

News story: Gloucestershire robots sent to teach kids in the US and Australia

Ohbot, a Gloucestershire company that makes robots for the education sector, has secured contracts in the US, Australia, and Canada with support from the Department for International Trade (DIT).

The business recently signed a contract with the Microsoft Store in the US after exhibiting at Bett, a global education training and technology show in London.

The deal will see Ohbots supplied to all 80 Microsoft stores across the US and Canada to help children at its YouthSpark summer camps learn technical skills. The robots are used to help kids have fun while learning how to code. The business also secured its first deal with an Australian distributor to supply robots to schools across the country with additional orders expected over the next year.

The Stroud-based business, founded by Dan Warner and Mat Walker in 2014, designs and manufactures affordable robots to teach children digital skills such as coding.

The Ohbot robot has formed an integral part of digital skills training in schools. (c) Ohbot

Last year, the business began working with DIT to help increase its exports and expand its international presence. DIT identified key target markets where demand for educational technology was growing and introduced the business to potential buyers. It also put the firm in touch with an export manager who offered on-the-ground support and advice about attending South by Southwest (SXSW), a series of film and technology festivals and conferences, in Texas earlier this year.

DIT has also provided financial support to help Ohbot exhibit at global shows and meet with Microsoft representatives from the US.

To cope with the increase in demand, Ohbot plans to hire 5 new members of staff to work at its manufacturing site at Halliday Mill, as well as brand and marketing specialists.

Mat Walker, co-founder at Ohbot, said:

We're a relatively new company and started Ohbot in 2014 using Crowdfunder and Kickstarter sites. We knew there was demand in the UK for technology that could teach children about coding and robots, but initially didn't have the contacts or the know-how to showcase our robots internationally.

Working with DIT was key to our international success. The team of advisers introduced us to buyers and distributors, which means that children across the globe will be able to learn about technology by using our products.

For businesses that are considering launching their products internationally, I would say don't hesitate. Working with DIT has had a huge impact on our business. If we can succeed on the global stage, so can other South West businesses.

Paul Shand, DIT's Head of South West said:

The UK is leading the way in educational technology and is home to more than a quarter of Europe's edtech businesses. By 2020, the global market for the sector is expected to total £129 billion and it's great to see local, startup businesses like Ohbot tapping into this demand and creating new jobs as a result.

Not only does DIT have a dedicated team of International Trade Advisers across the South West to support ambitious and innovative businesses like Ohbot looking to access new markets and increase exports, but we also have a team of experienced sector specialists and an overseas network in 108 countries. We can offer a range of guidance and support, including international market research and exporting workshops, as well as enabling contact with buyers and distributors in new markets.

For more information or to access online support, including the find a buyer, and export readiness tools, visit [great.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk).