



Nov 16, 2015 12:26 GMT

Newcastle Business School entrepreneurs lift top national accolade

Budding entrepreneurs from [Newcastle Business School](#), at Northumbria, have scooped the top prize in a national competition for successful business start-ups.

The 13-strong team of students – who are currently in their second year of the Business School's pioneering [Entrepreneurial Business Management \(EBM\)](#) course – were victorious in a two-week long competition against other UK universities.

During the National Customer Weeks competition, teams from across the country compete with their products and services to get the most customer visits (scoring one point), offers (scoring five points) and deals (scoring 10 points). The team with the most points wins.

The winning team – Concept Enterprise - from Newcastle Business School beat off tough competition from other leading university business schools and won by a sizeable margin with a range of products and services, two of which are targeted at gym and fitness enthusiasts.

‘Sound Threads’ is a men’s clothing range, which includes fitted shirts, t-shirts and joggers, and is designed and printed by second year students Ollie Pears and Ralph Winter. The fitness fanatics are also the brains behind ‘Power Fitness’ which is gym wear specifically for the weight-lifting market.

Customer Weeks team leader Curtis Pratt, 19, said: “We’ve been building the business from March last year and we’re thrilled to have won the National Customer Weeks final.

“We are really diverse as a group; we have people who are quiet but creative and those who are outgoing that make great salespeople. With there being 13 of us this allows the team to build a big pot of ideas and develop those ideas on an ongoing basis.”

Curtis has further tapped into the retail market after creating a student discount card called “R n R” for small businesses in Newcastle. The card is tailor-made for shops that do not qualify for NUS discount and helps increase footfall for sole traders.

Meanwhile, team member Tom Cheung, also 19, is attracting around 350 students every week to his house and garage music night at The Cut, directly above Tup Tup Palace in Newcastle city centre.

“We run it every Tuesday evening for students and it’s definitely getting more popular,” he said. “I’ve pushed the evenings heavily on social media, on flyers and within student accommodation. We also had our own stand at Gateshead College and Newcastle College events as well as Freshers’ Fairs at both universities in the city.”

The EBM course is an innovative new programme aimed at those aspiring to set up and run their own businesses or those who wish to stand out from the crowd when applying for graduate positions after completing the programme.

It has been developed with the Team Academy in the Jyväskylä Institute of Science and Technology, Finland. Historically, the percentage of Team Academy graduates starting new businesses is five to 10 times higher than in traditional higher education institutions. In a 10-year follow-up from a programme in Finland, one out of three graduates start a business right after finishing their studies.

[Lucy Hatt](#), EBM Programme Leader at Newcastle Business School, said: “It’s the first time Customer Weeks has been run nationally and as one of the first universities to start a Team Academy programme in the UK to date we are particularly pleased that one of our teams took the prize and by such a large margin. They are such an active team who are doing all the right things anyway – not just for Customer Weeks.

“We are very clear that this programme is for people who want to learn about doing business entrepreneurially, to be entrepreneurial employees, as well as for those who want to be entrepreneurs. Our first cohort of third years is mature and able to hold their own in professional situations. They can talk with the benefit of experience at networking events and potential interview situations.

“The North East has got the potential to be a fantastic hub of entrepreneurial activity in the country. We want to be the centre of entrepreneurial learning and the place that people come to learn how to behave entrepreneurially.”

Pioneering courses like the EBM programme emphasises Northumbria’s position in the top 1% of business schools worldwide by gaining double accreditation from AACSB (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) – an international hallmark of excellence.

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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