

CASE STUDIES INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial Students at the University of Worcester: Five Case Studies

Since 2004 the University of Worcester has operated an Enterprise Calendar of events that seek to inform and inspire staff and students to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Over 830 individuals have engaged in our annual Enterprise Festival, Enterprise Training workshops, Business Ideas Competition ('BizCom'), Worcester Innovators Network ('WIN') – our student enterprise society – and Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education ('SPEED'). All of these activities have been funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England through their Higher Education Innovation Fund. These case studies consider the effect and impact of this programme of support upon a diverse selection of entrepreneurial students. Here are the key findings:

Q: Tell us about your background. Where have you previously worked or studied?

A: All of our entrepreneurs were full time students, and most were mature students seeking a career change or to develop within their chosen careers. Former careers include sales and marketing of industrial textiles, professional football, recruitment, and car maintenance.

Q: How did you get involved with enterprise at the University of Worcester?

A: All of our entrepreneurs participated in the Enterprise Calendar to some extent. The most popular activities being BizCom, WIN and SPEED.

Q: Did your studies and enterprise activities complement each other?

A: Where studies were not linked directly to their business idea our entrepreneurs believed they accumulated skills that were essential to the success of their business, notably IT, business organisation, marketing and research.

Q: What were your greatest challenges and how did you deal with them?

A: Unanimously time management was, and remains, their greatest challenge. All of our entrepreneurs admit to feeling overwhelmed by the experience of having to juggle multiple commitments and all said that they have learned to be more professional in response to the challenge. Typically the balance between their family, studies and business was the most difficult to maintain.

Q: What's happened to you since graduation?

A: Three of our entrepreneurs have developed self-sustaining businesses within 12 months of graduation. The remainder demonstrate how their entrepreneurial skills have improved their employability, going on to study for higher degrees, and fully intend to pursue their business idea more actively in the near future.

Q: What has been your impact on others?

A: All of our entrepreneurs have used their experience to encourage, mentor and coach others to explore their ideas. Besides their commercial activities most of our entrepreneurs also engage in voluntary and community work and are happy to come back into the University to give talks to a new cohort of aspiring entrepreneurs.

Q: How do you measure your success?

A: A wide range of measures are used which include "how much sleep I allow myself", "the size and quality of client", "feeling active and useful", "personal growth", "academic success" and "keeping my life in balance".

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Q: On reflection is there anything you would have done differently?

A: There seem to be no deep seated regrets except that all of the mature students wish they'd come to university earlier in their lives.

Q: Where do you go from here (2-3 years)?

A: All of our entrepreneurs want to grow their businesses or career portfolios and at least two are considering a PhD.

Q: Who would you like to thank for their support and encouragement?

A: All have special mentions for their personal tutor, supervisor or mentor amongst the academic staff. The support of Student Services, the Crèche and the Research and Business Development Office also enabled our entrepreneurs to achieve more.

I hope you enjoy the case studies as much as we've enjoyed working with the individuals behind them.

Best wishes,

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May 2008
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