



# Superfast broadband helps businessman carve out new career as cabinet maker

Michael Barnfather quit his office job of 30 years and launched his own venture as a bespoke cabinet maker – thanks to the arrival of superfast broadband.

The former office worker launched his Withernsea-based enterprise, Curved World Woodworks, in January last year, but says he would have struggled to survive without high-speed broadband and support from Broadband East Riding, a partnership between East Riding of Yorkshire Council and BT.



Michael Barnfather in one of the wooden canoes built at Curved World Woodworks.

To help get his business off the ground, Michael attended the free business support workshops in social media, finance and using ‘cloud’ services.

The workshops, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and administered by the council’s business support service, were designed to help businesses get the most out of being connected and to boost growth. The 200 businesses that took part also received the expertise and guidance of a dedicated business adviser providing one-to-one support.

Using the knowledge gained from the workshops, Michael transformed his business – moving his operation into the ‘cloud’ and using social media to promote his work online.

Set up in January 2015 by former office worker Michael Barnfather, **Curved World Woodworks** is an example of a skilled craft business using the latest online technology to thrive.

[www.facebook.com/Curvedworldwoodworks/](http://www.facebook.com/Curvedworldwoodworks/)

Michael uses a computer assisted design (CAD) programme to help bring his wood crafted creations to life and is now able to upload and store all his digital plans and drawings quickly and safely using a 'cloud' service.

"Attending those courses was a revelation. Before I had no clue what the cloud was or how to use it, now I don't know how I could do business without it. Using CAD a lot, I need storage space and the cloud really helps – before I was trying to store everything on memory sticks and hard drives which meant things got easily mislaid or lost.

**"It also means I can access my work anywhere, whether I'm at home, in my workshop, or visiting clients."**

Armed with his new found knowledge, Michael still faced a final hurdle: slow broadband. "Sending over large files to clients the upload would sometimes just stop, it was that slow.



"My old broadband connection would drop out or when I was trying to save a file it would just freeze and I would end up losing a whole day's drawing work. Then, about six months ago the Broadband East Riding roll-out reached my street, and I upgraded straight away.

"With superfast broadband everything is fantastically fast – I can upload big files with the designs I'm working on in a matter of seconds. It saves so much time and makes it much easier to communicate with customers. All my customers are online and tend to expect you to be able to respond instantly. If I'd tried to manage with my old broadband I would definitely have lost customers."

As well as boosting his speed – having superfast broadband has encouraged Michael to create an online showcase for his work which specialises in curved surface furniture and boat building.



He said: "I use Facebook to upload pictures of the things I'm working on – which is really quick and easy with the superfast connection. And it provides a great way for me to stay in touch with customers and for new ones to find me. Without the training courses I would never have thought about using Facebook. I think it has definitely helped me to bring new customers in – it has got me work from a number of architects – which is a real feather in the cap for me. It provides you with a virtual shop window to the world."

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