



Case Study

smallcarBIGCITY



“The Practical Skills for Business course, run by TCHC, provided me with the skill set and the acumen to successfully bring my business to market.”

Robert Welch
Managing Director smallcarBIGCITY,

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Project: Practical Skills for Business
Business Sector: Leisure and Tourism
Location: St Albans and Wandsworth

English Literature and Business graduate, Robert Welch, began his love affair with the Mini on his 17th birthday, when his parents bought him a classic Mini.

“Just driving my Mini round the streets of Kingston, where I went to university, used to generate attention. Going for a spin in central London, around Covent Garden, bordered on the surreal.”

“Tourists would wave, take photos and shout ‘It’s the Italian Job!’” explains Robert. “Nostalgia is big at the moment – London is swinging once again and people want to enjoy a bit of escapism. What better way to see the capital than in the most iconic piece of British automotive design of the last five decades.”

Rob’s kernel of an idea was temporarily put on hold as the reality of touring London in a Mini seemed a distant and unlikely dream.

He faced university finals and the grueling task of job-hunting in credit-crunch Britain.

“I was determined to carve out a career in the insurance industry in the City, but after a dozen interviews I realised that so were most of the rest of the country’s graduates, not to mention half the previous year who still couldn’t find work!”

Then a chance meeting at a job interview changed everything.

“Whilst commiserating over lunch with a chap I met during one of the interviews – we’d both failed to get past stage one – I mentioned my Mini-tours idea and flippantly asked if he wanted to set up the company together. I was rather taken aback when he said ‘yes!’” Rob’s lunch companion was Oliver Knight, now co-founder and Operations Director of smallcarBIGCITY.



Robert realised that his business proposition would need skills and experience he did not have. So he approached St Albans Enterprise Agency for support and was happy to become one of the first to pilot a new business start up course, Practical Skills for Business, provided by TCHC.

TCHC Adviser Theresa Nunn takes up the story.

“Practical Skills for Business is an intensive course of workshops and exercises designed around practical business planning skills. It has been developed by TCHC and is accredited by the Northern College of Further Education as a Level 2 Award. Delegates completing the course leave with the knowledge and understanding of marketing, operations and finance required to build a realistic, workable business plan.



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Course work is carried out by each delegate against their own business idea. If the planning process highlights that their idea might not be viable, they will have achieved a new qualification and the expertise that can be applied to their next idea!

According to Robert, it was not only the trainers and course content that made all the difference to his business launch; it was also sharing thoughts with other entrepreneurs.

“Peer-review was an important part of the course and I learned so much from understanding the common issues faced by other delegates and how they fixed them,” he says.

smallcarBIGCITY has now launched successfully, providing tours for UK and foreign tourists around London in classic Minis, with chauffeurs kitted-out in sixties fashions. Robert is delighted with the initial success and has ambitious plans for the future.

“The London launch has been a huge hit and we’ll be looking at other UK and European cities to extend the brand,” he concludes. “I know that the skills I learned from TCHC will be invaluable in the future and will help me achieve my goals even faster.”

You can contact Robert on **020 7585 0399**

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