

SEATING MATTERS¹

By the end of 2015 Seating Matters were celebrating 8 years in business. Since 2008 the company, based in Limavady Northern Ireland, designed, manufactured and supplied specialist chairs for older people and those living with disabilities in care homes and in hospitals. The goal of Seating Matters was to make a difference to patients' quality of life by reducing pressure ulcers, improving posture and enhancing quality of life.

The company was started by the three Tierney brothers; Jonathan, Ryan and Martin Tierney, who, at its foundation in 2008, were aged 17, 18 and 19 years old. Martina Tierney, the boy's mother was an Occupational Therapist (OT) and had a deep understanding of the challenges her patients faced. The Tierney family together with their father James who was an engineer had set about solving some of these seating needs identified by Martina and thus Seating Maters was begun.

At the end of 2015, and in the last 8 years, the business had been growing significantly from a staff of 4 to 35 and sales were growing due to the combination of high quality of the product and the large degree of customization the company offers to its customers and patients, but at the same time there was growing stress on the manufacturing operation.

They have had shortages in key components and increases in the lead time for chair production. They needed to increase the staff significantly without time for training them. The stock levels of raw components and part-finished goods within the factory began to increase dramatically, and that led to the need for more storage space.

At the same time as stock levels grew, the quality control staff were noticing more and more defects in the final product. Re-work levels of these defected parts were growing and so too were the production costs and indeed the stress levels of those working in the company.

THE ORIGINS

¹ This case has been published by the Research Division of San Telmo Business School, Spain. Prepared by Professor Miguel Angel Llano Irusta from San Telmo Business School in collaboration with Mr. Rob Healy This case has been developed as a basis for class discussion only and is not intended to illustrate any judgment on the effective or ineffective management of a specific situation.

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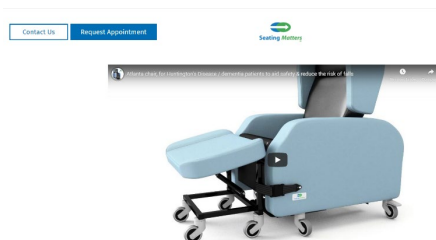
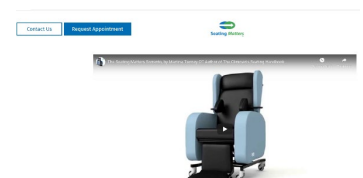
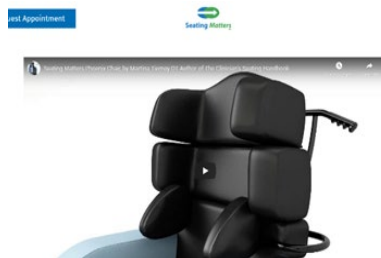
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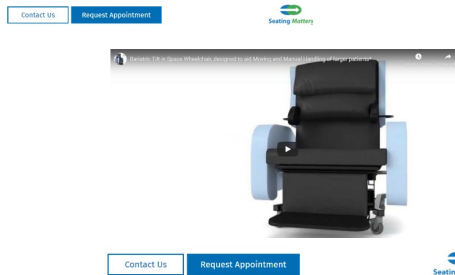
Martina Tierney OT and Clinical Director, has specialized in seating throughout her 30 years in practice, having worked in acute care, community, nursing homes, rehab and many different areas of OT. However, Martina struggled to find chairs to meet the clinical and functional needs of her patients. Martina realized that her patients needed pressure care chairs which were designed to properly fit the patient's size and were easily adjustable in order to meet their long-term needs. She set out to change the world of healthcare seating by designing therapeutic chairs that would meet pressure management, posture, comfort, mobility and functional requirements.

Seating Matters began when Martina and her husband James, an Engineer, started designing custom chairs to meet the needs of Martina's individual patients. James and Martina were passionate about solving seating problems and to support clinicians and families in doing so. This passion was passed on to their 3 sons Jonathan, Ryan and Martin who could see there was a need for patients globally and that Martina wasn't the only therapist that could benefit from these chairs. The three Tierney brothers started the company in 2008.

THE PRODUCTS

In 2015, Seating Matters had seven core product lines of children's, adult and bariatric chairs. Within each product category, they offered lots of choice to customers - 14 colours, multiple size options, two dozen accessories and an endless list of customised adaptations. The motto in the factory was "if you can think it, we can make it". In the following link and QR the product range offer of seating matters can be seen.





PURPOSE AND GOAL

Seating Matters was established with the purpose to improve patients' lives and to influence clinical best practice. They set out to create chairs that would cater to the holistic needs of patients – providing comfort, postural support and pressure management. The Seating Matters chairs were designed by therapists and clinicians and are supported by independent clinical evidence, proving their ability in helping to solve a range of clinical problems through seating.

The goal of Seating Matters and the Tierney family was to make a difference to patients' quality of life by, first of all Reducing Pressure Ulcers, treating and preventing pressure ulcers for those with low mobility that spend considerable time in a chair or bed each day; secondly Improving Posture, supporting efficient posture to encourage maximum independence and improve respiration, digestion and communication and finally Advancing Clinical Research. In the Research goal Seating Matters with Ulster University carried out the first and only clinical trial on specialist seating to establish the impact of the Seating Matters chairs on patients' health. The results were amazing.

Martina explained her thoughts to the authors of the case:

At Seating Matters, the patient is at the heart of every decision, meaning that our products and services are continually enhanced to provide the best service and help as many people in need around the world as possible. Even today, too many people continue to endure contact pain because of poor posture. Too many patients are suffering a reduced quality of life from avoidable pressure injuries and too much money is being spent by health services worldwide on reacting to these problems after it is too late.