



ThanksTo launches Social Enterprise Challenge to discover London's hidden heroes

Apprentice winner Tim Campbell and Secret Millionaire Dominic List are among those backing a new campaign to help young people develop their business skills.

The six-week Social Enterprise Challenge starts in February and will see up to ten teams of seven young people aged 18 and over compete for the chance to shadow a leading entrepreneur for a week. The winning team will also receive a cash prize of £500 plus over £5000 worth of sports equipment.

Each of the mini businesses created as part of the challenge will not only help participants learn about business and enterprise, but also make a positive contribution to their respective communities in Greater London.

Each team will be assigned a successful entrepreneur who will help the teams develop their skills, as well as acting as adviser to each 'mini-business'.

Team member will be assigned roles including team leader, community liaison support and marketing officer. At the end of the six weeks, a judging panel including Campbell, List, founder of Make Your Mark with a Tenner, Oli Barrett and Coffee Nation founder Martyn Dawes will choose the winning team and also the best performing person in each of the specialist roles.

The initiative is the brainchild of the team behind ThanksTo, a website that encourages people to thank and publicly acknowledge those unsung heroes in our communities, and is sponsored by multisport superstore Sweatband.com.

"The challenge is a unique and exciting introduction to the world of social enterprise and entrepreneurship. Our objective is to provide an opportunity for young people to develop their business skills at the same time as supporting local communities. It brings together people from different age groups and backgrounds developing community cohesion" – says Caroline Ashcroft, MD of ThanksTo.com.

Maz Darvish, CEO of Sweatband.com adds, "As a business that recognises the huge difference hard working people make to their sports and communities we're proud to be sponsoring this very unique challenge. For us the benefits of the scheme are two-fold; first it will give young people an opportunity to acquire and refine vital business skills, and second it will acknowledge and reward those unsung heroes who put their hearts and souls into the teams and communities they serve."

For further information about the programme please contact Caroline Ashcroft on c.ashcroft@thanksto.com or call 0845 359 9859. Full details can be found at www.ThanksTo.com

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Notes to the editor

- The deadline for applications is 25th January 2010
- Individuals must be 18 or over and based in Greater London
- All participants in the Social Enterprise Challenge will be invited to the awards ceremony in April 2010

About ThanksTo

www.ThanksTo.com aims to encourage people to thank and publicly acknowledge those unsung heroes in our communities who exceed in what they do and who make a real difference to our lives and those around us. It could be a teacher who inspired us to succeed, a doctor who saved our life or a coach who spurred us on to great achievements.

Beyond the Challenge, ThanksTo trains staff from corporate sponsors to mentor teams of young people through a three month, 'learning by doing' Social Enterprise Programme. Sponsors benefit from innovative training for their rising stars, and give something back to the community at the same time.

Founded by Duncan Cheatle it is part of a more general goal to "make Britain the most enterprising nation in the world". Cheatle already runs The Supper Club, a club for fast growing, innovative entrepreneurs who have a combined turnover of £1.3 billion. Nearly half the members achieved sales growth of more than 30% in 2009 and contrary to common trends recruited four times as many they made redundant. The plan is to take the knowledge and best practice of these award winning businesses picked up from over 560 events to date and share the next generation of entrepreneurs.

About Caroline Ashcroft

Ashcroft left school at 11 deciding to teach herself. She studied at Clare College Cambridge graduating with a first class degree in social and political sciences last year. She has worked with The Supper Club previously and joined the ThanksTo team last summer. She developed the Enterprise Training Programme and was appointed MD in September 2009.

About Sweatband.com

Sweatband.com is the ultimate active sports equipment super store. Its range covers multiple sports and includes tennis, badminton, cricket, squash, golf and fitness equipment. Amongst the major brands represented are Head, Wilson, NordicTrack, Suunto, Dunlop and DKN. Unlike many fly by night Internet retailers, Sweatband.com has a long trading history over which time it has served many thousands of clients across the UK. The client base ranges from private individuals to clubs, coaches, sports professionals and celebrities.