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### *Individual Case Study*

## **Higher Education Enterprise Skills Routeway – Trendy Vend**

### **Project Overview**

They say inspiration often strikes in the most unusual places, and for young entrepreneur Talia Baccino from Liverpool, her moment of enlightenment happened while on a night out with friends in the city centre.

Talia, 22, and her 23-year-old sister and now business partner Kayleigh, saw a gap in the market for vending machines in bar toilets selling high-quality merchandise, products like lip gloss, hairspray and perfume, essential for a girl's night out. With that thought in mind, Talia set about designing a prototype vending machine which has the added advantage of an LCD panel to display advertising messages, and launched her company, Trendy Vend.

As students of Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), the sisters were able to benefit from the Higher Education Enterprise Skills Routeway (HEESR) project, a programme of training and support to raise awareness of entrepreneurship and facilitating new enterprise start-ups. The initiative, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as part of its 2007-10 European Social Fund (ESF) Co-finance Plan, is delivered by LJMU in partnership with Young Enterprise North West and Creativebias.

### **How it works**

Talia explains: "The ESF funding has made it possible for us to get our business venture off the ground. We were able to pay for a prototype to be built and have had assistance with the manufacturing costs of the actual units.

“We’ve worked hard on marketing our product and researching what the most popular products would be. We now have six machines in bars across Liverpool city centre and ultimately hope to franchise Trendy Vend in other cities across the country.”

### **Impact and Success**

Talia and Kayleigh were recently named Best Young Entrepreneur in the Morgan Foundation Entrepreneur Awards and the Innovation Award at the LJMU Graduate Entrepreneurs Awards. Thanks to the effort they put into marketing Trendy Vend, the company gained some high profile publicity at the MTV Music Awards held in Liverpool earlier this year and have been featured on the front page of the city’s Daily Post newspaper.

Talia added: “We’re very proud of what we’ve achieved so far but we have a long way to go. It feels brilliant to see our business taking shape and over the next six months we plan to build up the number of units we have.”

Head of Student Enterprise at LJMU, Emma Hunter, said: “The project aims to encourage more students to become self employed and create successful, sustainable businesses.

“As part of the initiative, we provide the participants with the practical business skills needed to back up the theoretical knowledge they’ve gained as part of their University education. We’re able to offer them support and guidance from successful local business people and networking opportunities. They can also benefit from peer support.

Emma added: “There’s no way we could run the programme without the ESF funding, yet it’s a very cost-effective way to encourage entrepreneurship and to feed back into the regional economy. Ultimately, even if some of the business ideas don’t take off, the participants are more employable and have gained valuable skills to help them in whatever direction they choose to take.”

Talia welcomed the next cohort of students taking part in the HEERS programme last June, to talk about her experiences and inspire Merseyside’s next budding entrepreneur to devise a winning business idea.

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