



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

SPARK

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CAREERS CENTRE 4 GRADUATE
START-UPS

info@spark.leeds.ac.uk



Spark is a business start-up service, based at the University Careers Centre which advises and assists students and graduates interested in self employment or setting up a business. It is funded through the Higher Education Innovation Fund and is also a partner in the Centre for Graduate Entrepreneurship in Yorkshire (CGEY)

As Spark, we offer business start up support to students, graduates and alumni of the University of Leeds. In addition to workshops and information sessions, we help potential entrepreneurs to realise their business ideas through providing:

ADVICE AND MENTORING

Our pre-start up advisers help students and graduates to carefully consider the business ideas they may have. Then our business advisers and mentors from specific business sectors can provide further advice on finance, marketing and business planning.

PROOF OF CONCEPT FUNDS

We help our students and graduates access Proof of Concept funds to support the development of their business ideas.

INCUBATION SPACE

Our incubation space called 'Ignition Point' is based in the Students Union. Incubation Space gives new businesses the step up to make it on their own. We can offer a 12 month contract to a new business that

provides fully equipped office space, meeting rooms, a professional business address and telephone number as well as ongoing access to business advice from Spark Advisers. Our pre-start advisers are happy to discuss our entrance criteria with anyone who is interested.

COMPETITIONS

We help entrants to prepare for business plan competitions including the annual Spark business plan competition for Leeds students which has a cash prize. Our winner then competes with an entrant from each of our regional partner universities for the title of 'Winner of Winners'. The prizes in this event include free PR support to help to establish the business.

This year Katie Jenkins and her company 'Live the Lingo' won our Spark competition and came third in the regional Winner of Winners competition. To find out more about her success to date see her profile overleaf.

This brochure showcases some of the fantastic businesses that are in the process of setting up or trading with the help of Spark.

If you have any queries about Spark and how we could help you with your business ideas then please contact:

info@spark.leeds.ac.uk tel. **0113 3435028** or enquire at Careers Centre reception.



CARLTON ADDISON

PRE START-UP BUSINESS

Carlton is graduating from Leeds this summer and is in the process of setting up a company to manufacture ice cream. He's also worked in recruitment for 7 months and his experience in that competitive, pressured environment was one of the factors that made him think about setting up his own business. He says "Ever since I was 12, I had crazy ideas and an ice cream company was one of them." Inspired by Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream and their start-up, he hopes to start trading this summer. Carlton has applied for a

Proof of Concept grant from Spark and hopes to become an Incubatee in the Ignition Point offices very shortly. He considers himself quite young at 23 to be taking a risk setting up a business but "Why rely on your boss to shape your career when you can have a direct influence on how successful you are?"

Look out for Carlton this summer as he starts selling ice cream in Leeds!

MARTIAL EDGE

PETER MILLS
STUDENT START-UP



Summarise your business idea in one sentence?

Martialedge is an Online Martial Arts Magazine focusing on traditions, technique and performance.

What made you consider starting up your own business?

I don't think there was ever a point where I thought 'one day I will start my own business.' My parents are self employed so I guess I have been brought up with the whole idea. Last year I took a year out from university and worked for IBM, it was a good experience and it gave me the confidence and the finances to set up Martialedge.

What sort of support have you received and where from?

The university team involved in graduate/undergraduate enterprise have been fantastic. They are always there to offer support and advice, and put on great events that really broaden your horizons in terms of what's out there. I also know a couple of individuals who have well established businesses, and are always on the other end of the phone if I need advice.

What have been the main difficulties in setting up?

The beauty of Martialedge is that I can run it from anywhere that has an internet connection. I had it designed with a content management system that means I don't have to spend hours writing code. However, I guess the problem with an internet business is that you need lots of traffic (people visiting your site) in order to attract advertisers and after six months the site is only just starting to attract high visitor numbers.

What are your future plans for Martialedge?

I want to see Martialedge grow into one of the most definitive Martial Arts sites in the world. How would I measure that? When you type martial arts in Google it would be in the top ten! But I think we are going the right way about it in that we have contributors from all over Europe, the United States and Asia and we produce quality content every month. We are also looking to launch a Martial arts cinema related site by the end of the year which will feature reviews, interviews and articles on 'behind the scenes.' The long term aim is to publish material but that's a whole different ball game! But for now I am very happy with the way Martialedge is progressing.

www.martialedge.co.uk

RECRUITMENT STARS

BEN TAGOE



Recruitment Stars specialises in finding trainee recruitment consultants for employment agencies and also provides staff training.

Whilst studying at Leeds, Ben Tagoe worked part-time for the Recruitment Employment Confederation and through his work met many business owners who spoke of the shortage of skilled staff in the Recruitment sector, particularly in the North of England. Ben looked into different ways of providing these staff and Recruitment Stars was born.

Ben says Spark was an enormous help in setting up. The Incubation desk space has made a real difference particularly as Ben is working on his own; he feels that the businesses in the Incubation space support and provide networking opportunities for each other.

His tip for setting up in business: do your research and get to know your market. Be prepared for an emotional ride.

www.recruitmentstars.co.uk

LIVE THE LINGO

KATIE JENKINS
BA ENGLISH AND FRENCH
(GRADUATED 2005)
INCUBATEE



What is Live the Lingo?

Live the Lingo is a website offering a complete service to International Students coming to the UK. It provides comprehensive information on language schools, accommodation, visas, insurance and much more. The site is translated into 5 languages: simplified Chinese, Japanese, French, German and Spanish.

What made you consider starting a business?

I went abroad to study in France and had trouble finding a course that suited me and it put the idea in my mind to help people in similar situations. Whilst in France, I spoke to many international students who had previously studied in the UK who thought a comprehensive service would be a good idea. I knew there was a demand and I needed to do some research. Other websites offering similar information didn't translate from the English and therefore beginners wouldn't know how to access the information they needed.

What initial steps did you take?

I managed to secure a desk in the Incubation Space, and started my research. I looked at statistics from UK Visas, and educational bodies to see which nationalities were coming to the UK and how many. I investigated which organisations would provide information to make the website more professional and reliable. So, initially I was working out a business model to see what I could offer within a certain price range.

Which companies and organisations have worked with you?

Amongst my direct content providers are UK Visas, the University of

Cambridge ESOL exam board, Itchy City Guides and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

How has Spark helped you?

Leah Bennett and Kairen Skelley (Spark Business Advisers) have been fantastic and also support from the Centre for Enterprise Learning and Teaching. I was awarded a Proof of Concept grant and I won the Business Plan Competition this year and the prize money from that has gone towards translating the website. After winning the Business Plan Competition, I won 3rd Place in the regional final, Winner of Winners.

Any difficulties you've had setting up?

It's taken a lot longer than I expected! For example, I had to take a crash course in html. Working alone is difficult, especially learning to be realistic in my workload. My Dad has been a real help offering me advice and marketing support.

Future plans?

I want to expand the website to offer flights, have the site translated in more languages and maybe one day have representatives or offices overseas who will work as agents.

Any encouragement or advice you'd offer those thinking about starting up a business?

Don't try to do everything yourself. Learn to delegate but realise that no-one will be as passionate as you are about your business.

www.livethelingo.com

JOHN TUDOR PHOTOGRAPHY

JOHN TUDOR
HOT-DESKING INCUBATEE



John Tudor, a graduate from the Leeds BA Hons Arts Management course, liked the idea of running his own business and had a hobby, photography, which he could see as a career. So he approached Spark to see what support he could get in setting up. John Tudor Photography specialises in Commercial, Advertising, PR and Events photography, in particular in the arts market photographing theatre productions and doing actor headshots. John says that Spark has helped in three ways:

- Business advice received before and during start up was very useful.
- Incubation Space enabled him practically to set up.
- Courses attended such as the Entrepreneurial Summer School and the Marketing seminar by Brighter Marketing were invaluable.

The main difficulty John says he faced at the outset was 'not having a clue what he was doing!' Now he knows the photography industry and its facets much better and recalls, "If I knew what I know now, I'd have been too scared to start in business!, however my naivety at that time and the SPARK backing helped me foster boundless enthusiasm. Thankfully now my knowledge and increasing experience in my industry, is much more valuable to both me and my clients."

www.johntudorphotography.co.uk

LIQUID SATISFACTION

MAX BILBOW
TRADING BUSINESS



Liquid Satisfaction sounds as if it might be something inappropriate but it is the name of the Kayak Coaching and Travel company set up by 2nd Year Student Max Bilbow. Liquid Satisfaction has already started trading and is running its first excursion to Uganda in September; a 2 week package holiday kayaking on the White Nile. Max has been a kayak coach since age 16 and says that kayaking is his one 'true love'. With one of his best mates at Uni he ran many trips for the University Canoe club and from there sprung the idea to set up Liquid Satisfaction. According to Max, many freelance coaches sell themselves short or are not truly recognized for their skills. He reckons if you have the ability and desire to do it; then why not do it properly? Max came to Spark for advice and says that the business advice helped highlight the small but important details needed to set up in business. He says "You look at a business from the outside and it seems easy to do but it's not; especially when you're trying to get a degree!"

Visit www.liquidsatisfaction.co.uk to find out more!

Max's words of wisdom (maybe): "If you can do it now... do it NOW!"



ARTS-STRA

NICOLA GREENAN AND JOEL MCKAY
FORMER INCUBATEES



Arts-Stra is a project management and consultancy company for the arts and creative sectors. It is run by two Leeds Graduates, Nicola Greenan and Joel McKay who met whilst studying Arts Management. Nicola started Arts-Stra 2 years ago as a standard limited company with help from Spark, having a desk in the Incubation Space and accessing advice from business advisers.

Initially a major part of Arts-Stra's work was in arts regeneration; working with businesses to help them give something back to the community through arts projects. However as the company has grown and Joel has joined, Arts-Stra finds its remit is more focussed on developing the creative sector in Yorkshire through consultancy work or project management. There is a lack of companies doing what Art-Stra does in this region and the market is segmented; there are management companies for individual fields such as the visual arts or theatre but Arts-Stra is one of the only companies who encompasses all of these different fields.

Arts-Stra acts as a hub for gathering and disseminating information about the arts sector to arts organisations in Yorkshire. They feel there is a great wealth of artistic talent in Yorkshire that has yet to be exploited. To give some examples of their work: recently, Arts-Stra ran a project called 20202 Vision in Leeds bringing together 20 musicians and bands

with 20 filmmakers to make music videos within the competitive timescale of 2 weeks (see www.20202.co.uk). The project worked in conjunction with the BBC and Channel 4 as well as film and music organisations and was devised to help fresh young music and film talent collaborate with each other, reach new audiences and create a new platform for this sort of project in Leeds.

At present Arts-Stra is involved with 2 dance projects. The first project is a dance piece choreographed by a University of Leeds Dance lecturer to be performed in Leeds Central Library in January – a project that they are to manage and produce. The second project is consultancy, enabling a dance company to reassess and develop their strategy for touring and putting on productions. Arts-Stra are also proud that their Aim Higher contract has been renewed – they work with the University of Leeds Performing Arts department to encourage underprivileged school children to study arts based degrees at University.

Arts-stra's advice to small companies setting up in business:
"One of the largest powers and responsibilities you have at your disposal as a SME business owner is flexibility and you have to make sure you use it wisely and logically"

www.arts-stra.co.uk

FIT2SUIT

RUTH INNES AND MICHAELA BEGLEY
INCUBATEES



Fit2Suit provides made-to-measure suits for both male and female, offering a personalised service to each individual AND they save you having to shop for them – they'll come to your office!

Run by Ruth Innes and Micheala Begley, who met whilst studying Mathematics at Leeds, their business is gradually expanding. They went travelling together after university, experiencing new cultures that broadened their horizons and spent time dreaming up ideas for business. When they returned, they couldn't find suits that fitted for job interviews and that's where it began. Ruth got a job teaching Maths and Michaela trained to be an accountant but soon both girls were disillusioned by the 9-5 daily grind. Michaela said 'We're both creative and our travels made us think outside of the box' – it was only natural that they wanted to be in control of their working life. And so, one night in the pub a friend who had just set up his own business encouraged them to go for it and they did.

When asked what they think they've achieved so far, the girls are proud to say they're already paying their own wages. They haven't had any financial help and are making it on their own. They've met all sorts of people they would probably never have met. They believe they have

learnt much more than they ever did in teaching and accountancy because in business they have to do it all themselves, including learning how to jumpstart Ruth's car when they're late for a meeting!

Working together, the girls balance each other out when one's feeling down, the other is positive and vice-versa. They are both really motivated to succeed. They told me that every Tuesday morning they're up at 5.20am to go leafletting for an hour. And they say that in this line of work the day goes too fast – in fact there aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done.

Spark has helped Fit2Suit set up with advice from business advisers Leah Bennett, Kairen Skelley and Graham Caddock. They have office space in the Incubation Space on campus and won 2nd place in Business Plan Competition.

Fit2Suit's future plans are to buy a factory within the next 3 years. They would like to produce off the peg, corporate clothing and get Fit2Suit out all over the country.

www.fit2suit.co.uk

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