Innovation and Animal Welfare

Project Background

The Penn State SBDC began working with Bock Industries early in 2012 as Randall Bock worked to commercialize a new technology that he designed at the prompting of Cargill, a large producer of animals for consumption. Cargill had requested help developing an on-farm euthanasia tool that was more humane than traditional on-farm methods, which were subject to scrutiny from animal welfare advocates. Bock, an engineer, developed a captive bolt gun that was both more humane for animals and safer for farm workers and was in the process of negotiating a license agreement with Cargill when he engaged the SBCC to assist with the many business development questions he suddenly faced.

SBDC Assistance

Bock consulted with the SBDC as he navigated the process of bringing a new technology to market. Bock’s consultant coached him through technology license negotiations with Cargill and supported him in the development of his negotiation strategy. In a subsequent meeting the SBDC recognized the need for expert information regarding export compliance and connected Bock with the Export Trade Development Program, where the International Trade Specialists researched trade regulations on the device and assisted Bock in connecting with new international opportunities.

Recently, as sales have grown steadily and substantial export opportunities appear likely, Bock returned to the SBDC for consultation on how to scale the young business. Bock is working with the SBDC to analyze the lead time required to produce the products so as to determine the optimal level of inventory. The SBDC will also work with Bock to calculate the capital required for him to scale-up and help him to assess his financing options.

Outcome

Bock Industries is growing steadily and has earned positive nods from many animal welfare and management groups including the Animal Welfare Association, the National Turkey Federation and the Humane Slaughter Association. The TED and Bock Industries’ newest device, the Zepher-E, are in compliance with the American Veterinary Medical Association’s guidelines for humane euthanasia, and the affordable technology is helping both small and large farms satisfy the requirements of on-farm animal welfare audits.

Bock Industries’ success earned Bock a nomination for the Governor’s ImPAct Award for Entrepreneurship, and he continues to manufacture the devices in Central Pennsylvania.