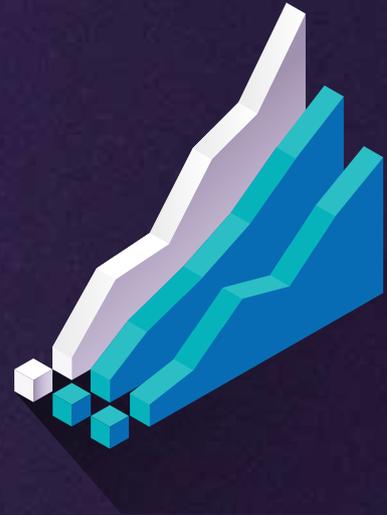




NatWest

Padbrook Park Hotel: riding the storm pays dividends in Devon



Hard work, great staff and a little bit of luck kept hotelier Garry Scargill afloat during the darkest days of the recession, and now he's back with a cash injection that's revitalising his business.

Few businesses sailed through the last recession, and Padbrook Park – a 40-bed hotel in Cullompton, Devon – was no exception. “Being in the hospitality sector, it was especially tough,” says director Garry Scargill, who had been steadily developing the business with his ex-wife and business partner Susan since 2003, when it was bought as a nine-hole golf course with a couple of function rooms.

“When the recession hit, we lost 35% of our value almost overnight,” says Garry. “For a couple of years, I'd wake up thinking, ‘Is this the day we run out of money?’”

Garry weathered the storm and last year secured a significant six-figure loan from NatWest, organised by business development manager Nick Shepherd, who was referred by broker Mark Westcott, of Barr Financial Services, from Bideford in North Devon. The money was poured back into the business, and all of those things that had been put on hold during the financial crisis – everything from updating Padbrook Park's booking system to refreshing the bedrooms and installing super-fast broadband – was back on the agenda. The 16-month revamp is now nearing completion – and business is booming because of it.

Best monthly turnover in years

“Our occupancy has gone up,” says Garry, “and in July 2018 we had our highest monthly turnover since 2012. The loan we secured from NatWest has absolutely transformed the business.”

The smile count is up, too, and some of the happiest faces can be seen on Padbrook Park's 18-hole footgolf course (that's golf, with a football) – one of just a handful in the South West.

Unfortunately, Garry holds no course records: “I used to play football at a reasonable level,” he says, “and when we opened the course I went out and thought, ‘This'll be easy’. It wasn't!” Today, there's an optimistic air about Padbrook Park that could scarcely have been imagined during the darkest days of 2008-2013, and the hotelier is thrilled that his enterprise is once again firing on all cylinders. The staff, says Garry, are a credit to the business. “Even though for five years we were unable to give them a pay rise, they stuck with us – so we must be doing something right,” he says.



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