

CSV is the anti-Dragon's Den – promoting nurturing and growth over barracking



BIG ISSUE INVEST

BUSINESS MENTORS WHO WON'T BITE

Starting a social enterprise can be daunting. Thankfully there are people who can help

We all need a little help from time to time. For start-up social enterprises, the trick is finding the right match.

When you work with the right people, you get the best results. This will not come as a shock to anybody, and it's why fledgling start-ups place a premium on canny guidance from experienced old hands. But it's not always easy to source this help. And to maintain the links.

However, Big Issue Invest has come up with a simple solution – the Corporate

Social Venturing (CSV) programme. The initiative is designed with fledgling social enterprises in mind, helping them to tackle the particular challenges they face.

Put simply, those who secure a place on the programme are matched with mentors from a network of diverse corporate partners: to help provide business solutions to social problems. Like any relationship, it is a combined effort.

CSV represents a new approach to corporate social responsibility, which has become a vital part of staff development, rather than a box-ticking exercise. Kathleen

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

CSV delivers big benefits to organisations that join the programme. It's easy to sign up and enjoy the sort of projects CSV helps grow. For information on how to join Barclays and Experian in shaping the future, email John Montague: john@bigissueinvest.com. For more information visit bigissueinvest.com



DIGITAL MUMS

Social media training

Founded: 2013

Mentor: Tracy Balachandran, Barclays

Digital Mums began when co-founders Kathryn Tyler and Nikki Cochrane (pictured) realised there was a demand for social media among small businesses but few people with the right expertise. There were also 1.2 million mums missing from the workplace. Instead, they were at the school gates, using

their smartphones. The connection was made. By training mothers to work as social media managers for local businesses, Tyler and Cochrane realised they could create flexible employment opportunities for parents while addressing a need in the community.

The concept was a hit with both CSV and Barclays, who mentored Digital Mums over a three-month period – sharpening up their business skills and helping them to market their services to not-for-profit businesses.

In 2014, Digital Mums successfully pitched for CSV funding of £50,000. Since then, they have developed an excellent training course, which – thanks to a bursary scheme – is accessible to all, regardless of income. In the next three years their aim is to support 1000 mums back into work.

Tracy Balachandran is impressed with their progress. “The most rewarding aspect of being on CSV was seeing the business move forward... they've brought their ideas to Barclays and reshaped their thinking.”



TALENTINO!

Careers agency

Founded: 2010

Mentor: Paul Speirs, Experian

Former HR director Jenny Connick started careers agency Talentino! to give young people a better start on the career ladder. Their face-to-face Early Career

Coaching programme, tailored to individual schools, is a unique way to prepare school leavers for work, and also meet the needs of employers.

Paul Speirs from Experian supported the team over an initial three-month period, honing their action plans, defining goals and helping them with tough business decisions. It was clearly a mutually beneficial partnership. He described his mentoring role with Jenny Connick as “becoming part of the family”. They are still in regular contact and Paul offers advisory support.

“I was frankly blown away by his commitment,” says Jenny. “We now have a clear vision, mission and strategy, and a solid financial plan.”

As a result of CSV, Talentino! has achieved sales with a contract value of nearly £200,000 over three years. They're also planning for further growth of up to £1.6m in sales – aiming to cover 10 per cent of England's senior schools.

Britain, Head of UK community investment at Barclays, says their partnership with Big Issue Invest is an important part of Barclays' broader commitment to have a positive impact on the future of five million young people by the end of this year. Five million!

“More than ever before, we recognise that Barclays must play a broader role in society and in the communities in which we live and work,” she says. “It gives us an opportunity to combine business acumen with social goals to create financially viable organisations and projects. We see ourselves as an enabler and incubator for promising ideas.”

Among those Barclays have already helped hone their business skills is social media agency Digital Mums. Digital Mums was founded by social entrepreneurs Nicki Cochrane and Kathryn Tyler. They had a clear and simple idea – a means

of offering employment for skilled women taken out of the workplace by becoming mothers. They worked out there was a gap in the market for those who could bring social media skills to small businesses. The mentoring that came helped Digital Mums flourish.

Experian are another massive firm that has brought its skills to CSV. Career coaching agency Talentino! is one of the enterprises with whom they have forged a strong relationship. Talentino! was founded to bring early career support for school pupils, helping them be what employers frequently claim kids are not – work ready.

For large organisations, the CSV programme is also a chance to learn. By encouraging employees to mentor social businesses, they can develop their skills and be better placed to understand the needs of the growing social sector.

Paul Vescovi, Experian's managing director of credit services in the UK, said: “One of the key reasons I love it is that it enables us to play in a number of intelligent, skilled people to turbo-charge the next generation of social enterprise. It's a wonderful symbiotic relationship.”

And as well as supporting social enterprises directly, CSV creates a culture of social responsibility that can make a tangible difference to a lot of people's lives.

“These things become self-perpetuating,” said Paul Vescovi. “I feel good when I see other organisations acting how we've been acting. It's like a snowball rolling downhill. The more people who get involved, the more social enterprises can be helped.”

Winners of a place on the CSV programme for 2015 will be announced on June 29