

Meet some of the winners of the Enterprise Awards, a scheme developed to recognise the entrepreneurial talent emerging from universities across the UK.

A

Ross Kemp: Asap Water Crafts

The hardest bit was starting, honestly. My product was something that began as
 5 a project at university. Once I started, each step led to the next, with difficult decisions to make at each one. My biggest mistakes always came when I tried to do everything myself. I soon realised that I couldn't do everything without sustaining financial losses – and very often other people can do bits better than me!
 A challenge is knowing who to trust and where to gain feedback. I talk through
 10 decisions with lots of different people to **gauge their opinions**, but in the end, big choices (like whether to give away fifty percent of my business) come down to following my heart and gut instinct.
 I've got a poster above my desk which says 'work hard and be nice to people' – I try to live by this. My success has been simply through taking opportunities
 15 when they came my way, being **tenacious** and saying 'yes'. I try to look for positives in everything, even when things are really tough.
 However, I would urge entrepreneurs to hold on to their day jobs as long as possible while building a new business. If you can continue your day job until the business you have founded generates enough cash to pay your wage, this
 20 is the best scenario!



B

Rowena Simmons: Black & White Boutique

I studied Art Textiles at secondary school. After I finished, I had an assortment of embroidery threads, charms and other arts and crafts supplies left over. I enjoyed playing around with them and was curious
 25 to know if they could be made into something saleable. I decided to try my luck and posted images of my handcrafted bracelets on Facebook. Much to my surprise, my schoolmates enthused about them immediately and started asking where they could
 30 buy them.
 Having **realised the potential** of homemade items, my boyfriend and I set out to establish an online store. My intention wasn't to build a brand, nor was it to become as **prosperous** as we have. In fact, it
 35 was simply a passion I had for creating things, which ended up giving me **a flying start** to a career as an entrepreneur.
 Our initial investment amounted to £200, which went on purchasing fifteen different products to sell on our
 40 website. The other jewellery we offered was all my handiwork. I remember receiving our first order for £21 from a customer in Spain shortly after our opening promotion, which made the whole thing thrilling. All of a sudden, I realised how straightforward it was to access
 45 international markets through the Internet.
 I reckon patience is definitely the key. It is, however, worth noting that while there are many positives to owning and managing your own business, it isn't child's play and it doesn't come without its **restless**
 50 nights and pressured days. You must be eager to develop your products and prepared for **fluctuations in the revenue** you receive. With a lot of effort and **perseverance** and a dose of good luck, you will eventually **see a return**, though.

C

Ry Morgan: Pleasecycle Exercise App

I guess recruitment has been one of our biggest challenges. I **was fresh**
 55 **out of** university and still had a babyface and had only had experience as an intern when we started. I think trying to recruit exceptional talent in what is already a **hyper-competitive** space, in terms of the tech industry, has proven interesting and probably one of the bigger difficulties.
 60 Trying to bring in experienced individuals who are maybe a decade older than I was at the time has been quite a tricky task. It's one that's got better over time, but having never run a business before, it's been hard doing the interview process, and actually sitting down and quizzing people to recruit really good talent.
 65 And it's about getting not just the right professional match but the right personal match, so linking them in with your culture is sometimes more important than their **competence**. If there's a guy that's a little bit better in terms of his CV versus the girl that you **have a great rapport with** and who matches the company culture, I'd say go for the girl over the guy because, in
 70 the long term, rapport and fitting in with the culture are more important.

