

# Beautiful Vending

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University friends Neil Mackay and Richard Starrett had been involved in the entertainments industry for 10 years when they spotted the potential to supply personal grooming services in clubs and bars. Nothing spoils a girl's night out quite like a mop of frizzy hair!

They needed to find a way to fulfil demand and knew it had to be an automated system. The solution was a hairdressing station, where girls could rent time using ceramic straightening tongs that could be installed in ladies' toilets.



Realising the strength of their idea, they developed a prototype and applied for a patent, investing £120,000 of their own funds into product development. Venue owners welcomed the idea and saw it as not only as an attraction, but a source of income too.

Effective planning was key and after the incorporation of the business, time was spent on the product development, testing it, working out time/ cost ratios and doing in-depth evaluations of the market. The pair settled on a price of £1 for 90 seconds, believing that it was important that people would not be queuing up for too long and that the service would be perceived as affordable.

The product was a success, with the market expanding to gyms, office buildings, airports and shopping centres. Mackay is crystal clear about his company's vision. "It is to have the Beautiful Vending brand common in washrooms globally."

[www.beautifulvending.com](http://www.beautifulvending.com)

Source: Shell Livewire / Telegraph

# Jo Jingles

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Soon after returning to her job after maternity leave, Gill Thomas was sent to work for a couple of weeks in Boston, USA. She realised that her existing job did not fit in with her desire to spend time with her young family, although having had a fulfilling career she did not want to become a full time mother. The solution was to use her interest in music to start a local music class for children under five. She called it Musical Minors and ran it in village halls.



Gill ran the classes for three years and they proved so popular that she decided to explore the possibility of turning Musical Minors into a franchise. So she took a year out to find out everything she could about starting up a franchise business, talking to the British Franchise Association and looking into why music was so important for pre-school children. She began by organising two pilot schemes run by people who had already worked for her doing classes

However, one week prior to the franchise launch she discovered that another franchise business had already applied to trademark a similar name. She had chosen to call it Musical Minors and had assumed that the name had been registered as a trademark by her lawyers.

Gill was forced to change the name of her business to Jo Jingles, a move that cost her £25,000 and delayed the business launch by four months. In 1996, she launched the business as a franchise, initially offering packages for £5,500. Jo Jingles now has 105 franchisees in Britain and Ireland and this year will have a turnover of £3.5m.

[www.jojingles.co.uk](http://www.jojingles.co.uk)

Source: The Sunday Times