

Market-led commercialisation capability for Advanced Materials and Custom Manufacturing Divisions

The Challenge

Thomas Swan is a family-run manufacturing company with a growing presence in the UK and international chemicals market. The business wanted to improve its understanding of potential new markets for a new range of advanced two-dimensional materials, including graphene, which is 200 times stronger than steel, thinner than a sheet of paper and more conductive than copper. The graphene industry is recognised as having large potential but no well-developed markets. Thomas Swan identified a need to define the international commercial opportunities for graphene and determine how revolutionary new products could be developed, marketed and sold to create business growth.

Solution

Thomas Swan partnered with experts at Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University to apply for funding from Innovate UK to run a two year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP). The KTP enabled Thomas Swan to engage a talented graduate (KTP Associate) to lead the project on a full time basis, for the duration of project, with support from a specialist team of academics who worked with the Associate to transfer and apply knowledge directly into the business. The focus of the KTP has been to develop a market led commercialisation capability for Thomas Swan, specifically for its Advanced Materials and Custom Manufacturing Divisions. Work to date has included developing a marketing function across the two divisions and development of a business intelligence database. This is designed to track potential customer information to help commercialise graphene across multiple segments along, with the creation of a new bespoke CRM system for managing customers' details.

Impact

The project is due for completion in September 2018. Building on successes achieved to date, we expect that new skills and tools will be built into the business to promote growth and increase profitability through the effective delivery of emerging products and technologies. It is also hoped that experts from the Northumbria Law School will also be involved in the project. They will be providing support for innovation through dedicated patent workshops to the core divisions at Thomas Swan.

Organisation Overview

Thomas Swan & Co. Ltd.

Thomas Swan & Co. Ltd. is an independent chemical manufacturing company with a global network of distributors. With offices and warehousing in the UK, USA and China, the business services the domestic and international markets and exports to over 80 countries worldwide.

