



L-r Joey Swindells, Natalia Blagburn, Cole Robinson, Rob Lundgren

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Three North East graduates, three successful businesses and one thing in common

What does a musician from Manchester, a guided tour operator from Northumberland and a videographer from Teesside have in common?

They are all graduates of Northumbria University's pioneering Entrepreneurial Business Management (EBM) programme and now they're running successful businesses just six months after leaving University.

The EBM programme at Northumbria University is unique in that students are expected to start and run their own businesses from day one. Commercial ideas are developed as a central aspect of the programme and students are encouraged to explore how to manage and grow their businesses independently.

Rob Lundgren-Jones, 21, from Alnwick, completed his studies on the EBM programme last summer. He owns and runs Lundgren Tours, providing guided coach and walking tour experiences throughout Northumberland.

Working with local coach companies, visitor attractions and tourist information providers, Rob is delivering themed tours and guided trips for individuals and groups as well as the North East business community through corporate events and conferences.

Since launching the business in 2017, Rob's hosted over 1000 visitors, doubled his revenue and is on target to generate a minimum £50k turnover in 2019. Popularity and demand for his personalised visitor experience is proving so successful that Lundgren Tours won silver in the 'Guided Tour of the Year' category at the North East England Tourism Awards 2018.

Rob explains: "I love entertaining and meeting new people. I'm also passionate about Northumberland having lived here all my life. I think its unique history, wild landscapes, wonderful people and unspoiled night skies are fantastic assets that should be enjoyed and I can help people to do that.

"This was the inspiration for setting up in business, but it was the support and advice from my tutors and friends on the EBM programme which really gave me the confidence and entrepreneurial mind-set to go for it.

"Lundgren Tours has been running for two years. It's been an amazing journey, I've learned so much; made plenty mistakes but learning by doing is genuinely the right path for me. My aim is to keep developing the business and to make Lundgren Tours the best tour provider in the North East of England."

Fellow EBM graduate Cole Robinson, 22, from Redcar in Teesside has turned his passion for travel and storytelling into a freelance video production company.

Since graduation, Cole has worked with more than 50 clients, ranging from international engineering firms, charities and high-end ladies fashion brand 'Tiska London', to numerous tourist boards, event and specialist media companies.

Describing his business and hopes for the future, Cole said: "My speciality is telling the stories of businesses. Clients hire me to go in and really understand the things that drive their business on a deeper level so that I am able to convey this in video and really personify the business to their audience.

"I see myself as a visual storyteller, which sets me apart from the competition. I have never done any formal training, which has led me to develop my own unique style and something that my clients seem to love.

"My turnover is set to double during the next 12 months. So far the bulk of my business growth has been organic through referrals and people viewing my content. My strategy is to continue working hard to build my profile and establish myself as a world-leading creative content producer with the ultimate goal to set up my own videography agency. The incredible mentors and coaches I've worked with on the EBM programme have given me the guidance and confidence to create a commercially viable business."

Joey Swindells, 22, from Bolton, Greater Manchester, also completed the EBM programme in 2018. A lifelong musician and drummer, his experience led him to launch 'The Rookery'; a music collective which brings music makers together to jam and collaborate.

Having never considered University as an option, Joey's decision to move to Newcastle and enrol at Northumbria was based entirely on the appeal of the EBM programme's unique approach to learning.

He explains: "I've never been particularly academic and University had never made it onto my radar. I just couldn't imagine being on a traditional type of course and almost wrote the option off. That changed when I found out about the EBM programme.

"I couldn't believe how good it sounded, having a real world, hands-on approach with the freedom to do things your own way and the potential to

gain a huge amount of valuable experience in just three years. Added to that was the lure of moving to a new city, so I completely changed direction and took a leap of faith!”

The Rookery is now firmly established with a growing community in Newcastle. The business generated £15k in its first year and aims to grow by 50% in year two. The collective works regularly with established and new music venues including The Cluny and Little Buildings in Newcastle. In December, The Rookery spread its wings with a launch in Manchester.

Students on the EBM course work in small teams to make business ideas a reality, but their passion is always encouraged as a starting point. It focuses on independent, real world learning, with students working to launch their own businesses and learn from their successes and mistakes.

The programme is based on a Finnish model of education, called Team Academy, and Northumbria was one of the first two universities to pioneer this approach in the UK.

Natalia Blagburn, senior lecturer in entrepreneurship at Northumbria University, is a business coach on the EBM programme.

She said: “The approach we take on the course is always to find something that students are passionate about and work from there.

“For Rob, Cole and Joey, they have been able to create viable businesses from something they love doing which is also sustainable in the long-term and clearly means everything to them. I’m very proud to see them executing their business plans with such professionalism.

“Our graduates are everything we could hope to find in young entrepreneurs, not only are they passionate, creative and committed to their businesses, they are very supportive of each other.”

The EBM programme is part of Northumbria’s award-winning Newcastle Business School; recognised as Business School of the Year in 2015 and more recently, the first North East Business School to win the Small Business Charter for services to SMEs.

Rob, Cole and Joey are also being supported by Northumbria's [Student and Graduate Enterprise](#) service as they continue to grow their businesses. This is part of wider support for graduate enterprise and a key contributor to Northumbria recently being named the UK's top ranked university for graduate business start-ups based on turnover, for a second year running. The latest report by the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), shows turnover from Northumbria graduate businesses for 2016/17 reached £80.3 million – over £30 million more than the second placed institution. The combined turnover for Northumbria graduate businesses also grew by more than £10 million on the previous year.

Since 2009, Northumbria has supported the development of more than 200 graduate businesses, which currently employ over 1,000 and now have a combined annual turnover in excess of £80 million.

To find out more about available courses, including the EBM course, click [here](#)

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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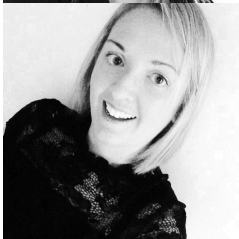


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