

Merseyside Graduate Bucks the Business Trend

A Liverpool graduate and entrepreneur sees her business continue to grow thanks to an enterprising training programme.

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Liverpool John Moores University Graduate, Talia Baccino, is helping Merseyside's revellers retain their title as the region's most glamorous party-goers, thanks to a business idea she developed as a student.

In 2008, 22-year-old Talia and her sister Kayleigh, 23, enrolled on the Higher Education Enterprise Skills Routeway (HEESR) project, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as part of its 2007-2010 European Social Fund (ESF) Co-Finance Plan. The programme of training and support, delivered by Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) in partnership with Young Enterprise North West and Creativebias., aims to raise awareness of entrepreneurship and encourage start-up businesses. Since attending the course, the sisters have launched their own successful company, Trendy Vend.

Their enterprise supplies high-quality cosmetic and beauty products to women enjoying a night out on the town, via a number of vending machines in bars across the city. The units also have a digital panel upon which companies advertise their services for a fee.

Talia, who graduated in Marketing and Consumer Behaviour from LJMU, found inspiration for her business concept while enjoying an evening out with friends in Liverpool city centre. The HEESR programme helped Talia develop her idea and now Trendy Vend has 12 vending machines in venues across Liverpool, with plans to roll out the service further still over the next year.

Talia says: “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 12 machines in bars across Liverpool city centre and ultimately hope to franchise Trendy Vend in other cities across the country.”

Andrew Fawcett, Economic Development Director for the LSC in the North West, says: “ESF makes a real difference to peoples’ lives, and across the North West thousands of people have improved their skills and opportunities thanks to ESF-funded projects.

“Merseyside has a wealth of talented graduates like Talia and Kayleigh, and this initiative enables young entrepreneurs see their vision turned into a reality and gain new skills that will be invaluable as they embark on life after university.”

Head of Student Enterprise at LJMU, Emma Hunter, said: “The project aims to encourage more graduates 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, networking opportunities and they can 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.”

ENDS

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) 2007-2010 ESF Co-finance Plan

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone.

The LSC in the North West has secured £185million of ESF funding for 2007-2010 which is matched with an equivalent amount of Government funding. This overall package of £370million is being used to:

- Up-skill unemployed people so that they can secure sustainable employment.
- Support young people who are not currently in employment, education or training.
- Support employers to up-skill their workforce.

In the North West over 130 colleges and training providers are contracted to deliver projects to achieve those objectives.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The European Social Fund is investing in jobs and skills – especially for people at a disadvantage in the labour market.

Over the past seven years from 2000 to 2006, the ESF has helped over four million people in England. In 2007, the EU launched a new round of ESF programmes for the next seven years to 2013.

The new programme will invest £4.6 billion in 2007-2013 of which £2.3 billion will come from the ESF and £2.3 billion will be national funding.

For further information:

LSC website: www.lsc.gov.uk

ESF website: www.esf.gov.uk

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