

Meaningful Learning Experiences

Strategic Commitment		
Curriculum Provision	✓	Learning about small businesses in Business Studies
Employer Partnerships	✓	Showing the potential for new school/business links
Reflective Young People		
Informed Career Choices	✓	Revealing the reality of running a small business

GCSE Business Studies students research and present solutions to real challenges facing local SMEs

The head of Business Studies at Oakwood Academy in Nottingham explained his aim to bring classroom learning to life: *'Students would benefit from direct exposure to businesses and areas they deal with on a day-to-day basis. Existing year 10 students produce a report about a small business on a question they choose. They could have access to a supportive business that provides information about the selected topic. It would be a major boost to their chances of success'*. He identified the need for support in topics including marketing, finance and ethical & environmental issues.

The school had done very little curriculum work with local employers. The search for potential small business partners included exploring nearby industrial estates using Google Street View, with two contrasting companies offering to help. EMDD is an industrial drilling specialist working around the country and Double T is a small social enterprise promoting employability among young adults in Nottingham. Both provided informal 'mini-masterclass' video clips about marketing and cashflow management in their businesses, along with a real current business issue facing the company.

In addition to the video clips and a few Powerpoint slides with background information, students undertook their own online research. The challenge required them to prepare a concise business report, which they presented to the directors from the businesses when they came into the classroom to hear about their ideas and proposals. The discussions also provided an opportunity to ask questions about running a small business – a career path of interest to many of the students.

Benefits for the Students

- *'We take it a bit more seriously because our opinions could genuinely help his company'*
- *'It gets us ready for when we want a job ... it gets us a bit more prepared'*
- *'We've had to work in teams and do lots of research to find out a about a business we've not heard about before - and then having to come up with suggestions about that business. It did challenge us'*
- *'It was pleasing to be listened to by an actual business leader and my ideas to be taken on board in a serious manner'*

Benefits for the School

- *'I am pleased that you found the work they had produced of a high standard and I know that they greatly valued you talking to them. Thanks for providing feedback on their ideas and I am sure your interest in them will have a positive impact on their understanding of the topic and in developing their individual skills and confidence'*
- The school is considering developing further curriculum links with local employers, going beyond the traditional work experience currently provided by the school

Benefits for the Employer

- *'I've taken away all their work and am going to feed that into the discussions we have. I'm hoping I can come back in a few months to tell them what we have done as a result of their input'* Hamish Elliott, CEO, Double T
- *'I was impressed by the way they'd approached it. They all assumed a methodology and collated information ... They'd all got to grips with the brief and presented their information in an articulate way'* Tom Gould, Contracts Director, EMDD

Oakwood Academy Business Challenge

You have found out about two local small businesses, in particular about the way they manage Marketing and Cashflow. They have also asked for you to use what you have learned from Business Studies to help them solve real issues:

Double T

I need your help to find ways of meeting young people in their free time or after 5PM who are not working and not in educational settings. We are particularly keen to find ways of meeting these people in your part of Nottingham.

EMDD

We removed the words 'Email' from our logo a couple of years ago to reflect our 24/7 email coverage. But we are open to other ideas about how we can communicate our status as a specialist business that operates nationwide.

Choosing one of these businesses, prepare a short memo (no more than one side of A4) that you may need to discuss with the business guests, explaining:

- How you suggest the issue is solved for the business
- Any Business Studies learning that you have applied
- What benefits will be gained by using your solution



Students prepared and discussed their ideas about solving real business challenges facing local SMEs, including one that students walk past on their way to school