workshops, face-to-face meetings and grants, has helped Neil Haynes to begin planning for the next stage of his business. "I attended an Elevate

programme finance workshop" Neil says, "which confirmed that I was doing a lot of the right things, but also gave me ideas on ways of financing my growth plans. I am also exploring how to secure tax relief on the R&D; I need to remain at the cutting edge of manufacture and engineering design."

Neil admits that as a small business owner he has learned most of his marketing skills on the job but is now bolstering this with Elevate workshops on social media and marketing.

"I have spent time with a Network Navigator from OxLEP Business. They helped me to think through some of the difficulties I face recruiting the right kind of people to make growth possible. I came away full of ideas about the way ahead. The meeting gave me a boost and motivated me to push ahead with my plans."



## Growing ambition

"It is difficult to recruit the right people when you are a craftsman and my aim to expand the business depends on finding good people. It is the biggest challenge I face" he said. "I need people who are patient and pay attention to detail."

Now, Neil is experiencing growth in every market, at home and worldwide. In particular, he has seen a sharp rise in kit orders from the USA, which are up 25%.

In terms of business development, the biggest effort is going into marketing. "We have invested in a new online presence – and our international sales are all driven by the website."

## What next?

In the immediate future we will be concentrating on the bespoke guitar market with Haynes Guitars. Interest is very high in this – and we project sustained growth. The only issue is capacity. "It is a nice problem to have" Neil joked. "So long as I can spend the right amount of time working on the business as well as in the business, things will remain positive for me."



[www.guitarandbassbuild.co.uk](http://www.guitarandbassbuild.co.uk)

[www.haynesguitars.co.uk](http://www.haynesguitars.co.uk)

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Find out about the free support available to you on the Elevate programme through workshops and 1-2-1 help from a Network Navigator at:

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