

Mentor case study

Symetrica is developing new high-performance gamma-ray spectroscopy and imaging technologies in the fields of medicine and security. With a background of new product development at ICI and Astra Zeneca, Dr Brian Lever was aware of the difficulties facing new ventures and knew that Symetrica would benefit from a mentor's external perspective.

Aware that SETsquared Business Acceleration Centres offered support to technology businesses, Brian and his team made contact. Symetrica needed a mentor whose experience would help them get to know unfamiliar markets and who could act as a sounding board, providing challenges, support and contacts.

Brian said: "I discussed our situation with David Bream, Centre Director for the SETsquared Centre in Southampton, and he was able to introduce us to Heddwyn Davies. We've only been working together for a short while, but Heddwyn immediately clicked with the team, understood our business and was able to add value from the start. He helped us realise we had to sharpen our commercial focus and improve our knowledge of key markets at the same time as developing our technology. He helped us set clearer priorities, challenged us to raise our ambitions for growth and helped us to think through the key steps to success."

Heddwyn's years of experience in high-technology businesses, including GEC Marconi, Schlumberger, Peek and DRS Technologies, were immediately apparent. "He sees through problems very quickly and relates what the technologists say to what actually needs doing," said Brian. This is essential when you need to set up the business quickly and efficiently. He is also a good listener and extremely keen to help make it work, which I appreciate enormously."

For Heddwyn's part, with over thirty years' experience in technology markets and a career in developing and managing international businesses, he combines technical understanding with profound business acumen. "I have a natural interest in high-tech businesses," said Heddwyn. "But the excitement around SETsquared is not just the technology, it's the commercial possibilities. The ideas coming out of the Centres have clear applications and real high-growth potential."

"Mentoring however is not prescriptive - I'm not there to tell them what's right or wrong. It's about listening to problems and concerns, and being able to step back from the situation. Naturally, that's much easier to do when it's not your own business. In many instances, there's a need to push them to make a decision to make progress. However, ultimately, it's about providing the strategic guidance that lets them work out the answer for themselves, and this can be very rewarding."

For more information on Symetrica, please visit their website- www.symetrica.com