Creating Sports Bottles That Last

When it comes to sport or any form of exercise, it's extremely important to always stay hydrated when you're out and about on the pitch or the field.

But the bottles on the market often leave a lot to be desired, as they're flimsy and may even contain potentially harmful chemicals. As a leading and respected importer and distributor, Fortis Trading knows all about making sure that products give the end user what they need on a long-term and sustainable basis.

When they decided to create their own bottle, all sorts of problems ranging from learning a new blow-making method to working with a material they'd not used before arose. However, Fortis managed to beat the problems through a process of concerted research and development (R&D) activity.

And with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) R&D tax relief programme on their side, Fortis were able to deduct a large amount of cash from their eventual tax bill.

The issue: bottle manufacturing

As anyone who has ever purchased a drinking bottle to use while playing sports will know, it's not all that common to find a bottle which lasts a long time and is a pleasure to carry around and use.

Bottles like that can often be hard to find - the market is full of cheaply made and easily breakable items which don't serve modern sports players very well at all.

As a result, Fortis decided to create a new bottle - to be known as the “Alpha Bottle XXL”. This bottle would be durable and long lasting, designed to withstand all sorts of stress and to contain a large amount of liquid. With an eye on safety, Fortis decided that the bottle should come with a handle made from materials that were totally devoid of the controversial industrial chemical bisphenol A (BPA).

Yet in many ways, this was easier said than done and Fortis found themselves facing a number of technical challenges in the way of producing the bottle. The bottle was going to be made, for example, from Eastman Copolyester EB062, a material that had not been used for a bottle of this size in the past.

In addition, Fortis were going to have to use a blow-moulding method which they were not certain how this would be capable of application. Additionally, the strap which came with the bottle didn’t dry out properly after being exposed to water.

All in all, it was a big challenge. But as a dynamic and hard-working team, Fortis were able to respond well to the demands of their new project and they overcame the challenges facing them with real skill and success.

What Forits did

Fortis began by kicking off the process of research. Testing a wide range of materials to replace the wet strap, for example, and designing the perfect mould for the production of the bottle.

As well as working on designs and materials sourcing, they also spent time in the workshop, correctly calibrating their machinery so that the cuts were exactly right.

While this required resources to do, it was vital to making sure that the design of the bottle was sturdy, leak-proof and durable.

By doing all of this, Fortis were able to surge ahead in the sports bottle stakes. Many of the bottles currently available on the market are sourced from the Far East, and they leave a lot to be desired for the drinker. By taking the time and resources to invest in their work, Fortis now has a real competitive advantage. Rather than the highly similar, mass-produced and potentially unsafe bottles already out there, the Alpha Bottle XXL is unique, long-lasting for the end user and free from harmful chemicals.

Big budgets: is it worthwhile?

With any R&D process, it’s not always going to be cheap to get these sorts of innovations off the ground. In fact, the costs can often run into the tens of thousands. For Fortis, the total amount of qualifying R&D costs, in the end, came to £16,000, and this included both the consumables (such as different material types) used in the testing process as well as staff salaries and employer’s National Insurance and pension contributions.

Given that the costs are often quite high, some firms find themselves getting deterred from carrying out the R&D work which their businesses need in order to get ahead. But the R&D tax relief system means that it's possible to knock a large amount of the cash spent off the company's bill from HMRC.

R&D tax relief: the process

By taking the time to work out how the R&D process operates, the savings on offer when it comes to paying your company's tax bill further down the line could be huge - if you have a team of helpful and friendly tax experts on hand, the process is even simpler.

The process begins with the company - backed up by knowledgeable advisors like ourselves - locating the technical uncertainties which faced their industry. The essence of the claim lies in showing how the company carried out research or developed a new way to try and tackle these problems. If your company wasn't able to successfully defeat these problems in the end, you can still make a claim, so it's definitely worth thinking about no matter what the outcome was.

If you're interested in following in the footsteps of Fortis by saving your company money from its tax bill, please get in touch with us today to find out how we can help identify any qualifying R&D activity.

How did the claim benefit the company?

The team at R&D Tax Solutions took the time to explain the principles of R&D tax relief and what types of projects qualify.

On the back of our discussions with the team, we have been able to make successful claims for the last three accounting periods and will continue to invest in unique development projects

Matthew Gadd, Director