

Singer instruments:

A Rural Enterprise Exmoor business case study



Singer Instruments was established in 1934 and is headquartered in Roadwater. They are also in the very exciting process of setting up another local site in Minehead. On top of these sites, they have laboratories and offices in California, Germany and Singapore.

Singer develops robots for biotechnology. Their products accelerate science in laboratories in over 50 countries, for customers like NASA, Nobel laureates such as Sir Paul Nurse, Cancer Research UK, and the top 50 universities in the World.

Singer currently employs around 55 people however, they are a fast growing innovative business currently looking to provide many more employment opportunities.

As a very successful third-generation family business, Singer are a friendly SME with traditional values, but with a dynamic vibe

more like a tech startup. Growing at a rate of about 25% per year, they stay ahead of their competition through constant investment in innovation.

Singer holds strong employee focused values. They have implemented shared success initiatives to mention a few, "Profit share for nerds" and "Equity share for nerds".

Not only do these initiatives reward their staff for their valued hard work but, the financial success of the business is fed right back into the local rural economy.

Most recently they won the Somerset Business Awards "Employer of the Year 2019" and The tech South West awards winner of 2020.

Singer Instruments is abundant in history boasting three generations, certainly too rich to capture on a document.

Benefits and challenges of working on Exmoor

Benefits

Harry Singer: "Where do I start? Off-road running or biking to work. Swimming at lunch time. Kitesurfing after work. The divide between work and play is almost non-existent. Firstly because work is very much like play. Secondly, because for those of us who live on Exmoor, we don't have to drive anywhere to enjoy this amazing playground."

Challenges

Harry Singer: "You can't get good sushi. Recruitment of technical staff like software developers, biologists and engineers isn't easy. To make Singer Instruments an attractive place to work, we've spent a lot of time thinking about work-place culture. And we've won a bunch of awards. For example, we have a profit share scheme where all staff share in the financial success of the business. Most staff also own a slice of the business."

Aspirations and advice

Aspirations

"Singer Instruments' are on a mission to develop laboratory automation to accelerate research for scientists who want to make the world a better place. We're looking to grow our team of amazing people, with a shared vision to automate every biological breakthrough. One customer of ours, Spiber, are brewing renewable fabrics (just like you brew beer) with yeast that contains spider DNA. How cool is that?!"

Advice

"My piece of advice for business owners with a workforce on Exmoor is, go blueberry picking Exmoor Blueberries and make blueberry cake for your staff. Then, take them to Torre Cider Farm for some of the good stuff. Finish it off by going to Horner Farm and eating wood-fired Pizzas in the courtyard. Staff are your people and directly contribute to the success of your business, make sure they are valued."

