

## Laptop Learning

Cathy Gillard has been a small business for the past 4 years providing computer tuition services to people in their own homes or offices. The business was already successfully operating to fill her week and more but Cathy was ambitious and was determined to grow Laptop Learning to be able to offer the service nationally (and eventually internationally).



John Pearce, business mentor, has worked with Cathy for around 18 months during which time they have worked to develop and implement a strong business growth model. With John's help Cathy has developed Laptop Learning into a franchise business which has just taken on its first two franchisees.

"This has not been an easy road to take and without John, I am sure that I would not have been able to organise the financial projections and business plan as effectively. He has also helped considerably by enabling me to see the business from the outside and from the customer's point of view. I am immensely proud of what has been achieved in such a short space of time. John has a strong business background and has experience in developing successful companies and he has introduced me to new ways of thinking about the development and management of my Laptop Learning."

## Fruition Design

Fruition Design provides a range of commercial interior design, graphic and web services. Mark Green, the firm's founder, and partner Martin McCully have worked with business mentor Tim Patterson on the development of the business for over a year.



Fruition had been working on an innovative advertising product which combined a software solution with their design skills. Mark and Tim have been developing a comprehensive business strategy that will enable the firm to raise equity finance to provide the first round of funding to take the product quickly into the marketplace.

"Without Tim we would not have got as far as we have this quickly - if we had got there at all. We saw the potential in the product but had no experience in developing and implementing a strategy that would grow a successful national business from a prototype upwards. We are about to make a regional presentation for angel finance and having worked through everything that we can expect to face in the Den with Tim, we feel confident that we can see this through. Tim came to us with a strong background in raising business finance having been a Financial Director of a number of growing companies. We would recommend a business mentor to anyone wanting to develop their business."



You can find out more about our business mentoring and other business development services from the Business Mentors South West website (<http://www.businessmentorsouthwest.co.uk>) which also provides links to individual mentoring and coaching services around the Counties with whom we are associated or operate, including those in Dorset, South Devon, North Devon & Torridge and Torbay. You will also find information and links for High Growth Coaching and Start Up services designed for businesses with High and Rapid Growth potential.



**business  
mentors**  
SOUTH WEST

Business Mentors South West  
Innovation Centre  
Ivybridge  
Tel. 01752 246353

Email: [enquiries@businessmentorsouthwest.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@businessmentorsouthwest.co.uk)

Web : [www.businessmentorsouthwest.co.uk](http://www.businessmentorsouthwest.co.uk)



## What is the service?

The service has been established to help smaller businesses with the capacity to grow to maximise their potential.

We do this by providing mentors who are experienced in setting up, managing and growing businesses, to work closely with business people who are determined to develop their businesses and their own abilities to manage their businesses successfully throughout their growth.

We do not want to grow and run your business – we want to help you grow and run your business.

With our business mentors you can tap into our extensive knowledge and experience which has been all gained at the sharp end of business.

## Who are the mentors?

All mentors have either started and developed their own successful businesses or have worked in senior levels of management within large public corporations, often at main Board and Chairman level.

Mentors have worked in a variety of industries from engineering and electronics to food, retail and ICT. Many have not only attracted investment for their businesses but have gone on to invest as business angels in smaller companies.

Whatever their commercial background they have all been trained in the mentoring skills required to help smaller business develop and prosper.

## Who do we want to work with ?

We want to work with business people who are fully committed and focused on developing their businesses – whatever that takes.

We usually work with businesses that are up and running but have some way to go to reach their full potential and where the owners feel stalled in their own capacity to take the business to the next level but are determined to take the business forward.

## How do you start ?

We operate largely on referral from organisations like Business Link, South West Angel Investment Network, South West Investment Group, Banks, Solicitors and Accountants. Alternatively, please call us directly if you would like to have an informal discussion about our services.

## What can you expect?

A first meeting with our General Manager who is also both an experienced business person and mentor. The purpose of this meeting is to learn a bit about you and your business and see if what potential the business may have.

If all goes well and we all decide to move forward with mentoring, we will work out a mentoring plan with you that specifies objectives, timescales and terms.

We will then introduce you to a mentor with whom we think you will be able to work and monitor progress with yourself and the mentor on a quarterly basis.

## Richard Skitch RSBC Ltd Building Contractors

Richard Skitch started as a self employed bricklayer and spent a number of years developing a sub contracting business employing bricklayers and masons to carry out large commercial works within the southwest.

Richard wanted to do more in the construction industry and, through Business Link, was put in touch with Julian Hassard-Short an experienced business mentor who had developed a successful design and build company in commercial property and had helped a number of developing companies in Devon and Cornwall.

“Julian has helped me develop my business from a small building firm into a specialist building company, with sound control and management systems. We have purchased development land, designed houses, built them, sold and retained them to let. We have carried out all types of industrial, commercial and domestic building work and we have built houses for private clients with budgets upto £1 million. He has helped me to work through with confidence the costs and profitability in jobs, how to arrange appropriate finance and also how to manage staff and sub contractors effectively. I can evaluate risk and make sound decisions. My turnover is now 4 times what it was when I started working with reasonable profits.”



“Why does it work?– well we get on and the fact that Julian has a construction industry background has definitely helped - he understands the working culture in the industry. He says what he thinks and certainly doesn't always take an easy line with me – the air has been blue on occasions - but then that's the building industry for you – you can't mess around and can't get it wrong. He gives advice and says what he would do in the circumstance but always says the final decision is yours, look at all the facts, check them over, THINK, weigh up the pros and cons, then make the decision, I never thought I would take a business this far and I haven't finished yet.”

