

Taking care of business

Liam Bailey

By Robert Foster

While many dream of running their own business, it seems only the most talented can turn their ideas into a profitable venture. Alan Sugar's dim-witted apprentices may talk the talk, but it's pretty clear they can't walk the walk. Curious as to what it takes to succeed in the high-pressured world of business, I decided to track down one of Wirral's most promising young entrepreneurs – Meols' very own Liam Bailey.

Although a leading light within the local business community due to his work with Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Liam is likely to be an unknown quantity for many readers of *The Lake*. From humble beginnings, his business foundations were laid through hard work and a flair for web design. He and his business partner, Mark Ainsworth, first dipped their toes into the corporate waters when they launched Max Web almost ten years ago. Things quickly took off as word spread about their dedication to quality, and together they worked tirelessly to cultivate one of the most innovative web design companies around. Max Web's ever expanding workforce continues to thrive as they work with the likes of Assist Recruitment, the National Health Service, and trade union giants, Unison.

With his charisma and friendly attitude, Liam reminds me of a young Richard Branson and they certainly share values when it comes to running companies with a responsible ethos. As we chatted, it became clear he's a strong believer in providing opportunities to local young people and as such has given numerous apprenticeships



to them through the highly commended Wirral Apprentice Scheme. It's refreshing to find someone who is willing to take the time and effort to invest in training and developing young people, who are all too often brushed aside in favour of more experienced candidates. He's also opened his doors to local schools and regularly offers work experience placements, which goes hand-in-hand with the work Mark undertakes on the Council's Young Employment Steering Group.

Generosity is not something I'd immediately associate with ambitious business people, but Liam and the Max Web team break the mould and make a point of giving a little something back to those who need a helping hand. Charities including Friends of Katy, Stick 'n' Step and the Golgotha Orphans Care Centre in Tanzania have all benefitted from free websites and IT support from Max Web, which Liam modestly plays down as he turns the conversation back to the good work the charities

undertake. However, he was more eager to tell me about his plans for a charity golf tournament, which will see a range of local businesses battling for bragging rights at Leasowe Golf Club next summer. His charity work has also seen him cross paths with some real local legends, and he is particularly proud that he had the opportunity to raise funds alongside the late Howard Kendall shortly before he passed.

With such a range of existing commitments, I would expect Liam to be reluctant to take on more responsibility. But no, it seems his appetite for new challenges is growing just as fast as his business portfolio – he is always on the lookout for new ideas to invest in. And the man with the Midas touch looks like he's struck gold again as Wirral-based clothing website cersei.co.uk goes from strength to strength. He's working alongside a team of local fashionistas to bring stylish, yet affordable clothing to the public, and while he admits he knows little about fashion, he clearly has an eye for a promising venture. While I don't know much about fashion, Liam is adamant that Cersei's new line of Christmas jumpers is going to be a big hit as the temperatures plummet.

So what's next for Liam? Early retirement? A life of beachside pleasure in the Bahamas? A slot on *Dragon's Den*? No, you guessed it... he wants to take on more challenges within local business. His passion for working with ambitious, motivated people is clearly what drives him and it seems he just can't help but keep his eyes peeled for new investment opportunities.

As our meeting came to a close, I felt I had gained a true insight into what it takes to be successful within business. While a solid plan, thorough financial awareness and organisational skills are vital, they count for little if you lack the energy and motivation to pull it all together. Liam has it in abundance and I know for sure that if I ever have a 'eureka moment', he'll be the first to know.



Liam with Howard Kendall