

Birmingham graduate spills the beans

by Mark Harrison



22 year-old James Eder graduated from the University's Business School just a few weeks ago, but he is already preparing to launch his first company, Studentbeans.com, later this month.

The pun is cringe-worthy, but 'full of beans' really is the only way to describe him. He enthuses about his new business, which aims to provide student discounts for a range of outlets in the city – covering bars, restaurants and theatres among many more. James is co-director of the company along with his brother Michael.

'The idea of setting up my own company had been bubbling away inside since before I started at Birmingham, but Studentbeans.com was created as part of my business course. The company has been set up as a solution to 3 main problems that we identified; the fact that students are generally unaware of local services; the financial burden of studying; and the difficulty that local business have marketing to students.'

With Birmingham students spending around £150 million in the region each year, clearly the student market is one that local companies can't ignore. Businesses pay the website to post discount vouchers for their services, which can be printed and claimed along with student ID. Recalling his own time at Birmingham, James is keen to promote the wide range of the opportunities that the city has to offer.

'Students are hit with so much mass marketing from the main clubs, but there's so much more out there than the typical drinking culture, which is only one aspect. There's a whole

range of restaurants, theatres, comedy nights off the beaten track.'

James has been encouraged from the start by Jamie Elliot from the University's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centre, saying that he has been a great sounding-board. An enterprise day at the University also led to James recently receiving sponsorship from the Prince's Trust, who have strict eligibility criteria.

Jamie Elliot added, *'James epitomises the entrepreneurial spirit this University is encouraging. I am very pleased to see that his hard work has paid off with his successful bid for support from the Princes Trust. I am sure Studentbeans will be one of the many entrepreneurial success stories of the University.'*

Marketing and management are hardly new areas for James who has been involved in the world of business from a young age. After setting up a highly successful Young Enterprise company at school he went on to gain an impressive portfolio of experience during his time at Birmingham. He managed to bring in over £10,000 worth of sponsorship for the summer ball in his first year, became 'on campus' brand manager for the Yell group in his second year and recruited for AIESEC, an organisation that sends graduates for overseas work placements.

A 9 week placement to the Philippines with the organisation left a lasting impression on James and has shaped his business outlook since. On top of witnessing a bank robbery and military coup during his time there he also visited the free-trade Cavite region, which was featured extensively in Naomi Klein's No Logo.

'I felt it was important to visit the region. The factories there had two logbooks: one for the big companies, where they claim their staff work 6 hour days, and a real account that is kept secret, containing the actual hours worked. When company representatives go over the factory owners send half the workers home and only show the first book. It might sound aspirational but I hope that one day I can make a difference if I become the head of one of the large companies. The experience will definitely stay with me forever.'

Plans are going well so far with over 100 companies signed up to his business and many more meetings in the pipeline. According to James the 'bean' brand lends itself to quirky marketing, so staff and students should be on the look out for blue beans across campus as well a 'bean patrol'. Be afraid.

Outstanding Accenture prize winners

The Business School's long-standing recruitment relationship with leading global management consultancy Accenture has scaled new peaks with the addition of the Accenture Strategy (Science/Commerce) Award to the existing Accenture Strategy Award.

The awards of £1,000 each are shared between Business School students who give the best group analysis on the Strategic Management casework, as part of their degree course. This year's winning students are: Lara Bayliss, Lynsey Birkett, Hanna Newton for their analysis of South African Breweries (Accenture Strategy Award) and Amandeep Chohan, Narinderjeet Shergill, Kavith Thakrar, Harkeeret Singh, Jagdeep Daheley for their analysis of McDonalds (Accenture Strategy [Science/Commerce] Award).

Melanie Lee, responsible for Graduate Recruitment (Midlands) Accenture and Giles Walker, Manager at Accenture confirmed that the 150 plus graduates recruited from the University and the Business School over the last 6 years since academic Dr Rehan ul-Haq and Giles Walker established the link have and continue to make a valuable contribution to Accenture's global business and to the competitiveness of their clients.

Investigating Non-Government Public Action: IDD wins £260,000 ESRC bid!

The International Development Department recently received news that it has won £260,000 funding from the Economic and Social Research Council to carry out research over a 2 year period. This international project will be entitled 'Whose Public Action? Analysing inter-sectoral collaboration for service delivery'.

The research will build on IDD's 2004–2005 project, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), which investigated the role that non-state providers play in providing basic services like education, health and water to the poor, and how governments may interact with such providers. This study looked at international experience but focused on South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

Non-state providers, such as the private sector and community or religious organisations, offer options to the poor as well as competitive challenges to the public sector providers – for example a case study in Malawi examined competition to the state health sector from traditional birth attendants who helped women in rural areas that could not easily get to state hospitals, may not be able to pay the required fee or preferred the traditional style of medicine; while a investigation in Nigeria showed that non-state

providers gave children in urban poor communities access to a basic education that the government could not afford to provide for them.

However although non-state providers may provide flexible and accessible services to poor people, they may also overcharge and provide bad services such as inadequate quality medicine. The regulation of small and individual providers (doctors, midwives, water vendors, for example) is very demanding on government capacity and may itself easily be abused by governments that wish to make life difficult for non-state providers. For more information on this project, please see www.idd.bham.ac.uk/service-providers

The ESRC research will carry on exploring these themes and will take place in South Asia and Africa, with a focus on Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and the Philippines. IDD will be leading the research with a team including the University of London's School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; the Centre for International Education of the University of Sussex; and the Water, Engineering and Development Centre of the University of Loughborough.