

# Premier Watercoolers

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When Phil Langley left school at 16, his vision was to find a niche and make money. The niche wasn't found until later in his career when Phil, who had been working in the sales team of a bottled water firm, carried out research into the market.

He discovered that mains fed coolers had several advantages over bottle fed coolers. For example, there is an environmental benefit compared with the cost and inconvenience associated with delivered bottled water. However, customers did not want the effort or expense of installing the plumbing that was needed for a mains fed machine. Langley had found his niche.

He resigned from his job and got a £100,000 bank loan. He decided to refine his market and target larger "blue chip" businesses, sourcing his products from Italy. To boost his cash flow further he sold his car and invested £20,000 of his personal savings into the start-up.

After 10 months of trading, Langley had 300 water coolers out on rental but realised he needed to bring in outside help to develop the business further. In exchange for a 10% equity share, James Cullum, an experienced entrepreneur, joined as an unpaid chairman. After other share sales, Langley now has 49% of the company.

Turnover for Premier Watercoolers has reached £3.5 million and, whilst a success, Langley admits that recruiting the wrong people has, on some occasions, had a very detrimental effect on his small business.

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



*Adapted from The Sunday Times*

# Sport Stars

2

During a gap year in Uganda, James Taylor worked at a boarding school and set up sports and arts clubs to occupy bored schoolchildren during the long afternoons. After taking his business degree, James got a job as a sports coach at LA Galaxy football club in America.

James returned to the UK and was shocked by media coverage of rising obesity in children, lack of sport in schools and the video game culture. It was at this point, he decided to make good use of his experience in the USA and Uganda and set up his own sports coaching company based in Cardiff to help address these issues.

James' aim was to create an organisation that would help develop bright futures through sport. Using the £1,000 birthday money he received from his parents, he bought sports equipment and tracksuits. James managed to persuade some coaches to join him and offered their services free of charge to schools. The main problem was, whilst providing an enjoyable activity for children, it did not provide any income for his new business.

The turning point came in 2005 when the government ruled that teachers must spend 10% each day away from the classroom to prepare. James recognised an opportunity and approached head teachers with the proposal that they employ Sports Stars Coaches to cover this time. He secured five contracts and by the second year, sales rose to £500,000. By the end of year three, Sports Stars expect that sales will reach £3 million.

[www.sport-stars.co.uk](http://www.sport-stars.co.uk)



*Adapted from The Sunday Times*

# 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

As a business management and marketing student at Southampton University, Grant Lang financed his studies by working in bars and cafes. But he was also passionately interested in sustainable development and local community. In March 2005, he found a way to tie it all together by starting a coffee business called Mozzo, that sells organic fair trade beans and helps local artists gain recognition.

Lang first tried to open his own coffee shop but couldn't raise enough money. So instead he bought an Indian rickshaw, fitted it with solar panels and a wind turbine and launched an eco-friendly coffee cart. To top it off, he hung the works of local painters on the sides of the cart and played local bands over the boom box. The bright red cart attracted attention and soon stores and cafes asked to resell his beans. Shortly after, Lang started began trading as a coffee distributor, an activity he expects will achieve sales of £16,000 in its first year. To stay true to his values Lang will donate 5% of profits to community causes.

Next year he finally aims to open that coffee shop, while continuing to branch out into other fair trade imports. Lang is convinced he can build Mozzo into a sustainable lifestyle brand.

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

Coffee, Art, Community  
**MOZZO**  
100% FAIRTRADE

BEHIND THE BEAN | THE MAGIC MOZZO BEANS | BUYING MOZZO | MOZZO AND ART

News:

- 16/05/08 I did run run... Read more.
- 01/05/08 Mozzoman New Consumer Magazine Feature... Read more.
- 08/04/08 Mozzo featured in Theme Magazine... Read more.
- 08/04/08 You do run run run... Read more.
- 08/04/08 Cup a load of this... Read more.

Welcome to Mozzo World:

From the moment Mozzoman began selling his Fairtrade, Organic Arabica espresso coffee from his wind and solar powered mobile coffee cart, Mozzo was always going to be more than just your regular coffee company.

Mozzo... think outside the cup™

Source: Business Week

# Chem-Dry

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“ THE CHEM-DRY FRANCHISE *opportunity* HAS GIVEN ME THE *freedom* TO LIVE MY LIFE THE WAY I’VE ALWAYS DREAMED.”

THANK YOU CHEM-DRY  
Roland & Jane Peck  
Franchise Owners, Beverley, East Yorkshire

When Ian Jackson was made redundant after 22 years with the Royal Mail he decided he wanted to go into business and work from home. Wary of the risk of setting up on his own, he decided he wanted the security of setting up a business under a recognised brand that provided help and training. Using his redundancy money, he decided to start up a franchised business.

His starting point was the British Franchise Association website, where

he made a shortlist of possible ventures. Having received a number of information packs they found themselves attracted to Chem-Dry, which offers a wide range of domestic and commercial services from carpet to upholstery cleaning to disaster recovery.

After visiting the headquarters in Yorkshire, he spent £23,000 on the franchise, which bought them all the equipment they needed and four weeks' training, with the only expense being the purchase of their own van.

Marketing was done on a small budget with adverts in the local telephone directories and numerous leaflet drops. After the first year the turnover topped £56,000, with this success behind them, they applied for a second licence to operate over the whole of the Essex county, which meant a second vehicle and more staff.

[www.chem-dry.co.uk](http://www.chem-dry.co.uk)

Source: Telegraph & British Franchise Association



# Rock and Ruby

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When Gemma Stone received redundancy from Granada, she decided to set up her own business. Her business was event management and with ten years experience in this market she was sure it would succeed.

Since the launch in early 2004, Rock and Ruby has gone from strength to strength, organising ceremonies for the South Bank Awards, events for Tesco and for the London Film Festival.

Gemma has worked in the events industry since leaving college and loves the creative challenge, the build up of work as the date draws closer and the satisfaction of seeing hard work come together for the enjoyment and benefit of others. Owning her own company has given her the opportunity to do what she does best.

Part of Rock and Ruby's success is based on the fact that funding came only from Gemma and her partner, Steve, rather than from bank loans. The business has been funded solely through savings and redundancy. They were keen not to have the added pressure of loans to pay back.

Gemma admits that going it alone was daunting at first, with simple tasks such as registering the company seeming like a complicated process. But, after initial concerns, she reveals that the greatest challenge in the early days was deciding on the name for the business.

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

Source: *The Sunday Times*



# Fly Fishing for Fun

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Whilst fishing with his son, it occurred to Johnnie Jourdan, that there were lots of other boys out there who wanted to learn how to fish. However, the problem is that beginners are confronted with so much equipment and information in a fishing tackle shop that it's difficult for them to know where to start.

Johnnie decided to join forces with friend Patrick Lloyd, a fellow fishing enthusiast, to set up a venture which would encourage beginners, and particularly children, to start fly fishing. The business partners each put in £7,500 to develop prototypes, buy the initial stock and build a website - which cost about £5,000. They worked with leading English rod makers Bruce and Walker and produced five versions before coming up with "The Answer", a rod handmade "with young green bones in mind" and exclusive to Fly Fishing for Fun. The pack they produced includes everything essential to start you off fishing including sunglasses and a cap. To further encourage young beginners, a free fishing licence for 12-16 year olds, and junior membership of the Wild Trout Trust for under-17s is included.

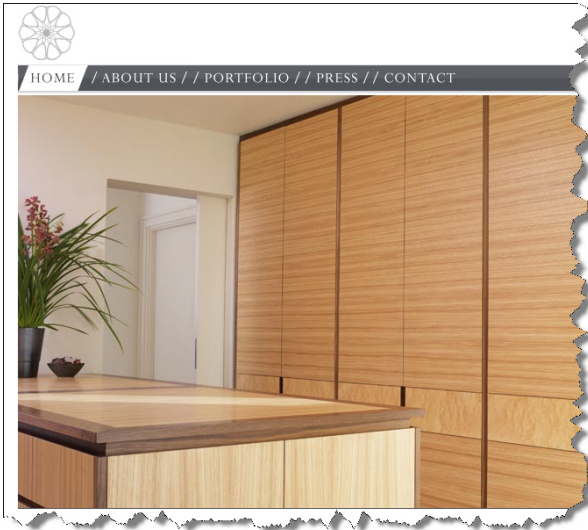
Mr Jourdan claims that the business is not designed to make lots of money. "The profit it makes will be poured back into the business to encourage children to fly fish. We want to keep a balance between altruism and the commercialism which is essential to make it a success."

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

Source: *The Telegraph*







Bruce Hodgson had always been interested in furniture making and, having left the army, he decided to go back to college to learn his new trade. After completing a City and Guilds Certificate in furniture making and working as a general manager in a joinery company, he and his wife decided to leave London and move back to Bristol. This proved to be a good move, as Bristol had a long and distinguished history as a centre of furniture making and a valuable source of skilled labour.

Starting out as a sole trader, Mr Hodgson, began making bespoke furniture for affluent clientele. On meeting one of his clients, David Telling (Chairman and founder of MITIE Groups, and an investor in entrepreneurial businesses) he was offered backing to fund larger projects such as house conversions. Artichoke became a private limited company in 1999, with a share capital of

£134,000, half of which came from Bruce and the other half from David.

The marketing strategy was clear. It would all be about producing the highest quality work and backing it up with outstanding service. Most of their clients were high earners, so are cash rich and time poor. Service is what they are looking for. Artichoke's client base grew as a result of referrals and turnover is expected to top £2 million this year.

[www.artichoke-ltd.com](http://www.artichoke-ltd.com)

Source: The Telegraph

## Daisy Coffins

Following the success of their handicraft business Devoncraft, Craig, Alex and Philip Cooper wanted to build another sustainable business that would continue to use natural materials that were readily available in the Far East. Philip Cooper came up with idea of making "green" coffins.

Intrigued by this idea, Craig carried out some market research, visiting funeral parlours, asking questions, wanting to find out the main criteria for coffins. Using this information, the Coopers came up with a conventional coffin shape, that was constructed from large leaves wrapped around a softwood frame.

Start up funds for Daisy Coffins were provided by the main handicraft business, mainly to build two large warehouses that would hold 200 coffins. Daisy Coffins is not a stand-alone business and Craig expects it to reach it's break-even point by the end of the year

The main challenges facing the company was persuading funeral directors to accept alternative styles of coffin made from sustainable materials rather than chipboard or mahogany veneer and to create demand from the end users, the public.

The product was launched at a funeral trade exhibition and they are taking a stand at major retirement exhibitions.

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

Source: The Times



From an early age, Paul Spacey has been involved in five a side football and so moving from playing football to organising it was a natural progression. Along with his two brothers, they realised that five a side leagues were scarce and so, despite still working full time, they began to set up leagues in their local area.

The enterprise proved sufficiently successful to allow them to give up their full time jobs. Paul wanted to concentrate on taking the concept to disadvantaged areas in Scotland, where there weren't any organised leagues and broke away from the original business, setting up Fivez with two leagues in Greenock and Stirling.

The idea was that, whilst building a sound business, he would also be providing a community service, giving young people a focus and helping to tackle Scotland's health and anti-social behaviour problems. The service is simple, Fivez book a venue, get a local qualified Football Association officials and invite, via local newspapers, local teams to play. Revenue is made from the £20 a week fee charged to teams. The community element has been key, with features in the local press spreading the word.

Spacey invested £3000 on the development of their website, fivez.net, which keeps members up to date, provides forums for players and now gets about 10,000 hits a month.

They received a start-up grant of £1,000 from the Prince's Trust, in addition to valuable help and advice. One of the major hurdles described by Spacey was convincing local authorities to let them hire the facilities for matches.

[www.fivez.net](http://www.fivez.net)



Source: Princes Trust

## Curries Made Simple

# 12



Tasnim Hussain's curry recipes were renowned amongst her friends and colleagues. Tasnim was a maths teacher by day and an enthusiastic cook of traditional Punjabi dishes in her spare time. She was constantly pestered for her recipes and decided to collate them and sell them for charity.

Spurred on by suggestions that she should publish recipes commercially, she approached numerous publishers over a five year period, but found no support. Hussain realised that the only way to see her book materialise was to publish it herself.

With the help of Business Gateway, the Scottish enterprise support agency, Tasnim found that self publishing would not be too expensive. For £6,000 she could get a print run of 2,000 copies. Her family believed in the project and provided a £5,000 interest free loan. The business was also eligible for a £1,000 grant from

Business Gateway because her 18 year old daughter was a co-director.

Hussain realised that their market was restricted as books were generally sold via word of mouth, through family and friends. Wanting to expand distribution she approached major book stores, only Ottakers would buy directly from Tasnim. Other chains such as Waterstones and WH Smiths would only buy books from wholesalers and the wholesalers would not buy a book without a track record. When the book was ranked as number eight in the Scottish book sales tables, it was registered and an ISBN number assigned. With a track record, Hussain was then able to persuade the wholesalers to buy copies.

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

Source: Daily Telegraph

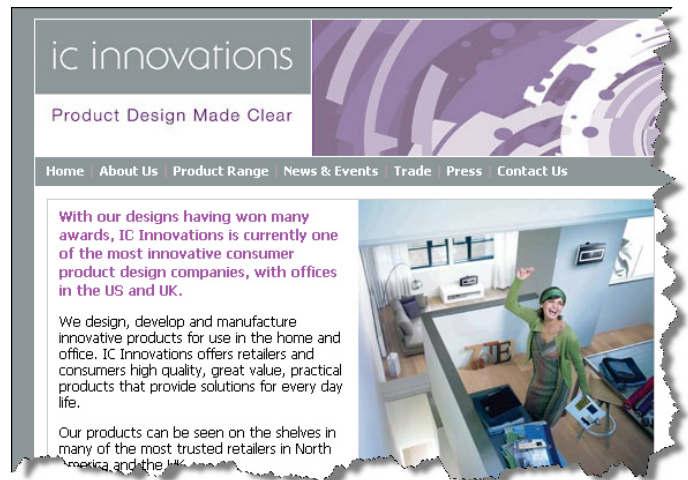
IC Innovations is perhaps best described as an "ideas factory". The business was started two years ago by Tristan Cowell, then a geography graduate from University of Nottingham.

The business idea was born when Cowell's mother was looking for a way to display her Christmas cards. Tristan noticed a strip of Velcro sticking out of her sewing basket. His Eureka moment, as Cowell calls it, was the idea of sticking the cards to a strip of Velcro hanging from the wall.

After incorporation in 2004 and exhibiting at trade shows in the UK, Cowell had his big break thanks to a 100,000 unit order from Asda. Unfortunately his local suppliers couldn't possibly produce that volume in time for the 2005 holiday season, so Cowell hopped on a plane to Shanghai, lined up manufacturing and made the deadline. Since then he has expanded the produce range to include photo hangups, fridge hang-ups and three other novelties for displaying cards and photos. Annual turnover has already reached £130,000 and Cowell expects this to grow four-fold.

Cowell won £3,000 when he was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year for Yorkshire and Humberside. He then reached the regional finals of the 2007 HSBC Start Up Stars Award. IC Innovations, which started with the quick and easy card display product named Card Hang ups, now has employees in both the UK and the USA.

[www.ic-innovations.com](http://www.ic-innovations.com)



Source: Daily Telegraph

## Little Ironies

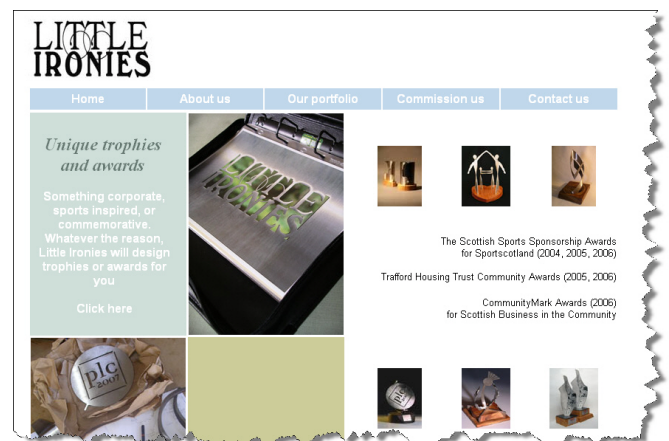
When Joanne Moody, a graduate of interior architecture, moved to Dundee with her husband she noticed a lack of work in her field of design. With time on her hands, she decided to do a course in welding and fabrication. Having a background in architecture, she became interested in designing garden furniture, as it brought together her practical and design skills.

Keen to take this idea further, she applied to go on a postgraduate entrepreneurship course at Abertay University. In addition to the study of the academic side of business, accounting and law, it also offered an incubator facility, known as Embreonix, which gave her an office, computer, fax – everything needed to get a new business started.

Financial support was provided through match funding from Scottish Enterprise and Tayside of £1,045 and £425 business start up award towards her IT equipment. Soon she was developing her first commercial pieces which, being reusable, also satisfied Moody's wish to "do a little bit more for the environment."

With little initial knowledge of metal work she has had to learn quickly and makes use of experienced fabricators to outsource larger projects. Building a sophisticated website has proved to be an effective marketing tool, attracting clients from as far away as Dubai and Malta.

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



Source: The Times



Whilst studying for her A Levels, Becki Train had always been at the centre of organising nights out for her friends. She felt this was something she was good at and decided to do a degree in events management.

After graduating, Becki got a job working for an events company in Liverpool, but when this business closed Becki, aged 23, started her own event and conference management business. With no mortgage or family she felt she could afford to take the risk.

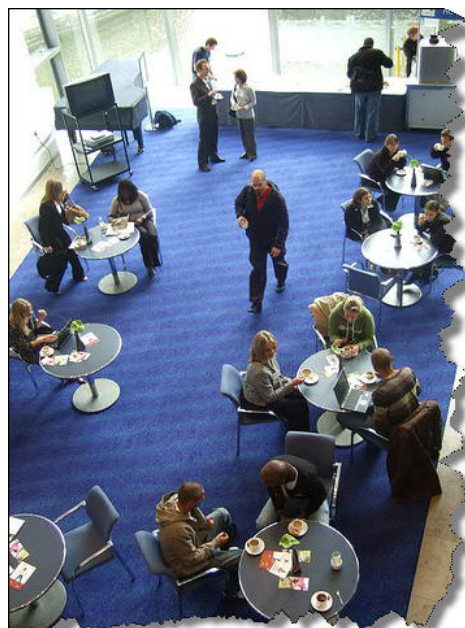
Seeking advice Becki went on a free business planning course run by BusinessLink which helped her focus her ideas and gave her access to a business mentor to offer advice as she started her business.

Being in the service industry her start up costs were low and a £2,000 loan from her parents enabled her to buy the basic office equipment.

Working in the events management industry she wanted to project a professional image and so set up as a limited company, Events Northern. Becki managed to keep her overheads down by working from home and held an evening and weekend job in a bar so that she wouldn't have to draw a salary.

The company turnover has grown from £52,000 in her first year to £105,000 last year and she is convinced she will continue to see gradual growth.

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



Source: Telegraph

## Pet Pavilion



Inspired by the pet parlours in the United States, Andrew and Jenny Edells realised that there was a gap in the market for a pampered pet experience in the UK. They decided that the concept of over-indulging our four legged friends with extravagant gifts could well be a winner, particularly in the affluent London area of Chelsea.

To create the ultimate pet experience, the couple teamed up with Dan Thomas, a local pet grooming expert, who was looking for new premises. The idea was to provide a luxury pet store and grooming service under one roof.

The initial start up challenge was finding suitable premises. It needed to be big enough for the venture, at a reasonable price and with landlords who were happy with the idea of dogs coming in and out of the property! Perseverance paid off and a location was found in Chelsea Farmers Market. Wary of over-committing themselves before the business was proven, they raised a modest bank loan of £38,000.

The sort of personal service on which they were determined the business would be founded was an instant hit with customers. Ladies who lunch could do so secure in the knowledge that their pet was safely parked at Pet Pavilion. Soon the business had built up a regular, loyal client base. It now has a turnover of £500,000 and four staff, directors included.

The key to their success was good merchandising commented Mr Edells, going over to America and spotting the latest trends has been an essential part of ensuring our products meet the customer needs, whether it is pet umbrellas or tailor made jewelled collars, the pooches and their owners are well catered for.

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

Source: The Telegraph

A visit in 2002 to watch their beloved Leeds Rhinos rugby league team convinced twins Geoff and Jim Riley to turn a hobby into a business. Geoff, a teacher at Eton College had developed a popular website that offered free materials for Economics teachers and students. Corporate financier Jim had recently completed a 12 month period of "gardening leave" after leaving his job at a quoted multinational. The twins resolved, in a half-time discussion, to turn the website hobby into a business.



A limited company was set up with share capital of £2,000 from the twin's personal funds. In order to conserve cash, Jim invested his own time free for a couple of years (so called "sweat equity"). Key business functions such as web design & development, editing and authoring were also outsourced. The business was also based in a loft conversion until 2006 at which point tutor2u's rapid growth justified a move to larger office premises.

By minimising fixed costs, tutor2u quickly achieved the break-even level of sales and has been profitable since trading began in 2003. Annual growth has averaged over 60%, all of which has been financed from retained profits.

The product range has been expanded to include a wider range of subjects and now includes student and teacher events in addition to digital learning resources. tutor2u's presence on the Web has enabled the business to build a strong online customer base with whom market research can be conducted. The launch of a free magazine for tutor2u's target teacher community has also helped to grow brand recognition and revenues.

Source: tutor2u

## Lynch's Direct

# 18

Having been unemployed for 15 months, Kevin Lynch found it almost impossible to get a job and his status made it difficult for him to get finance to turn his dream of setting up his own fruit and vegetable business into reality. From a family of greengrocers, he had the knowledge and experience of the market to make it a success, but with traditional avenues of finance closed to him, he needed to explore other sources.

Kevin approached the local Enterprise Development Unit (Invest Northern Ireland) who suggested he contact the youth charity, The Princes Trust. They put him on a five day business course and took him through the loan application process. With a £3,000 loan approval, Kevin opened his first store.

The greatest challenge Kevin faced was competition from the big supermarkets but with support of the local community, he built a loyal customer base and was then able to start a wholesale business to support the retail outlet.



Today customer loyalty is still strong and this has allowed him to expand both the retail and wholesale business. He commented that one of the best forms of advertising he has used is to get the name of the business seen across Northern Ireland, by way of his three vans, sporting the Lynch's Direct Flowers livery, this had contributed to expanding his market.



An avid golfer, Graham Gibbons was frustrated by the lack of sophisticated practice equipment for putting. Using a roll out green mat with a ramp at the end did not imitate the ups and downs and twists of a real golf green. What was needed was fully contoured, portable putting green.

Graham, a professional design engineer, completed a patent search on his new idea. There appeared to be nothing like his concept on the market. Keen to take his idea forward, Graham visited his local Business Gateway for advice on how to put together his business plan. For market research, he visited several local golf clubs and asked people whether they would buy his product and on the back of this developed a marketing campaign which he estimated would cost £50,000.

In total, he calculated that he would need £250,000 to get the business up and running. In addition to his own investment, he raised £105,000 in private equity from friends and former colleagues and got a promise of a £100,000 small business loan from his bank. Everything seemed to be going smoothly when the bank had a change of heart. He was just about to go into production and was heavily committed to tooling up costs and opening stock when he was informed they would not give him the loan. Fortunately he was able to find a new bank, who came up with £25,000. This still left him £75,000 short, but through careful negotiation with his sub-contractors he was able to limit his supplies to fit in with his cash flow.

Mr Gibbons anticipated that the bulk of his sales would be to private individuals. What has surprised him is the popularity of the product with golf professionals and corporate event organisers. He has kept the company's own operations as simple as possible by outsourcing most major functions including packing and delivery.

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



Source: The Sunday Times

## Tea on the Green

Tired of commuting to a job in Camberley, Dawn Knight had taken a job in a tea shop in her local town of Chichester. Enjoying the experience of working in a tea shop, she was inspired to look into setting up a similar business of her own. Working with her husband Dennis, they set up as partnership and spent five years planning the opening of a business. Their aim was to provide a high quality tea and cake experience, with home made cakes and quality china and to enjoy a change in lifestyle.

Initially their thoughts were to take over an existing business but premises were scarce or did not fulfil their ideal style and location.



Eventually they found a run down tea room in Westwood Ho, with wonderful views of the ocean, the location seemed perfect and but was consequently over priced.

Higher funds than expected were required, to not only buy the property but also provide the finance for the much needed renovations. The start-up funds of £50,000, were raised via their own personal funds and a small business loan.

It took six months of hard work before the tea room was ready to receive its first customers. With no budget left for marketing, the couple had no idea how successful the venture would be and relied on passing trade to support the venture. Since then, Dawn's cakes and scones, which she bakes fresh daily, and the tea room's quirky atmosphere have proved successful. Situated just yards from the coastal path, there is steady stream of walkers and hikers providing a strong customer base.