



Joey Swindells of the Rookery

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Innovative degree course strikes the right note for aspiring musician

A Northumbria University student has discovered his hidden commercial talents after launching a thriving new enterprise based on his love of music, all thanks to a ground-breaking undergraduate course at Newcastle Business School.

Joey Swindells, 21, originally from Bolton, Greater Manchester, is a lifelong musician and drummer, with a love of performing with others and creating music that is vibrant and unique.

He is also, much to his self-confessed surprise, an undergraduate on the Entrepreneurial Business Management (EBM) course. Having never seen University as an option for him, Joey's decision to move to Newcastle and enrol at Northumbria was based entirely on the appeal of this 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 lots of freedom to do things your own way and with 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 and getting to enjoy student life, so I completely changed direction and decided to take the plunge!"

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. For Joey, it would have been impossible to look beyond his deep love for music, something he gives most of his free time to.

He met fellow EBM student and music lover Jack Cooper on the course and the two teamed up to launch 'The Rookery', a collective and community group which brings music makers together to jam and collaborate on different kinds of music.

After launching just nine months ago in Newcastle, The Rookery is going from strength to strength, with a growing presence in Newcastle and Joey's hometown of Bolton, working with established and new music venues such as The Cluny in Newcastle and Little Buildings.

[Natalia Blagburn, senior lecturer in entrepreneurship at Northumbria University, is Joey's business coach.](#)

She said: "Joey is everything you could hope to find in a young entrepreneur, not only is he passionate, creative and committed to his cause of bringing musicians together, he is also eager to learn new skills and most importantly,

very generous and supportive of his team mates.

“However, what makes Joey really stand out are his strong business acumen and leadership qualities. I’m very proud to see him executing his business plan for The Rookery with such professionalism.

“The approach we take on the course is always to find something that students are passionate about and work from there. For Joey and Jack and the rest of the team developing The Rookery, to be able to create a business from something they love doing which can also be sustainable in the long-term, post-graduation, is an achievable aim and means everything to them.”

Joey is delighted that by choosing to go to University he has been able to transform his hobby into a potential living and is determined to develop The Rookery music collective into a thriving business.

He has established a detailed plan for how the collective can scale up, utilising talents he never knew he had and skills he’s acquired from being part of the EBM course.

Joey adds: “The EBM course appealed to my creative side as it can be anything you want it to be, if you’re prepared to work at it. I think it is important for creative people to be willing to learn entrepreneurial skills as it provides a way for them to continue sharing their art and being supported by it. The two are not exclusive and shouldn’t be seen that way.”

The Entrepreneurial Business Management (EBM) course at Northumbria University is ideal for students who are keen to start their own business while getting an academic degree. The programme is part of an internationally recognised team learning model which originated in Finland. Northumbria was one of the first UK universities to pioneer this approach.

The course is part of the 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. Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University is globally recognised for delivering some of the best business management education in the UK. You can learn more about available courses, including the EBM course, at www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria.

The Rookery is always looking out for new members and welcomes other creatives in addition to musicians. If you're interested in being part of this exciting project, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/therookerycollective or email therookerycollective@gmail.com. The next scheduled jam sessions will be on the 21 November and 3 December at the Little Buildings music venue.

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