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News for Schools!

Welcome to the latest BiG Newsletter – the last of 2009.

In this issue Council Leader Paul Scriven officially launches the BiG Challenge 2010, we find out about an innovative enterprise venture by Ecclesfield, three schools share knowledge and ideas, a BiG team goes to a regional award ceremony and we meet a new BiG Champion, Karen Wood!

We hope that you enjoy the issue and look forward to being involved with BiG in 2010!

Keep Making it BiG,
The BiG Team

Council Leader Launches BiG Challenge!

The Leader of Sheffield City Council showed his support for the BiG Challenge recently when he attended the launch event in the heart of the city's Cultural Industries Quarter.

On October 15th Councillor Paul Scriven and Cabinet member for Employment, Enterprise and Development, Councillor Colin Ross, joined local entrepreneurs and Sheffield students at Red Tape Central to launch the third BiG Challenge.

The event was broadcast to City Learning Centres (CLCs) across Sheffield using Virtual Classroom technology. Schools that weren't able to attend the launch had the opportunity to watch the action in real time whilst appearing live on Red Tape Central's TV screens.

Successful teams from last year's BiG Challenge were on hand at the launch to offer advice and to answer questions.

The winners of last year's BiG trip to Paris, 9 Peas in a Pod, gave some top tips, including:

- Your desire to succeed must be greater than your fear of failure
- Learn from your mistakes and stay focussed
- Be trend setters and have a slogan!

Members of Star Signs from Sheffield City College attended the launch to share their success story and to explain how the BiG Challenge has helped them to set up their own businesses. One member commented,

"The BiG Challenge gave us confidence, showed us how to get started and gave us the determination to succeed."

Councillor Scriven took the opportunity to meet some of last year's teams and, speaking to students throughout the city, he said,

"We are committed to encouraging entrepreneurial talent in Sheffield and this year we want the BiG Challenge to be bigger and better. Last year's teams raised over £17,000 in profit and students were inspired and equipped with the confidence to look at running their own business. In fact, we have had two new business starts created in the city from this exciting competition.

"I am delighted that the BiG Challenge is in its third year. These students are vital to our city's future success and I'm looking forward to meeting some of the teams and following their journey through the competition."

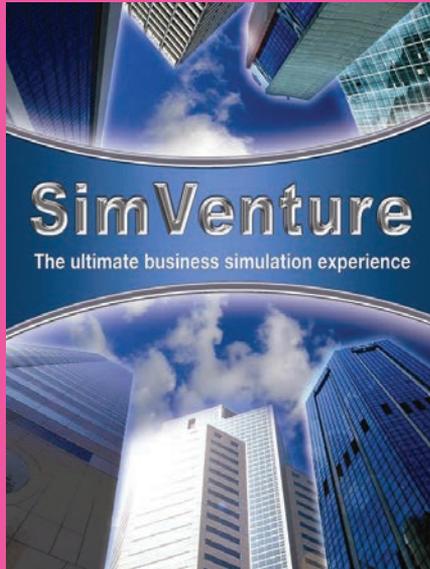


A New Venture for Ecclesfield...

Ecclesfield is the latest school to bring business to life with the innovative SimVenture software.

As part of the Y11 Business Studies course, students will have the opportunity to set up a virtual company, experiencing all of the challenges of self-employment but with absolutely no risks. Everything that a new entrepreneur is faced with features in SimVenture, presenting the user with countless decisions and the consequences of those choices.

The SimVenture computer-based business simulation game is designed and built by business experts who know what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur. Peter Harrington, one half of the partnership, explains why the software is perfect for students:



"More and more young people think about starting their own business as a career choice but choose not to because of the fear of failure and the risks involved. We have deliberately

made SimVenture extremely realistic and integrated large amounts of information so users can appreciate the theory and detail which will help them achieve more, academically and professionally."

Students at Ecclesfield will be introduced to SimVenture during business lessons shortly before Christmas and will then continue to use it in the New Year. Bethan Crowe, Business Studies Teacher, recently underwent training to familiarise her with the software. She comments,

"SimVenture demonstrates the ways that all business decisions are interlinked and teaches valuable lessons on cause and effect. It provides a holistic view of business, showing how every small decision can impact on the entire business."

Bethan admits she didn't appreciate how much of the curriculum is incorporated into the virtual world of SimVenture. She explains,

"Before I did my training, I underestimated how much can be done with this software. I would recommend it to other schools because not only does it support activities such as the BiG Challenge, it also fits into so many units of the Business curriculum."

To find out more about using SimVenture in your school please contact Karen Wood: karen.woodL@sheffield.gov.uk.



The BiG Challenge 2010 is the biggest yet, having topped last year's entry total of 286 teams by more than 100!

The competition has reached a new level in its third year, with over 300 entries from 29 schools and colleges city wide. Many teams have already had to make it through a rigorous judging process, taking part in 'Dragon's Den' style activities to earn their place in the competition. With such dedication already shown by the teams, we expect to see lots of businesses surviving until the end of the competition.

Well done for the sterling effort put in by the eight schools that are brand new to the competition. Over a third of the entries are from the new schools, including an impressive 80 entries from Bradfield, Notre Dame and Stocksbridge combined.

As the BiG Challenge has swept across the city, teams have been engaging in a variety of different activities to develop their businesses. These include the BiG Boost event, a networking event on Sheffield's BiG Wheel and the BiG Challenge Xtra competition.

The next couple of months will be a busy time for teams as they compete to sell items and offer their services during the festive season. As the competition continues in the New Year, we hope to see a record number of teams working towards their final reports.

Boost for **BiG** Businesses!

BiG Challenge teams from three Sheffield schools joined forces at a special event to share ideas and help their businesses to grow.

The BiG Boost, held at Concorde Leisure Centre on the 17 November, welcomed teams from Fir Vale, Chaucer and Firth Park. Over 50 students attended to consider their business idea, the role that each individual is playing and ways that they can move their business forward. Four local entrepreneurs were on hand to guide the teams and to help them progress their ideas.

Each team was encouraged to think about and share its Unique Selling Point (USP), the roles of each team member, its slogan, strong and weak points and its six month aim. Lots of fresh ideas were born out of this activity and many teams grew in confidence after talking about their plans.

The event was concluded with a 'What now?' planning session during which each team devised a schedule for its next steps, noting who is responsible and when the action needs to be completed by.

Snap, Crackle and POD are a team from Fir Vale, working to make the world a better place by encouraging healthy lifestyles. The team attended the BiG Boost and later wrote on its BiG Challenge blog:

"It was great to find so many people with so many different ideas...also to find out about our competition!

We negotiated and it went well... :) Hoping that there are more events coming up!"

Business woman and life coach Jane Briggs was one of the local entrepreneurs on hand to help out during the event. She commented,

"I have absolutely loved the experience of today. These are tomorrow's people and we've got to encourage their creative thinking and help them to develop into the next generation of business people."



Myers Grove Forge towards award success

Forge, from Myers Grove School, were nominated in the Enterprise in Education category at the Social Enterprise Yorkshire and Humber Awards. The awards aim to showcase the thriving social enterprise sector that exists in the region.

Forge won in South Yorkshire to become one of only four shortlisted teams for the finals of the awards.

The arts business team from the Sheffield school went home runners-up from the awards, which were hosted by Big Issue founder John Bird.

Mike Garnock-Jones, BiG Champion for Myers Grove, said, "It was a great achievement for Forge to be nominated for a prestigious award at the Social Enterprise Yorkshire and Humber Awards.

"Forge showed themselves to be one of the best enterprise ventures in South Yorkshire and one of the leading examples across Yorkshire and Humber of a successful school enterprise."



New **BiG** Champion: Karen Wood

Karen Wood joined the BiG Schools team in September and is already working closely with schools in Sheffield to support and develop sustainable business models.

What sort of expertise are you bringing to the BiG Schools team? I have a mixture of skills that are appropriate to my current position. I actually started out in science many years ago, working in both routine and research laboratories before moving into the commercial world and gaining a business qualification. Putting that into practise, I successfully managed a project commercialising research products at Cancer Research UK to generate resource for further research. After that I was Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Manager at the University of Bedfordshire, where I was responsible for a very respected entrepreneurship course and for supporting students on the road to business start-up.

The wide range of experience I have in both the public and private sectors is a real benefit as there are lots of different ways I can get involved in various projects. My main focus at the moment is looking for ways for schools to establish viable business models that can be sustained into the future.

You've been working as part of the team since September. What have you most enjoyed about your new role so far? It's still early days, so I'm trying to learn as much about everything as I possibly can. What I can say is how impressed I am with the level of activity and interest in enterprise across Sheffield schools and, with the increase in numbers entering the BiG Challenge, it only seems set to grow. I have really enjoyed meeting many of the Enterprise Co-ordinators in schools, who are committed to ensuring students get as much opportunity as possible to be enterprising and entrepreneurial.

Why do you feel the BiG Schools Programme is important for young people in Sheffield? The schools programme has been so important in highlighting the opportunities in enterprise learning for young people. Not only does it provide a platform for the development of skills that will be valuable throughout later life, such as team-working, planning and communication, but it also draws out the budding entrepreneurs and offers business start-up as a viable employment opportunity.



If you had a BiG Challenge when you were at school, what would have been your business idea? Well, at the age of eleven, a friend and I had a dog walking 'business' in our local neighbourhood. Although we did it because we didn't have dogs of our own and therefore enjoyed it, we made a bit of pocket money through it too. With BiG Challenge backing I think we would have expanded the business into holiday care for small animals and maybe dog bathing too!

Finally, what is your key piece of advice for young people starting up a business enterprise? Make sure you get as much help as possible. There is a lot of free support available, so take as much as you can and then decide for yourself which is the most useful. Don't be afraid to try new ideas – if they don't work, learn from the experience and apply it to the next idea until you find the most successful one!



Be in the next issue

If you have a story about enterprise activities in your school, or an idea for an article you would like to see in the next newsletter, please send it to David Kay, the Editor, at david.kay@sero.co.uk