

Business Plan Competition Winner

Sam Dixon – GO'GO GUITAR

Overview

Commercial Music student Sam Dixon won the £1,000 top prize in the 2009 Bath Spa University Business Plan Competition. His winning idea, GO'GO GUITAR! is a fun and unique guitar course for group tuition that is aimed at children in primary schools.

About the Project

Sam Dixon has worked as a peripatetic teacher in over 11 primary schools. He quickly observed a gap in the market for a course that could maintain the interest of the majority of students by providing a tuition course that would tap into their creative instincts and inspire them to continue with the instrument for many years to come.

GO'GO GUITAR! is a 16-week course that has been constructed with innovation, fun and learning in mind. It is tailored specifically to the 7 – 10 years old age group, to keep them motivated in the initial stages of learning to play the guitar. It challenges traditional methods of teaching using new contemporary techniques, with content that is more easily understood, enjoyed and absorbed by younger children. It aims to inspire children, so that they learn to play quickly, and it is innovative in that they learn to play guitar in a group setting, using the specially written materials for the GO'GO GUITAR! course.

GO'GO GUITAR! is establishing itself as a popular course within primary schools as an after-school club. It will generate income through the sale of the course materials and also through the tuition fees from lessons. There is also enhanced profitability for any teacher that uses this powerful new teaching programme, as it has been written and developed for group of teaching of up to 6 students.

After a pilot 5-month period, GO'GO GUITAR! has taken the success of the private group tuition into delivering the teaching programme to those Local Authority departments responsible for peripatetic work. The aim is that the course can be further developed in conjunction with Herefordshire Education Authority and implemented as a course for young beginners throughout other primary schools regionally.



Sam Dixon

Fast Facts

- Sam Dixon beat off competition from 23 other student entries to the competition
- Winning the competition meant that Sam was able to fund the development of the GO'GO GUITAR! website
- The Business Plan Competition offers aspiring entrepreneurs a first prize of £1,000 to help get their ideas off the ground
- Local business, Inventures, sponsored the first prize for the 2009 competition



Benefits

GO'GO GUITAR! is a unique course of tuition in beginner guitar, and is written for students between the ages of 7 to 10 years. It is a new method of tuition that promotes group learning, and teaches content in simple steps that focus on goal reaching – rather than a continuous climb of learning new material and theory.

Traditional methods of tuition introduce students slowly to a number of different ideas, and try to combine these over a period of 24 to 48 weeks. GO'GO GUITAR! focuses on teaching just two ideas in the foundation course, allowing the children to master these principles themselves before applying them to contemporary music in just eight weeks. An additional eight week course then builds upon this foundation course to continue the learning method.

Continuous development of the business plan whilst piloting the service meant that Sam was able to adapt and improve the business before its launch. For example, originally, the plan was for the course to be delivered immediately from an illustrated tuition book, with an accompanying CD that had backing tracks and examples of the learning content inside. However, as the tuition book and CD were to be a major source of revenue, the decision was made to delay development and production of these until an assessment could be made from the pilot course.

The solution was to produce exactly the same product, but in high colour and quality PDF format – printed out and organized week by week into a folder for each GO'GO GUITAR! student. All of the criteria and key principles involved in how the lesson material was presented, taught and articulated would remain exactly the same – but children would not need to pay for these materials.



Sam Dixon receiving cheque from Inventions' Director of Finance



The goal was to refine each lesson sheet after it was taught, changing any ideas that children had found confusing and making it better with each lesson. This ultimately led to 16 weeks' worth of 'tried and tested' content that could be confidently used in the publication and illustration of a professional tuition book.

The lack of a backing track CD, was simply replaced with commercial music played in the lessons from iTunes. Although none of the children could take this music away with them, this helped to refine the styles of music that this age group liked to listen to and strengthened the research element of the business plan.

The tuition books were an expense worth saving in preparation for a product that would be completely refined, through real experience and constant development, and ready to be assembled into a completely professional product at the end of the pilot project.

Outcomes

Sam found the competition an extremely rewarding experience and GO'GO GUITAR! received some excellent feedback and ideas for its future development and success. The introduction of the thousand pounds worth of capital was extremely useful in supplying the funds to develop the business earlier than expected. It enabled Sam to work with an illustrator and web designer, to redevelop the original GO'GO GUITAR! logo for a more professional looking brand.

The award provided the financial investment to put more money into the website design than the initial business plan had budgeted for, transforming its design and branding. The site was finished in May 2009 and is an essential promotional medium for attracting enquiries and sales, www.GoGoGuitar.com.

Publicity in the local press and in the sponsors' newsletters has raised awareness of GO'GO GUITAR! and adds to Sam's portfolio of testimonials.

GO'GO GUITAR! is currently being taught throughout the counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

Perspective

Sam Dixon: “The prize is a fantastic support and the judges came up with several different ideas that I hadn't previously considered.”

Simon Bond, Director of the Innovation Centre in Bath and Chair of the Judging Panel, said “GO'GO GUITAR! is absolutely on the money and is such a well thought-out idea that turns teaching on its head and makes it pay. Sam gave a fantastic presentation, that was highly articulate and full enthusiasm. Sam obviously lives and breathes his subject!”

Graham Ormesher, Finance Director for Inventures and panel judge, commented: “I've thoroughly enjoyed the experience of being on the judging panel and it has restored my faith in young entrepreneurs. I was very impressed with Sam's skills and enthusiasm. GO'GO GUITAR! is a very practical course that he has proved can work. Sam has a lot of aspirations that seem very realistic.”

About Bath Spa University's Business Plan Competition

The idea of the awards is to encourage an enterprise culture within the university and, for those students thinking of starting their own business, to help them follow their idea through with the aim of keeping business in the local community.

Students are supported with workshops on how to structure a business plan, presentation skills and one-to-one advice sessions on their business plan. All applications are assessed against a matrix of business-related criteria and feedback is given to each applicant on the strengths of their plan and areas to work on.

Shortlisted finalists get the opportunity to showcase their business idea and receive valuable feedback from the judges that they can use to improve and develop their venture. At the same time, the judging panel of local business leaders sees the talent at the university and potential ventures to invest in or support with mentoring or practical assistance.

