

MAKING WAVES IN BUSINESS

A FEATURE ON OU ENTREPRENEURS – PART II

Our last issue of OU featured a series of articles on entrepreneurs making waves in business and we are delighted to showcase more amazing companies set up by OUs who are paving the way to success by following their passions.

Headed up by **Sir Charles Dunstone (LH 78)**, Executive Chairman of TalkTalk Telecom, former chairman of the electronics retailer, Dixons Carphone, and knighted for services to industry and philanthropy in 2012, we interviewed Sir Charles who was pleased to share his insights into life as an entrepreneur.

Are people born entrepreneurial or can it be learned?

I think it is something you have to have an instinct for. The most important qualities are being rebellious, inquisitive and determined. As a dyslexic, my inability to concentrate on one thing very long is also very helpful.

Having a good idea often seems like the easy bit, but how do you take a good idea and make it commercially successful?

You have to really believe in it, be incredibly persistent in fighting for it, but adaptable enough to change and modify it along the way.

What are the secrets of attracting investment and growing businesses?

Make sure you always try to work with the minimum possible investment. Every pound you take, dilutes your ownership and, if you are not careful, you'll end up doing all the work for the benefit of others.

Have you made mistakes in business; how did you learn from them?

You never stop making mistakes, hopefully you get slightly more things right than wrong. If you're not making any mistakes, you're not trying hard enough.

How do you motivate yourself and your employees to strive for success?

Everyone has to believe in the mission and enjoy being part of the team.

What are you working on now that really excites you?

Most exciting are the young businesses that we are incubating to scale. Exciting ideas and passionate people running them.

What's the one thing you would say to someone who wanted to open and grow their own business?

Do you really want it? It's incredibly hard work and often lonely. It takes your entire life over. You have to be totally committed to the mission.



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Guild

Ashley Friedlein (C 85) has founded two businesses from scratch. The first, Econsultancy, started in 1999 and was sold to Centaur Media plc in 2012. Econsultancy advises marketing professionals on digital marketing. His second business, Guild, went live at the end of 2018 and is a messaging app for professional groups, networks and communities – think 'WhatsApp for business'.

Ashley says: "My passion is around learning and curiosity. Specifically, as applied to one's profession as opposed to just socially or as a hobby. We spend so much of our lives at work that I believe we should try and find something that we care about, that we want to get better at, where we're keen to learn and share our expertise with others. This makes work more fulfilling and enjoyable."

His business Guild took around three years to conceive, design and build. It now has almost 70 customers and thousands of users. Their client base is mostly in professional membership organisations, B2B media organisations, professional services (law, accountancy, finance, property, architecture, agencies, consultancies, etc.) and education. All areas where high value contacts, trusted connections, expertise and knowledge sharing are important, and their operations are taking on the WhatsApp giant.

"It's actually against WhatsApp's terms of service to use it for professional purposes though it happens a lot," says Ashley. "WhatsApp is not compliant with privacy regulation like GDPR and there will soon be ads as well as integration with Messenger and Instagram. There are also no profiles in WhatsApp, like you get in LinkedIn, so it is hard to know whose company you are keeping. All in all, we think WhatsApp is not fit for purpose for professional use. But it is a big competitor to take on!"

By the end of this year, Ashley estimates that Guild will have more than 10,000 users, and by the end of next year, over 100,000.

Ashley's advice for those starting out? "Unless you feel compelled to do it, then you probably shouldn't. Being an entrepreneur is tough so unless you're totally committed then you almost certainly won't make it. If you can, you should also have at least one co-founder and you should have complementary, not similar, skills, e.g. technology and sales."



GUILD

Permanent Radius Point LLC

permanentradiuspont.com

John Sutton (Hf 50) has had a lifetime of inventing and even at School was known for his ability to make things, particularly the building of model aeroplanes, including a Stinson Voyager, which he used to fly on The Middle.

His latest invention 'Permanent Radius Point LLC' provides precision and accuracy

during the construction of athletics tracks. The product was originally designed for the Olympic Stadium in London and has since been installed at other racetracks.

Permanent Radius Point provides pin-point accuracy, ensuring that the event markings comply with the strict tolerances specified by the IAAF.

International Private Finance (IPF)



In 2008, **Fiona Watts (J 96)** founded International Private Finance (IPF) with a clear vision of becoming the leading international mortgage brokerage within five years. She achieved that in just two.

IPF works with over 50 international retail and private banks, and brokers loans from €100,000 to €55 million. Fiona offers the rare opportunity for language graduates to work in a financial environment and she is also passionate about female entrepreneurship. IPF is 98% female, bucking the trend in the male-dominated financial services sector.

The company has been instrumental in making the industry more transparent for the consumer, helped banks offer finance in new countries and set up new products, as well as making the overseas finance application process more secure and rigorous.

"I have learnt that a business is constantly evolving, and new challenges are always arising," says Fiona. "Being bold and brave with how you react to these challenges is often what generates the biggest successes, but you also need to give your mind space to come up with solutions, as forced ones are rarely as good."

It was her two years at Uppingham, which helped Fiona realise that anything is possible, fostering her desire to lead, rather than follow. "I aim to provide an environment for people to shine and grow, which is exactly what I saw the School do with the girls it took on board in the Sixth Form. I want people to leave IPF confident of their strengths and believing they can achieve anything they put their minds to."

O&3

www.oand3.com

In 2018, **Thomas Kerfoot (C 98)** and his two elder sisters, Jennifer and Eleanor, founded O&3, supplying natural ingredients to the cosmetic industry. They produce a wide variety of oils, butters, waxes and natural exfoliants for global cosmetic brands including Lush, Body Shop and L'Oréal, as well as small start-up cosmetic brands. They make a lot of their own products, and travel to very remote parts of the world – the Brazilian Amazon, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco – to source the finest and most functional natural ingredients.

Oil is in the blood – their entrepreneurial parents made their names in the industry with The Kerfoot Group, focused on selling oils to the food manufacturing industry. Thomas and his sisters took over the business on their parents' retirement and managed the acquisition process with a major French corporate in 2015.

Post-sale they had the luxury of time to really decide what they wanted to do next and building something of their own was very much on the agenda. The team started O&3 in April 2018 in an old grain warehouse, with six employees and an aggressive first year target of £1 million in sales. Fast forward one year and they celebrated their first birthday with 30 colleagues, sites in the UK, Poland and USA and sales of close to £6 million.



The team had a very well-structured plan, three minds with three different skillsets and a lot of drive and determination to make their business a success. Year two will bring more plans, more risk and equally as aggressive budgets including expanding their online product range via their new brand www.makersingredients.com which launched in April.

Thomas puts a lot of his success down to what he learnt at Uppingham – he remembers thinking and planning out his path whilst at School, wanting to create something of his own rather than following the 'traditional' corporate path.

"One thing was for sure – Uppingham gave me the platform to enable this to happen, and not just academically, it was the small things that all added value and developed me into who I am today. As a consistent struggler in the classroom, my determination and drive to achieve never failed – I have learnt that building your own path in business really is possible!"



EO

Founded by **Charlie Jardine (Fgh 04)** in 2015, EO Charging designs and manufactures electronic vehicle charging stations and smart software for homes, fleets and destinations. Having previously worked at another UK-based charger manufacturer, Charlie was frustrated by the unreliability of existing infrastructure and set up EO with a pledge to make charging simple and reliable.

After 12 months of development in a barn on his grandfather's farm in Suffolk (an old pig shed to be precise) the company's first EV charger was produced – the EO Basic. Within months EO secured numerous orders and the company looked to expand across the UK.

Next came the EO Genius, a modular and scalable smart charger designed to support the electrification of fleets, apartments and destinations. The success of the EO Genius quickly positioned the company as a leader in the fleet charging space.

In parallel to the development of commercial electric vehicle chargers, EO began to extensively research the home charging market. In 2018, EO launched the EO Mini and EO Mini Pro – the smallest electric vehicle chargers on the market. The EO Mini was created in response to consumer feedback that homeowners wanted a discreet charging unit for the side of their house.

To date, EO Charging has made over 15,000 electric vehicle chargers and operates in over 30 countries around the world including the United Kingdom, Norway, Australia and India.





Bear Jam Productions

www.bearjam.co.uk

James Hilditch (LH 98) is the founder and Creative Director of Bear Jam Productions, a video production company based in London. Bear Jam specialise in creating video content for businesses and brands. In the six years since launching, they have worked with some of the UK's most prestigious advertising and PR agencies and brands including Netflix, Nike, Knight Frank and John Lewis. Not to mention a couple of OUs.

After graduating from the University of Reading with a Real Estate and Planning degree, James worked in the property industry becoming a chartered surveyor. Noticing the growing demand for video content, particularly in the context of online and digital advertising, James's passion for filmmaking became an opportunity to escape the city and Bear Jam Productions was born – in his bedroom.

In the early days, James would trawl social media looking for work and opportunities to grow his portfolio. Before long he was booking meetings and working with top advertising agencies. James now employs a team of producers and editors.

While his time is focused on running the business, James still loves to get behind the camera on shoots for Bear Jam's wide range of new and existing clients. Whether it's helping a new business launch on a crowdfunding site or a FTSE 100 company promoting their brand, James loves the challenge of working with the client to produce something creative and visually stunning that also communicates the message in accordance with the client's brief.

If you or your business needs some help producing video James would love to hear from you – james@bearjam.co.uk.



Photo credit: **Laura Radford (Sa 01)**

Arcus Helicopters

www.arcus-heli.com

After leaving university in 2014, **Jamie Ferrand (Fgh 06)** became a commercial helicopter pilot within a year, and a flight instructor six months later. Not long after completing his flight instructor rating, Jamie left his full-time role as a commercial pilot and flight instructor, jumping at the opportunity to create something of his own.

In August 2017, Jamie and two partners started Arcus Helicopters, providing flight training and charter services. In just three weeks, they renovated a hangar, offices and three helipads at Nottingham Airport, and brought together a fleet of six aircraft.

Arcus saw a gap in the market to create a social club atmosphere. They bring together both students and pilots to enjoy events, whilst also providing high-quality flight training, to enhance safety for both recreational and career pilots.

In 2018, they expanded and linked up further with another local helicopter operator to offer luxury A to B charter services to destinations including London's Battersea Heliport, various hotels, most racecourses and customer's private houses UK-wide and into Europe.

This year Arcus will be expanding further, increasing their fleet size by adding more training aircraft to cope with the student demand. They are also renovating their hangar to add a new lecture room for courses and ground school, and they are now involved with aircraft sales and purchases, tailoring customers' requirements to match the right helicopter.

"Arcus Helicopters offers so much more than just flight training," says Jamie. "Learning to fly should be an enjoyable and fun experience both in the air and on the ground. We offer help for all students with their exams whilst gaining their licence and offer safety seminars and advice for licence holders. We also organise social events involving a group of people and aircraft. We hope to continue to grow and expand our customer reach, whilst maintaining our high customer satisfaction levels."