

## **TOP ENTREPRENEURS BACK FIRM THAT AIMS TO IMPROVE CAREERS ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

A firm that provides online careers guidance to young people is looking to double in size within a year after receiving backing from Lloyds Bank.

Leeds-based U-Explore provides free, comprehensive and impartial careers guidance for schools, colleges, students and parents via its Start software that matches users to suitable jobs based on their qualities, skills and work preferences.

The firm's expansion plans are being backed by Lloyds Bank, which has provided a £100,000 working capital package.

The business was founded in 2008 by current chief executive Andy Pickles, who was previously better known as part of Jive Bunny and the Mastermixers, the pop outfit that scored three number ones with its medleys of rock n' roll hits in the 1980s.

It was acquired in 2013 by the family of Matthew Riley, the founder and executive chairman of the £600 million turnover, IT and communication service provider Daisy Group, who was also one of Sir Alan Sugar's advisers on The Apprentice.

U-Explore, signed up more than 1,000 schools to its free careers guidance software (Start) in the first six months after launch and is looking to sign up another 1,000 in the current school year.

Managing director Matt Peters, a qualified accountant and former banker, said: "Schools have limited budgets for careers guidance and the infrastructure for delivery of careers guidance has been largely dismantled.

"With Matt Riley's financial support we have made our software available to all schools and students free of charge, as well as providing lesson plans to help schools drive engagement."

A big focus for the business is its new Three Minute Hero campaign, which aims to build a comprehensive library of three minute videos delivered by people in a wide range of jobs,

These videos will be accessible through the free Start software to give young people who might be mulling a similar career an insight into the profession.

Matt continued: "We intend to become the market-leading careers guidance software, and we want to capture 50,000 Three Minute Hero videos, giving students an insight into what it is really like to do different jobs."

Tony Buchan, relationship director at Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, said: "This is a business that has at its heart a real desire and drive to help young people across the country.

"U-Explore has an impressive management team and some exciting plans for the future.

"We're committed to supporting small to medium sized businesses like U-Explore and have pledged to grow our SME net lending by at least £1billion a year until the end of 2017."

The business was launched when Andy, after being invited into schools to give talks on how to get into the music business, found pupils were uninformed and under-prepared for the world of work.

And award-winning entrepreneur Matt decided to invest as he was excited about the potential to transform the lives of young people and level the playing field, providing the best quality careers advice to all young people.

## **ENDS**

September 2016

Issued on behalf of Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking by Citypress

For press information contact: James Ferguson on 0161 235 0336 / [james.ferguson@citypress.co.uk](mailto:james.ferguson@citypress.co.uk)

Notes to Editors

Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking

\* Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking provides comprehensive expert financial services to businesses of all sizes, from start-ups and small businesses to mid-sized businesses and multinational corporations.

\* Maintaining a network of relationship teams across the UK, as well as internationally, Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking delivers the mix of local understanding and global expertise necessary to provide long-term support to its clients.

\* Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking offers a broad range of finance beyond term lending and this spans import and export trade finance, structured and asset finance, securitisation facilities and capital market funding. Its product specialists provide bespoke financial services and solutions, including tailored cash management, international trade, treasury and risk management services.

Support for SMEs

\* Lloyds Banking Group is committed to helping businesses of all types and sizes, giving them the funding and support they need to grow at home and abroad. We have set out our pledges in our Helping Britain Prosper Plan.

\* For our 2016 SME Charter we have pledged to support 5,000 first time exporters; grow lending to small businesses; help 100,000 start-up businesses; and support small firms for their next phase of growth.

\* Since the start of 2011, we have grown our net lending to SMEs by 28% whilst the market has contracted by 13%.

To see the latest supporting businesses factsheet please visit:  
<http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/media/media-kit/sme-fact-sheet/>