



**Client:** Redbus Interhouse

**Publication:** Startups\_1205

**Circulation:** N/A

**Date:** December 2005

[http://www.startups.co.uk/The\\_top\\_50\\_entrepreneurs\\_of\\_2005.YS\\_R2tY.html](http://www.startups.co.uk/The_top_50_entrepreneurs_of_2005.YS_R2tY.html)

## **The top 50 entrepreneurs of 2005**

**2005 could be the year that finally saw entrepreneurship become 'trendy'. A raft of programmes, ranging from 'Mind Your Own Business' to 'Dragons' Den', put businesses, and the people that run them, firmly in the nation's consciousness.**

**This trend is supported by business start-up figures, which are sky-high. The UK has become a place where entrepreneurs are revered and emulated - the most successful becoming role models for the next generation of business leaders.**

**Our annual run-down of the top 50 entrepreneurs of the year features some well-known names, along with some newcomers who have burst onto the scene and taken the business world by storm.**

**You can comment on the list by emailing Oliver Milman, Startups.co.uk Editor, on [oliverm@crimsonbusiness.co.uk](mailto:oliverm@crimsonbusiness.co.uk)**

### **50. Emma Barnett**

Sent to some of the world's best spa hotels by her former publishing employers, it was unsurprising that Barnett, alongside her sister Deborah and private equity entrepreneur Jonathan Brod, decided to make a living out of living the high life. Since starting Essential Escapes, the UK's first dedicated luxury spa operator, in 2002, Barnett has gathered a database of 3,500 customers. Profits have broken the £1 million mark this year.

### **49. Jonathan Jay**

If success were based solely upon thrusting self-promotion, the ubiquitous Jay would be rubbing shoulders with the likes of Branson and Sugar. That said, the approach of the Coaching Academy has paid dividends in 2005, with his new 'Sack Your Boss!' book selling successfully to budding entrepreneurs. Presenter of BBC's 'Get a New



Life' show, Jay is often found spreading the word about entrepreneurship, and himself, through conferences and seminars.

**48. Linda Bennett**

Following a high-profile 2004 in which she attempted to sell her shoe company LK Bennett, the female entrepreneur has slipped back away from the limelight. It's a scenario she admits to being happiest with, declaring that she'd rather focus on running the business than talking about it. It's little wonder she has generated interest – after starting up LK Bennett with her savings and a £15,000 bank loan 14 years ago, sales topped £46 million this year.

**47. Lloyd Keisner**

Little over a year ago, Keisner was sitting in a café enjoying a cup of coffee. This innocuous activity led to the brainwave of advertising being integrated onto the tabletops of bars and restaurants using a unique tablewrap system. Within a year, Keisner's new company, tabletalkmedia, has muscled in on the fierce advertising market by securing contracts with Mars, Sony Ericsson, Dove, Visa and Coffee Republic.

**46. Tony Caldeira**

Seemingly not content producing products for the UK market, Caldeira's eponymous manufacturing company has exported to the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as a host of countries in the Far East. Caldeira recently secured orders in several other countries after exhibiting in trade fairs, and has received accolades for his trading success with China

**45. Ann Budge**

Although Budge is not revered as one of the UK's most iconic or glamorous female entrepreneurs, her story is nonetheless an interesting one. A single mother and daughter of a Leith dockworker, Budge set up her self-titled IT business 20 years ago, before selling it on to French company Sopra in June for £50 million.

**44. Guy Hindley**

Hindley has seemingly achieved the impossible – making caravans an option for luxury holidays. Set in Ribblesdale Park, Hindley's 16 caravan 'lodges' come with hot tubs, plush interiors and maid service. With prices starting at £139,000 the caravans are not meant for everyone, but that's the point. With plenty of interest so far, 2006 looks promising for the Lancashire-based entrepreneur.

**43. Philip Green**

Startups.co.uk's top entrepreneur last year enjoyed an extremely



lucrative 2005 on a personal level. He awarded a £1.3 billion dividend payout to Arcadia shareholders, of which he pocketed 92%. Green insists the pay-out is justified since operational improvements saw Arcadia generate over £400 million in 2005. His windfall represents a tidy profit on the £850 million he paid for the retail group just three years ago.

#### **42. Terry Burt and Mark McVeigh**

Founded in 2002 by Burt and McVeigh, 2e2 Group is a managed provider of skilled resources for firms' IT infrastructures. The past 12 months has seen the business grow by 71%, with revenues of £46.2 million. In the past month, 2e2 swallowed up TriSys Ltd and Yul Data, giving them a foothold in the data protection, storage and security markets.

#### **41. Dan Somers**

A year of steady progression for VC Net has seen Somers establish business in the US and Germany and build a 25% increase in turnover to £2 million. With over 200 blue chip clients, Somers expects a big year in 2006 and predicts a leap in turnover to £3.6 million.

#### **40. Janet Shelley**

On top of filling a massive niche in the market by employing the largest female construction workforce in the UK, Shelley has become an eloquent spokesperson on the role of women in work, especially in industries normally associated with men. Women Builders continued to grow in 2005, with Shelley becoming an increasingly public face.

#### **39. Mike Lucy**

While working at a catering company that supplied British Rail, Lucy felt that he could do the job much better and decided to go it alone. His catering empire has spread into restaurants that dominate the Royal Parks and English Heritage sites. With his business now worth £9 million, the ever astute Lucy is looking out for the next big thing in the restaurant industry.

#### **38. Karan Bilimoria**

Since starting up Cobra Beer in his Fulham flat in 1990, Bilimoria has seen the beverage become a curry house favourite. Cobra is one of the fastest growing beer brands in the UK, with turnover currently standing at £80 million. With over 30 countries enjoying the taste Cobra, Bilimoria has been concentrating on developing overseas links in 2005, especially Indo-British relations. Speaking engagements have also kept him busy.

**37. Nigel Botterill**

Despite operating for just four months, Botterill's web guide has taken on over 100 franchisees. The media company, set up by Botterill and his wife Sue, gives entrepreneurs a place in the internet business from £5,000, offers directories of local businesses and provides in-depth information to communities. Botterill plans nationwide coverage in 2006.

**36. Graham Bucknall**

Bucknall reports that the last year has been "very, very stressful" but ultimately successful. Having raised a £2.5m mixture of debt and equity finance, Advanti acquired established IT services firm Scotsys, trebling its workforce and bolstering its market hold overnight.

**35. Tony Maloney**

Since its creation in 2001, Anthony Alan Foods, of which Maloney is managing director, has seen its turnover grow by 4,700%, with profit soaring by 1,000%. Despite presiding over such impressive figures, Maloney is keen to underline the business' community-based work, pledging prize money from a recent awards win to business education in local schools.

**34. Doug Richard**

Aside from running the rule over wannabe entrepreneurs on Dragons Den, in which he refused to invest during the entire second series, Richard has been busy with his research group, Library House. Hotxt, his new innovation, is described as 'SMS over IP'. In layman's terms he plans to provide a flat-fee texting service which would save customers 80% to 90% on their bills – something Richard feels could revolutionise the mobile industry. With a business brain like his, few would doubt him.

**33. Sahar Hashemi**

Despite vowing that she would never start nothing business when she left her creation, Coffee Republic, in 2001, the entrepreneurial bug has bitten Hashemi again. Clearly her best-selling book, Anyone Can Do It, and countless speaking engagements weren't enough for the 37-year-old, who has launched Skinny Candy, a range of sugar-free sweets. With interest from Harvey Nichols, Selfridges and, unsurprisingly, Coffee Republic, Hashemi looks set to get back into the entrepreneurial groove again in 2006.

**32. Helen Stokes**

Stokes has overseen the rapid growth of Morgan Hunt, the fastest-growing recruitment company in the UK. With a turnover in excess of £30 million, 120 staff and contracts with over 500 public companies,



it's unsurprising that Stokes was named Businesswomen of the Year by the London Chamber of Commerce.

**31. Mike Tobin**

Tobin's company, Redbus Interhouse, emerged from a turbulent period, in which its founder Clifford Stanford was given a suspended jail sentence, during 2005. Tobin's tenure has seen an impressive turnaround in profits and growth, with a merger between Redbus and TeleCity creating the UK's leading cocolation company.

**30. Glenys Berd**

With many women crying out for shoes that are comfortable, posture and back-friendly, as well as fashionable, it's perhaps surprising that a company like Berd's LoveThoseShoes.com hasn't been set up before. Berd's retailing of Earth footwear has seen turnover hit £2.5 million this year, with celebrity fans such as Gwyneth Paltrow helping sales to a stomping 5,000 pairs a month. Sales revenue is expected is reach £30 million over the next five years – not bad for a niche Berd only spotted while casually browsing the net.

**29. Stelios Haji-Ioannou**

Stelios continues to stretch the easy brand across a mind-boggling array of sectors, despite a few hiccups. His easyCinema chain has introduced a no frills experience to movie-goers, but a lack of blockbusters would of demoralised an entrepreneur not as chipper as the Greek boss. More happily, his easyCruises have expanded their routes, the first easyHotel opened in London and easyJet saw passenger numbers rise sharply in the second half of 2005.

**28. Danny Bamplng**

Not many pitchers on the Dragons Den manage to secure investment. Even fewer manage to prise money from the Dragons' grasp, only to then turn them down after the cameras have stopped rolling. But then again, not many entrepreneurs are Danny Bamplng. After persuading Rachel Elnaugh and Theo Paphitis to part with £100,000 to fund his Bedlam Cube, Bamplng decided to keep his stake in the business, while cannily raising the profile of his fiendish puzzle, by accepting a bank loan instead. Bedlam would be found in toy store Hamleys; had it not completely sold out this Christmas.

**27. Sharon Richey**

A South African by birth, Richey has made rapid progress in the UK since launching LoewyBe in 2003. The firm offers experiential marketing to blue-chip clients, including a campaign for Pampers that saw the creation of a 16 metre-long walk-through caterpillar



demonstrating the different stages of a baby's development. A turnover of £2.8 million swelled to £4.2 million this year and, with plans to expand into Europe, revenues are expected to hit £6 million in 2006.

**26. Duncan Bannatyne**

Perhaps the fiercest Dragon to lurk in the Dragons Den, Bannatyne has had a busy 2005, also appearing on the BBC's Mind Your Own Business. His plans to build a UK casino empire kicked off with the unveiling of the Bannatyne Casino in Newcastle, while his new housing company got up and running. The Scot also started up his own business magazine and appeared in adverts for Barclays. With a personal fortune of £150 million, Bannatyne is keen to give something back, setting up hospices for children with HIV and AIDS in Romania and Columbia.

**25. Lloyd Dorfman**

Dorfman quit his job as a merchant banker to set up a small currency exchange kiosk in Trafalgar Square in 1976. That kiosk is now Travelex the world's largest non-bank currency dealer. 2005 saw Dorfman raise £1 billion through accepting investment from Apex Partners, while retaining 30% of his stake.

**24. Karen Finch**

Finch has successfully managed to shun the limelight, as well as achieve business success, since setting up Hearing Care Centres seven years ago. Mother-of-two Finch re-mortgaged her house to set up the company, which tests hearing equipment. This year saw her finally recognised for her work, being named Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst and Young.

**23. Simon Fuller**

Fuller, the man behind the Spice Girls and other pop acts, built his company, 19 Entertainment, into one of the world's premier representatives of names in music, sport and fashion. Fuller found a rewarding exit in 2005, selling 19 Entertainment to US billionaire Robert Sillerman for \$188 million. The British entrepreneur could have another hit on his hands with I Love Music, an internet portal for mobile phone ringtones.

**22. James Dyson**

One of the UK's gold standard entrepreneurs, Dyson has achieved billionaire status with a successful invasion of the US vacuum cleaner market, in which he has overtaken Hoover with this dual-cyclone model. Profits have doubled to £103 million, vindicating Dyson's



controversial decision to shift production from Wiltshire to Malaysia three years ago.

**21. James Murray**

When he left school at 16 with dyslexia and a small clutch of O Levels, few would've predicted Murray's ascent to become the head of one of the UK's largest telecoms and IT companies, valued at over £40 million. Following the business' floatation on AIM and the negotiated departure of co-founder Chris Wilson, Murray commented that he hoped to build a culture where "anyone can succeed."

**20. James Hibbert**

Hibbert experienced two of the traditional kick-starts to an entrepreneurial career – he was bored in his job and received shocking service and believed he could do better. Ditching his career in recruitment, Hibbert felt that the lack of enthusiasm shown by a visiting tailor could be bettered. After badgering Charles Dunstone and Richard Branson for advice, Hibbert set up Dress2kill, offering bespoke tailoring from £350. The firm already has 2,500 customers, 80% repeat business and a £1 million turnover.

**19. Jennifer Irvine**

Irvine's entrepreneurial instincts run deep – growing up on a self-sufficient farm, she sold eggs at farmers' markets. After witnessing the drought of time experienced by workers in New York, she created Pure Package, the ultimate food delivery for the health conscious. Her chef-produced, nutritional meals have attracted a small army of devotees, including celebrities as diverse as Linford Christie and Ruby Wax. Turnover hit £500,000 in little over a year, with international franchises planned for 2006.

**18. Mark Mills**

AIM-listed Cardpoint acquired its biggest competitor Moneybox for £87.3 million in July, topping off what Mills describes as a "great, challenging" 12 months. Turnover has increased from £35 million to £50 million with targets of £100 million for 2006. That's comfortably more than 10 times the revenues it was bringing just two years ago.

**17. Nick Wood**

Sometimes the most simple ideas can be the most successful. Wood and his brother's smoothie bars, Fruitboost, have been so successful that competitors have attempted to steal their secrets. Wood insists the company is based on a simple recipe of great customer service modelled on the \$1 billion US juice bar industry. Started up with the help of the Price's Trust, Wood is planning further expansion in Fruitboost's second year.

**16. Keith Jordan**

If you walk past someone with a digital advert strapped to their chest – don't be puzzled, get used to it. This is because Jordan's Adwalker has taken off in 2005 and is set to expand further over the next 12 months. Jordan, along with Simon Crisp, came up with the Adwalker idea in 2002. Three years of R&D and trials saw the company floated, where it was valued at £14 million. Jordan's raised £4 million to roll-out the product in his home country of Ireland, the UK, Hong Kong and North America. The concept has been boosted by campaigns with the likes of Paramount and Diageo.

**15. Tricia Weener and Katharine Roseweare**

To compete as an entrepreneur and in the bear pit of the marketing industry, both not choices for the fainthearted, you have to display a certain amount of determination and drive. Luckily for Weener and Roseweare, Women in Business winners at the Startups Awards, the duo possess such qualities in abundance. Their business, Intelligent Marketing, has grown at a frightening rate, securing contracts with Woolworths and Guinness, among others. An 83% surge in turnover took revenues to £2 million in 2005 – a figure dwarfed by the £20 million they plan to make in their five-year plan.

**14. David Soskin**

A serial entrepreneur, Soskin has made a habit of buying into companies and turning them around. Currently Chief Executive of Cheapflights.com, Soskin's reign has seen a 67% rise in visitors to the discount fare provider's website in 2005, coupled with healthy profits. A regular guest on TV and radio shows, Soskin has become an authoritative voice on the travel industry.

**13. Tom Allason**

Allason, a ship broker at the time, had no inclination to set up a courier company before a horrendous experience when trying to deliver tickets to friends convinced him he could do a better job. With university friend Jay Bregman, Allason set up eCourier, the world's first courier firm where customers and staff can track couriers as they make deliveries using a unique computer system developed overseas. Sales hit £1.7 in eCourier's first year, with Allason planning to further exploit his competitive advantage in 2006. The firm landed the Best Use of Technology prize at the Startups Awards.

**12. Gary Laurence**

A veteran of two previous start-up companies, even Laurence may be slightly taken aback by the success of Huntress Search, described by the CBI as the "UK's most exciting, innovative and fast-growing specialist recruitment group." The business posted impressive year-on-



year sales and profit growth and now has an annual turnover of £60 million.

### **11. Alex Tew**

As a one-off money-making idea in 2005, you will struggle to find anything more ingenious than the Million Dollar Homepage. Set up by 21-year-old student Alex Tew, the website offers essentially very little - a logo and link on a page – at \$1 a pixel. With a potential of \$1 million to make through the scheme, Tew is already well on his way, having sold over 800,000 pixels to advertisers across the world. Not a bad way to clear your student debts.

### **10. Ben Harris**

Harris has built on a successful 2004, in which his marketing company, New Brand Vision, grew by 150%. A number of blue chip companies have been wooed, resulting in Harris being hailed as one of the brightest young entrepreneurial minds in the UK. Having set up New2Marketing, specifically aimed at start-ups, Harris admits to bursting with further ideas. It will be interesting to see what will come to fruition in 2006.

### **9. James Averdieck**

Averdieck has successfully targeted the high-end pudding market with his tasty Gu treats. The deliberately expensive chocolate treats look, and taste, luxurious, an approach that has notched up £11 million in sales for Averdieck in just his second year of trading. His turnover and growth rate of 90% is especially impressive when you consider that the former St Ivel executive, a fifth consecutive generation of entrepreneur in his family, didn't raise a penny to start the business.

### **8. Chris Philp**

Philp has as close to a Midas touch as you can get. Having built distribution company Blueheath into a £70 million business in six years, he teamed up with Sam Gyimah to set up Clearstone, an HGV training provider, in 2003. The firm trained over 2,000 drivers in 2005, with turnover soaring to £5 million. Predictably, Philp is aiming for further success in 2006, predicting revenues will double.

### **7. Richard Branson**

The UK's premier entrepreneur refused to rest on his considerable laurels in 2005, announcing ambitious plans to send tourists into space. Rupert Murdoch was next in Branson's sights, with the bearded maestro making an audacious attempt to snatch Premiership screening rights from Sky. Virgin will take on Sky with a £4.5 billion television, internet and telephone company, following a planned merger with NTL.



Virgin Vines, offering fashionable wines, was also launched in 2005, meaning not even a break-in at the entrepreneur's house could take the shine off the past 12 months.

#### **6. Liz Jackson**

Jackson's story is an inspiration for anyone who feels that entrepreneurship isn't within their grasp. At the age of 25, Jackson launched Great Guns Marketing, despite having little education, no funds and no property to secure a loan. On top of that, she was rapidly losing her eyesight, a condition that has since resulted in her blindness. Great Guns Marketing enjoyed a strong 2005, with Jackson scoring a personal triumph with strong sales of her first book, Start Up.

#### **5. Peter Jones**

Jones is by far the most superannuated of all the Dragons that appear on the hit BBC2 show. His Phones International business has a turnover of £150 million, with a personal wealth of £100 million. It can be baffling why, therefore, he argues over the odd £50,000 on the show, before you realise that is exactly the business nous that has elevated him to such a lofty position. Jones further hit the headlines this year for rescuing fellow Dragon Rachel Elnaugh from the nightmare collapse of her company, Red Letter Days.

#### **4. Michael Murphy**

Ex-Financial Times executive Murphy performed superbly as Chief Executive of hit website Friends Reunited in 2005, after being welcomed on board by co-founders Steve and Julie Pankhurst. Murphy's endeavours saw the website become the eighth-largest site in the UK, setting up a bumper £120 million sale to ITV, with added payments subject to conditions.

#### **3. Adam Balon, Richard Reed and Jon Wright of Innocent Drinks**

The trio do not conform to the boardroom pinstripes of their contemporaries, but this has not stopped Innocent Drinks enjoying astonishing success since its launch in 1999. The long-haired Balon casually claims he does not know how much the business is worth, but £30 million sales in 2005, an amazing 207% leap on last year, proves Innocent is among the most exciting businesses in the UK today.

#### **2. Al Gosling**

Gosling is perhaps the most hyper-active entrepreneur of his generation. His Extreme Group has branched out into so many different areas, it can be hard to keep track. On top of his Extreme Sport Channel, there's an Extreme range of clothes and Extreme



Drinks – making it one of the world’s top 10 sports brands, alongside Manchester United and the New York Yankees. 2005 has been particularly eventful, with Gosling buying out all of his shareholders to continue with a fresh boardroom. A new TV channel for online gamers is set to launch, while next year should also see ventures in the mobile phone market and even a theme park in Dubai. Where he finds the time to sail new boat is anyone’s guess.

**1. James Murray Wells**

It’s rare for an entrepreneurial newcomer to shake an established industry to its foundations. It’s even rarer when that entrepreneur is just 22. But the astounding success of James Murray Wells’ Glasses Direct is the unlikely business story of 2005. Unsure why a pair of glasses – “essentially some wire and two pieces of glass” – could cost £250, Murray Wells researched the optical market and found that he could make the same glasses for a fraction of the price. In just a year, he’s sold 22,000 pairs of glasses via the internet, saving UK consumers £2 million and smashing the large opticians’ vice-like grip on the market. A string of accolades followed, culminating in the young entrepreneur being named Business of the Year at the Startups Awards. Unsurprisingly, investors are queuing up to invest in Glasses Direct, with a reported £5 million close to being raised. 2006 promises much for Murray Wells.