

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Helping companies survive

Jonathan Gold

ENTREPRENEURS providing advice for entrepreneurs. That's how Peter Hiscocks, my business partner and I see Finance Tree.

In the year we completed our own management buyout, it's great to look back at two years of successfully delivering advice and practical help to entrepreneurs and companies on managing and raising finance.

Looking forward is always a little harder. However, we remain confident that businesses who survive or are starting now can be leaders in their field when times improve, if they make the right choices.

Our Finance & Business programme, supported by One North East, offers a range of products and services to help SMEs make some of the right choices on the efficient use of cash and securing new loan or equity investment.

Through training courses and events, tailored coaching and mentoring, as well as on-line resources and guides, Finance Tree has worked with more than 1,500 businesses over the past two years.

Its work has helped SMEs to lever more than £1m of finance into the region and is committed to continue that success and grow that number in 2009.



PRACTICAL HELP: Jonathan Gold, director Finance Tree.

Training events will be held across the North East to help businesses get to grips with their finances and gain a better understanding of the needs of investors and raise investment finance to grow.

The Finance & Business programme has proved a resounding success with 69 courses held at venues across the region and almost 700 days of individual and tailored coaching and support. I am delighted that One

North East gave us the opportunity to deliver this project as part of their broad access to finance strategy.

There is a recognition that the project, originally targeted directly at companies seeking venture capital, has proved relevant to all businesses, from start-ups to more mature companies.

The discipline of preparing your courses and support have reported a positive change within their business. These have largely been centred on their ability to make cash work better for them and sometime sharpen their use of other external advisers, not to mention success in raising capital.

The importance of what we can provide has increased in recent months. Most businesses are finding it harder to ensure good cashflow. Our view is the best way to survive is look at what you need to grow.

Jonathan Gold is director of Finance Tree. For more information about how the Finance and Business programme can help you, visit www.financeandbusiness.biz or call (0191) 230-6370.

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

Finance can still be found, despite the doom and gloom in the media – that's the message from Jonathan Gold, director of Finance Tree.

IF YOU can put the right proposition to the right people you will get the money you need to grow your business – Finance Tree helps small companies and entrepreneurs to do just that. Our courses are not just about raising finance, equity and loans – we help optimise the companies' existing finances.

Now more than ever it is important to focus on the fundamentals of good financial management, and to protect your best asset – cash!

That's why we start at the beginning.

Finance Tree's one-day Managing your Money training course helps company owners to establish good solid principles. Then as they grow, our Finance and Business programme grows with them, providing a mix of direct mentoring and coaching, finance guides and

innovative online tools to find available funds and their investor readiness.

Finance Tree has also grown in the past year, with new centres at Wynyard and at the Business and Innovation Centre in Sunderland. We have also worked to provide the finance space in NetPark's web space for its clients, giving us access to many more science and technology companies.

We also welcomed Natalia Blagburn as a new member of staff as we took on the Achieve More project, which nurtures young and innovative companies in incubators to accelerate their growth.

Our programme has helped more than 1,500 companies in the region and we continue to grow our client base with the challenge of encouraging companies to think big, as a way of succeeding in difficult times.



8 January Finance and Business: Business Innovation Centre, Sunderland

15 January Managing Money: Westminster Business Centre, Wynyard

11 February Finance and Business: Keel Row House, Newcastle

12 February Managing Money: 1st St James' Gate, Newcastle

25/26 February Funding Your Business Needs: Westminster Business Centre, Wynyard

11 March Finance and Business: Westminster Business Centre, Wynyard

24 March Managing Money: Westminster Business Centre, Wynyard

25/26 March Funding Your Business Needs: Newcastle

Supported by One North East. For more information on all the courses above, please visit www.financeandbusiness.biz or contact Marie Potts on (0191) 230-6370.

TAKING ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO MOVE FORWARD

KLS Lighting Design

WITH seven years' experience in lighting design, Kristina Simpson had noticed the high demand for specialists in this field, so she decided to draw on her skills and experience to set up KLS Lighting Design in 2007.

Kristina initially funded the business using her own savings, credit cards and a bank loan. Other than the annual use of an accountant, she admits that she was a little fearful when it came to



NEW STRATEGY Kristina Simpson initially funded her business using savings.

finance. Kristina needed advice and support to take her business forward, but found many of the resources she came across to be less than helpful.

"Other advisors just assumed I wanted grants, when I wanted advice and help with how to run the business," she said.

Kristina completed the free, one-day Finance and Business and Managing Money courses.

She said this gave her the basic financial knowledge she needed to lose her fear of finance and "think bigger", as well as gaining access to the advice and support she had been looking for.

Following the courses, Kristina has changed her strategy. She now focuses on higher value, more specialised work and has also taken on freelancers to help with her work-load.

Kristina said that the programme helped her to develop a clear vision for the future of her business and to choose what type of finance suited her best.

She has since decided to allow her business to grow organically rather than seeking outside investment, thereby keeping full control.

Blacks Newsagents

SUSAN Black started out on her own in 1995 when she bought her local pizza takeaway, which she ran for eight years before buying her parents' newsagents. Initially, she



IMPROVED CASH FLOW Newsagent Susan Black with Paul Freeman of Finance Tree.

sourced funding from her parents and a bank loan, but she didn't fit the criteria for the various assisted funding and grants available.

While looking for business and financial advice, Susan came across Finance Tree, where she attended the two, free one-day introductory courses – Finance and Business and Managing Money.

"I found it really useful, both in gaining advice and guidance in financial areas, and in meeting and learning from other businesses," she said.

After the programme, Susan

raised delivery prices and introduced a late delivery charge which has turned her previously loss-making paper delivery service into profit and drastically improved cash flow.

Susan said that the advice has already saved the business thousands of pounds and given her the confidence to expand.

She said: "I moved from a loss of £2,500 a year to a profit of £1,800 just on the paper delivery service, and while payments were usually thousands of pounds in arrears, I now get paid within a matter of weeks."