



Charlotte Hall and Rosie Willan on their travels in South Africa

Sep 04, 2019 12:27 BST

## Travel experience leads to successful business start up

Northumbria University graduates, Rosie Willan and Charlotte Hall, have won the Duke of York's Entrepreneur of the Year award after launching their own specialist tourism marketing business, [Stay The Night](#), last year.

The Duke of York Young Entrepreneur Awards 2019 are organised annually and seek to recognise excellence and raise the profile of start-up businesses.

Rosie studied [Journalism and English Literature](#) and Charlotte

studied [Geography](#) at Northumbria University. They met when they were both employed by the University's Marketing Department during the summer holidays and started working together on the same day. After graduating they decided to go travelling together, which became the inspiration for their company.

Staying in various hostels whilst travelling around South Africa, Kenya and Australia for a year, they found a common problem within the hostel industry. They noticed many did not have a solid marketing plan in place and were not telling potential travellers about the unique services or facilities they could offer.

Whilst in Kenya, Rosie and Charlotte worked on the marketing for a community-run charity which sowed the seed for forming a business together and the idea behind Stay the Night came when they were staying in a hostel in Johannesburg.

Discussing issues surrounding the industry with the hostel owner, they made the decision to set up their business offering hostels a variety of services including social media management, paid advertising campaigns, web design, blogging, email marketing and PR, all of which can be built into bespoke packages depending on the needs of the business.

Believing their idea had potential, they got in touch with the [Student and Graduate Enterprise team](#) at Northumbria University when they returned to the UK who helped them build their business. Discussing their experience with the team, Charlotte said: "There are so many doubts when starting a business but no one else was doing what we wanted to do so we knew we had an original idea that we could build on.

"Right from the beginning the enterprise team believed in us and our idea which really spurred us on. They instilled in us the value of our work and expertise and coached us on various aspects of setting up an official business - often organising meetings with experts in these areas to help us learn more."

The Johannesburg hostel became one of their first clients when [Stay the Night](#) was officially launched in 2018 and Stay the Night now has 13 clients all around the world, with more plans to expand further in the future. Rosie and Charlotte have also taken on three employees.

As the business continues to grow and exceed expectations, they have plans to support charities and local businesses offering a free service called Uplift. This will provide organisations with three months of free marketing support and training so they have the basic skills to continue on their own.

When asked what advice they would give to other students and graduates thinking of setting up their own business, Rosie said: “Get in touch with Student and Graduate Enterprise, they really help set the wheels in motion and keep you motivated. Everyone is learning every day, no one knows everything - even the entrepreneurs and business leaders you look up to are always learning - so don't beat yourself up or quit because you feel like you don't know enough.”

Ailsa Riddell of Northumbria's Student and Graduate Enterprise team, said: “We are delighted to see Rosie and Charlotte receive the Duke of York Young Entrepreneur Award in recognition of their business, Stay the Night.

“We have been impressed with how passionate and committed they are to their business and are very pleased to provide mentoring support to them on all aspects of business start-up and growth. We are looking forward to seeing Stay the Night expand their client portfolio further and grow their team of employees.”

Northumbria is the [number one ranked UK university for graduate business start-ups](#), based on estimated turnover. Since 2009 Northumbria has supported the development of more than 370 graduate companies that now employ almost 1,100 people. The Higher Education Business in the Community Survey for 2017/18 revealed that turnover for Northumbria graduate start-up businesses exceeded £81.4 million, close to double that of the second placed institution.

A [new purpose-built incubator hub](#) which is soon to open on campus will help students and graduates like Rosie and Charlotte build even more successful companies in future.

---

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](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) or call 0191 227 4604.

## Contacts



### **Rik Kendall**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

[rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk)

07923 382339



### **Andrea Slowey**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

[andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk)

07708 509436



### **Rachael Barwick**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

[rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk)

07377422415



### **James Fox**

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

[james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk)



### **Kelly Elliott**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Gemma Brown**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk)