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Bespoke law service for bespoke North East business

An entrepreneur has praised the work of Northumbria University's Student Law Office for helping him to set up his successful business.

Neil Robinson, 32, launched his online business, The Custom Underground, in April 2013, creating and designing bespoke shoes. According to Neil, the business was born from a 'moment of madness' after deciding to doodle on a pair of plimsolls he was about to throw out.

Since then it has quickly caught the eye of consumers, including a number of UK celebrities, and due to its soaring popularity, the dad-of-one expanded his range to include t-shirts, hats and jackets as well as unique, one-off products.

With a growing consumer base seeking his bespoke products, Neil was keen to develop a tailored set of terms and conditions for his customers and was referred to the Student Law Office at Northumbria University which was only too happy to help.

The entrepreneur, who lives in Stockton-On-Tees, said: “The Custom Underground has been really successful in quite a short space of time. I have had orders from the cast of The Only Way is Essex, members of dance group Diversity, and prominent UK DJs which has been amazing and really helped raise the profile of my work.

“The nature of my business, with bespoke and made-to-order products, meant I needed tailored guidelines so I was referred to the Student Law Office at Northumbria University.

“The help I received from the team there was fantastic. They understood exactly what I was looking for and they were great to work with, helping me to create a set of terms and conditions that covered everything from personalised designs and intellectual property to pricing, payment, returns and refunds.”

The Student Law Office is an award-winning and world-leading university ‘law clinic’ in which students work with academic staff who are qualified solicitors to offer free legal services to members of the public, businesses and community groups. The students cover a wide range of legal areas including, employment, housing, consumer, family and business advice.

For a sole trader, like Neil, the service provided the perfect solution to his business needs, as it meant he had access to legal advice at rates his start-up business could afford.

He explained: “I am really grateful to the Student Law Office – until recently I didn’t even realise this type of service existed. It’s brilliant that it can help people like me who are just starting out and don’t have a huge amount of money to pay for these types of services. I would certainly recommend it and I won’t hesitate to get in touch in the future as my business takes off.”

As well as running his business, Neil also works full-time in the IT department of a local authority, where he has been employed since he left

school at 16.

He continued: “I am still a one man band at the moment - everything about the business I do myself, including the website, orders and the designing of the products. I live with my partner and our two-and-a-half year old son so there is not much time for sleep.”

Neil has big dreams for his business including employing a team of illustrators and opening his own store.

He said: “I have a lot of ideas for The Custom Underground but for now I am happy just to take it one day at a time.”

Senior Lecturer and experienced commercial solicitor, Elaine Campbell, said: “The Student Law Office has worked with a number of local businesses in the past, but the work for The Custom Underground was quite unique.

“Neil’s business is growing at a massive rate and it’s so important that he protects himself. It’s great that he has addressed these issues now, as often businesses will wait until a problem arises which may then be too late.

“The custom and online elements to his business meant that standard terms and conditions wouldn’t offer the appropriate cover. More detailed and in-depth terms were required and it was important that we worked with Neil to ensure they were robust while fitting with the overall style of his website.

“We are thrilled that Neil was happy with the service we offered and we are looking forward to working with him again in the future.”

The university was recently awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for the outstanding work of its Student Law Office - the highest form of national recognition open to a UK academic or vocational institution.

For more information about the student law office click here: [Student Law Office](#)

For more information on The Custom Underground visit www.thecustomunderground.co.uk

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Business and Law
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
07708 509436



James Fox

Press Contact
Student Communications Manager
james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact
PR and Media Coordinator
Arts Design and Social Sciences / Engineering and Environment
kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Health and Life Sciences / Sport

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Health and Life Sciences / Sport

ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk



Emily Morris

Press Contact

Corporate Communications Coordinator

emily.l.morris@northumbria.ac.uk