

Start-up: a story

A joint University Alliance and NACUE project

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10 Teasers

Anthony Borsumato – 13strides

Graduate of Teesside University, Multimedia Applications Masters

Home grown talent

“My career as a 400 metre hurdler came to an abrupt halt at 29 when I shattered my ankle. So I enrolled in a Multimedia Masters at Teesside which gave me the skills I needed to create a digital agency focused exclusively on sport. 13strides started in Teesside’s incubation unit and has been based there ever since. Now there are 7 of us, all Teesside graduates and we’re working on fantastic projects; designing the Channel 4 Paralympics website was a real highlight. The next step is to take 13strides internationally... “

Beth Widdowson and Lizze Leary - Kindred Sole

Graduates of De Montfort University, Fashion Retail Buying

Two of a kind

“We met in our first year at De Montfort and soon discovered we had similar tastes, wanted similar things and decided to turn our passion for shoes into a business. It didn’t take long to develop the idea, but we were still students, had no money and neither of us knew about the practical side of running a business. Enterprise Inc at the University made the difference between us having a good business idea and actually having a business. Now our shoes are worn across the world. Kindred Sole is a lot of work and it means our lives are quite different from a lot of other women our age, but we love what we do.

Bill Beaumont – Distant Future Animation Studio

Graduate of University of Bradford, Computer Animation Masters

Stick with what you love

“I put everything into the course and, after working solidly for 12 months, my final film won a BBC award! I thought that was my golden ticket but it wasn’t quite that straightforward. It took 2 years after graduation, plus lots of determination and the help of Think Business, before Distant Future Animation Studio was born. But if you love something you’ve got to stick at it. It’s amazing to think that we’ve built a thriving business from scratch and we’re aiming to become one of the premier computer graphics facilities in the country and - one day - why not the world!”

Hinesh Mistry – THAT Creative

University of Huddersfield, 3D Product Design

Start-up? Why not?

“THATCreative came about through the friendship of 5 of us studying Product Design at Huddersfield. In our final year we thought: "Instead of working for different product design consultancies, why not come together and start our own?" We knew a bit about starting up from our business lectures but we couldn't have figured out how to set up our business properly without the Activ8 scheme run by the Business Mine at the University. We're only 2 years in, so it's early days. The aim is to grow so that we have enough work for all 5 of us to come on board full-time. We'd really like to take on a few interns too..."

Jules Quinn – The *Teashed
Graduate of Northumbria University, Fashion Marketing
Selling tea to Japan

“My tutor at Northumbria, Fiona, was amazing - she used to work for a design agency so she really knew her stuff. She helped me develop my ideas in our regular one-to-one sessions, advising me about design and also on the retail side about things like pricing, mark-up, and turnover. By the end of my final year I'd done my research, written my business plan, sourced my tea, designed my first products and was ready to go. It would be nice to switch off one weekend but it's exciting seeing the business grow and working with distributors in Europe, the Middle East, Russia and even Japan.”

Michael Kashioulis - Smart Cookie Web Design
Graduate of University of Hertfordshire, Business Economics
Hold on to your dream

“It was a pretty big job running the enterprise society and doing my placement but I got to meet so many creative people and it confirmed that I wanted to work for myself. Using online tools like Business Link, the enterprise workshops at university and advice from staff and students in the society, I researched every aspect of setting up a web design business. After graduating, I thought “It's now or never” and took the plunge. The early stages were tough but after 2 ½ years, we're expanding our office and plan to use some of the space for a micro-incubation unit for other start-ups...”

Oliver Blanchard - Oliver Blanchard Design
Plymouth University, 3D Product Design
Designing to save lives

“While doing research for a project in Product Design at Plymouth University, I found out that 1.3m people die each year in developing nations from infections caused by reusing syringes. I got excited by the thought that I might be able to do something about it and set about finding a solution. My first prototype was not much to look at but it worked just well enough to make me think I could do it. But a potentially life-saving instrument has got to be perfect every time. I'd like to start clinical trials in the next 2 years. There's a lot of work to do but it's going to happen...”

Guy Watts - Streetscape
Graduate of Bournemouth University, Accountancy and Finance
Growing talent

“While at university I had the idea of using gardening to help unemployed young people gain skills. I used my spare time to research and start building the charity with a friend, James. We now have 2 landscape gardeners, each heading up a team of apprentices and I have more of a backseat role, focusing on business development and strategy. But I always want Streetscape to be there. It’s the most amazing buzz in the world to see the transformation in the guys who complete their apprenticeships – gaining skills, moving into employment and being positive role models in their community.”

Neomi Bennett - Neo Innovations UK
Graduate of Kingston University, Nursing
Lives transformed

“I didn’t set out to become a business woman; first and foremost I’m a nurse. While researching for an essay I was shocked to discover that 25,000 people a year are dying due to failed DVT prevention often linked to difficulty putting on anti-embolism stockings. So I began to develop a solution. My tutor suggested I enter my idea it into a competition called Bright Ideas, which I won! The Kingston enterprise team filled in the big gaps in my business knowledge and helped me get to where I am now; the Neo-slip is being sold internationally and there are more products on the way. It’s been a life changing experience.”

Vashti Seth - Deki Ltd
Graduate of the University of the West of England, Philosophy and Sociology
A hand up, not a hand out

I was really excited when I came up with the concept for a microfinance social enterprise during my second year at UWE. I wouldn’t have known where to start but the advice, funding, office space and other support from UWE Ventures enabled me to start up. There was so much to do - work with in-country field partners; build our lenders base; secure core funding as well as the day to day running of the business. Now I employ three others and it’s amazing to think that what we do is transforming the lives and communities of individuals we’re working with.