

Zeta

A British Manufacturing company engaged in designing, developing and manufacturing products that provide environmental solutions across a wide range of applications.

Environmentalist and CEO of Zeta, Phil Shadbolt, shares the origin story of his business: "Back in 1989 my partner and I were both working as researchers for Oxford Brookes University and one consultancy project that came our way on controlling engines. This is when we saw an opportunity and decided to start up a business called Zeta – focusing on high end intelligent electronics for the automotive market.

Phil goes on to talk about Zetas' current standing, saying "So that was 30 odd years ago, the business developed, and we eventually diversified into solar and LED lighting in 2000. Over the years we've earned an excellent reputation for high quality and innovative products. We've been awarded several awards for research and technology and are well known in the market."

OxLEP Business and Zeta under the same roof Phil's' prominence in the Oxfordshire business scene is how he came to know about OxLEP Business and the support available. In 2017 he engaged with the Elevate programme, working with specialist advisors for one-to-one business support to gain advice on developing new products.

Phil details his innovative idea and the need for support saying "Our team are always innovating, we're passionate about solving problems for our customers. More recently we've been working on a very important development for us, the solar power roof tile. We had this concept of how we can make a solar tile for a domestic house attractive and perform really well and make it easy to install. So, I made some prototypes here at the factory, but it wasn't really fit for purpose, it wasn't robust enough. We needed a lot more work on the design.

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Going on a journey with OxLEP Business

This is where the OxLEP 'Go Create' grant came in. I saw an opportunity for some financial support that would help take our concept through to a real commercial prototype. Phil goes on to speak about the application process and winning the grant, "we applied for an ISfB Go Create the grant And we got a lot of support. The team at OxLEP were there every step of the way through our application. They helped us cross the T's and dot the I's, because it's not an easy process to go through. We got our match funding in place as well to make sure we could fund our share of the costs and then we won the grant, which was fantastic!"

The sky's the limit when you have a solar roof over your head Phil tells us about the impact of OxLEP's support on his business and his future plans, "So where we are now, due to OxLEP's support, is working with another local company called Oxford Product Design. We've sourced some clever solar products and now have a very elegant solution for our solar roof tile, and one that enables a roof to be built very quickly, as opposed to the lengthy process of a traditional roof. So, we can now go the next step, which is to make a prototype, get it tested, get it approved and get the patent filed and once we're in that position, we will be able to raise some serious finance, go to market and do the job properly.



The Steppingstone to Scaling Success – Phil's Journey and Advice for Oxfordshire Businesses

"The funding from OxLEP for us has been an important steppingstone. It's enabled us to get to where we are today. They allowed us to develop our concept properly so we can move to the next level and get external people interested. I can honestly say that without their support and funding I don't think we would've been able to move from the rugged product we had to the very professional product we have today. We're in an exciting phase, it's all in progress. Our new approach will allow us to get significant funding later on. I'm just waiting to get all my ducks in a row before we can go to launch."

Phil finishes with some advice for other Oxfordshire businesses "I'm going to continue to turn to OxLEP for support as things move forward. They're brilliant at connecting you with the right kind of people, which will help us when looking at investment opportunities and growing our networks as we scale-up. I've been in business a long time but still seek external support, even after 30 years. I've worked with OxLEP Business since 2017 and I only have positive things to say about them. So if you're a local start-up or growing business looking for financial support or expert advice you should contact the OxLEP team today and see if they can help you. You won't regret it."