

**START
INVEST
GROW
LIVE**

Aylesbury Vale

“The Aylesbury Enterprise & Innovation Centre is helping us drive business for small food and drink companies.”

DEBBIE JONES. MANAGING DIRECTOR, IMAGING ESSENCE LIMITED

Visual-led communications food and drink

The company

Imaging Essence Limited

Debbie Jones

Telephone: 01296 398522

Email: Debbie@imagingessence.co.uk

Web: www.imagingessence.co.uk

Summary

A love of great food, a talent for photography and technical know how provided the perfect basis for the formation of Imaging Essence. With the support of the Aylesbury Vale Enterprise & Innovation Centre, the company's going from strength to strength.

Location

Aylesbury Vale Enterprise and Innovation Centre, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Business activity

Photography, web design, branding, point of sale displays & printing, and other visual marketing materials.

Debbie also offers software consultancy for other photographers.



From business idea to reality

After ten years' vendor experience in the IT and photographic industry as a marketing manager, Debbie knew her long term ambitions lay in working with – and helping – other small businesses. An interest in technology, combined with an absolute passion for photography and a real enthusiasm in helping others, provided a perfect grounding for Debbie in supporting other businesses.

The idea to focus primarily on the food and drink market was not only down to the founder's love of good local food – more practically, it was identified as a robust industry within economic uncertainty; market dynamics may change but people will always need to eat!

Imaging Essence now has an established client base, from local home start-up “farmers market” businesses to celebrity chefs. Most of the work comes from customer recommendations and repeat business.

Keys to success

A customer-led approach

Imaging Essence takes a different approach to communications, by leading with the visual impact of great photography, and then following up with effective marketing communications. From a photography perspective it's also about making it personal – capturing the people behind the product, both visually and through marketing activity, including social networking.

Imaging Essence's experience means no picture is created just to look pretty – each one must have a purpose in driving customer demand, every website must be searchable, easy to navigate and drive the customer to want more. Imaging Essence passionately believes it doesn't need to cost a fortune to drive business.

Quality product and service

Anything specialist is often regarded as expensive and, for small start-up companies, specialist photography often comes at the bottom of the “essential” list. However, even though the home-made food may taste great, unless customers are tempted to actually try it, the food company is never going to progress from the local farmers' market.

By primarily focusing on food and drink, Imaging Essence keeps those costs down but provides great quality images.

A sound business plan

A detailed forecast management system was set up right from the start, so Imaging Essence could see exactly what type and volume of business was needed to make it viable.

Additional support from the MK/Bucks Innovation & Growth Team helped Debbie to develop the forecast into a detailed business plan and helped define the mid- and long-term direction of the business.

Social networking

The isolation of working from home full time was identified as a potential challenge, particularly as Debbie had come from a busy office environment. Through the support of social networking sites like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, not only were these challenges overcome but they became a key part of business generation.

By joining local business and national food & drink social networking groups, much business has been generated and co-opportunities with other local businesses explored.

What does being in Aylesbury Vale offer the business?

- AVDC's Enterprise & Innovation Centre has been a perfect support mechanism for Debbie to start her local business, providing her with a business address, meeting rooms, the option of a company specific telephone answering service and introduction to local business support networks such as the Innovation & Growth Team. It meant that Imaging Essence could sustain a professional image from the outset. Even her accountant is now based there.
- AVDC Small Business Grant: The availability of grants to support local business is also invaluable. Imaging Essence is using the start up business grant to enable the next evolution of the business to support a full time studio, full time employees and freelance space for other local companies.

Plans for the future

The next big step is to set up a full time product studio. Debbie wants to make food product photography accessible to all local businesses. With access to a local studio, they can easily drop in to have their products photographed at much lower cost, rather than her going out on location incurring additional expense. In addition, she wants to bring a full time member of staff into the team to support the web side of the business, which will allow her to concentrate on the photography.



**YOUR
TIME IS
HERE**
Aylesbury Vale

**FOR
FURTHER
INFORMATION
PLEASE
CONTACT:**

Max Campbell
Aylesbury Enterprise and Innovation Centre
Tel: 01296 318150
max@aeicentre.com
www.aeicentre.com


AYLESBURY VALE
a great place to grow

