

# THE NEXT GENERATION

This month *Insider* profiles 21 more young business leaders who have made it into our 42 under 42 class of 2009

**W**hy 42? It's ten years younger than the average age of the people featured on *Insider's* South West Rich List. In ten years' time some of those featured could well be household names – and may even make the Rich List themselves.

# 42

under forty two

#### Do you know someone we should include?

The 42 under 42 is meant not just to recognise the successful but to also unearth some business gems, companies or individuals who may not yet have gained wider attention. As well as award-winners and young companies making a name for themselves, we also need your tip-offs. If you know someone special who you think deserves to have their achievements recognised, contact [christian.annesley@newsco.com](mailto:christian.annesley@newsco.com)

#### 1. ALASTAIR BANKS AND JAMES DAWKINS, BOTH 30

CO-FOUNDERS, OPTIX SOLUTIONS  
Not many businesses run by a pair of 30-year-olds have been going ten years, but Optix Solutions has. Alastair Banks and James Dawkins set up the business while at Exeter University. A decade on, the pair have built one of the strongest web design companies in the region, covering web design, web hosting, domain registration, e-commerce, content management systems, e-brochures and business support. The

company has doubled its headcount in the past 18 months and employs 12 people. The growth means Banks and Dawkins are trying to manage the company's evolution by using resources such as the Breakthrough Forums offered by the Beacon South West initiative to share business practice.

#### 2. MARK LAVINGTON, 40, AND NICOLA LAVINGTON, 41

DIRECTORS, BOSHERS  
It's eight years since Boshers was incorporated as a business but the commercial

insurance broker, based in North Devon, has been around much longer as a partnership. Mark and Nicola Lavington took over operations from Nicola's father three years ago and the company is developing a niche in offering insurance cover for those in the self-catering holiday homes market.

"This area accounts for a quarter of the £2.5m in insurance premiums that passes through the business and I expect that proportion to grow," says Mark. "Being a commercial insurance broker is all about building successful relationships so you can deliver the cover your customer needs, which is what we are doing. It's harder these days to compete in commoditised markets such as general motor insurance, so our focus is on working on the relationships we already have and building new ones, in Devon and across the UK."



#### 3. CAROLYN NEWTON, 28

FOUNDER, WHALEBAGS

Plastic bags: most of us still use them, but these days under the critical gaze of other shoppers armed with reusable alternatives. Carolyn Newton is one behind the change.

"I designed the original Whalebag – the humpback rucksack – because I was fed up with carrying shopping up five flights of stairs to my flat," she says. "I made the bag from cotton and designed a pocket it could stuff into so it would fit in my handbag."

Having researched the impact plastic bags have on the environment, especially to marine life, she set up Whalebags and is poised to break into Tesco this year.





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**Deloitte.**


#### 4. BARBARA COX, 41

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NUTRICHEF

Barbara Cox founded Nutrichef in Dorset in 2004 after she came up with the idea of a healthy meal delivery company while in Japan. "I lived in Japan for eight years," says Cox. "I had always enjoyed cooking, but I was taken with the delicate flavours and variety of healthy ingredients used in Japanese cooking. Add the fact that the Japanese are trimmer and live longer than people in the West, and my entrepreneurial thought-processes began pondering the possibility of creating a meal plan that would incorporate the principles of the Japanese diet but appeal to Western taste buds."

Cox returned to the UK to set up Nutrichef and the rest is history: the business has thrived and her meals have been enjoyed by thousands of customers. Cox was recently named Entrepreneur of the Year by the British Chambers of Commerce.

#### 5. BRAD BURTON, 36

MANAGING DIRECTOR, 4NETWORKING

"After leaving my job to go it alone in 2006, I started attending some of the networking meetings in the region but found that they weren't really for me," says Burton. "They were all formal and the members conformed with this. I just didn't fit in."

Burton's response was to create 4Networking – a network with a culture built, he says, on 50 per cent social and 50 per cent business. "When we began on this path this was revolutionary, but fast forward three years and the recipe has stood the test of time. We went from one breakfast group in February 2006 to nearly 200." Burton says the recession is helping because there's more appetite for networking in a downturn.



#### 6. HOLLY BUDGE, 30 FOUNDER, HIP JOINT MEDIA

In October 2008 Holly Budge became the first woman to skydive in front of Mount Everest. It was just the latest stunt in her career as a freefall flyer – she has jumped more than 2,000 times. But Budge is more than an adventurer. In the past five years she has drawn on her knowledge of skydiving and her design skills to produce E-FLI, an online e-learning platform for skydivers. And in 2006 she founded Hip Joint Media, which has become an established digital media agency that creates intelligent websites and e-learning applications using design, animation and film. For Budge, it really looks like the sky's the limit.

#### 7. LUCY JEWSON, 37

DIRECTOR, FRUGI

In Cornwall, Lucy Jewson's organic baby clothes business Frugi is laughing in the face of the global downturn. "This has been a really great year for the business – we've doubled our turnover and now have 13 employees – five more than this time last year," she says. Jewson puts her success



down to ignoring any geographical boundaries when growing the business, arguing that "they just don't exist in this internet age". She adds: "The weakness of sterling has made us really attractive, especially in Europe, and overseas trade has been our biggest growth area, proving there is a silver lining in every cloud."

#### 8. SHAUN CUNNINGHAM, 39

MANAGING DIRECTOR, CHIEF RENTALS

In 1994, a year after being made redundant as a panel beater with Volkswagen, Shaun Cunningham set up Chief Rentals with a loan and grant from the Prince's Trust. He was 23. Fifteen years later this Devon company has carved out a profitable niche supplying specialised vehicles such as replacement taxis, chauffeur vehicles and dual-control vehicles for driving instructors. The company employs more than 70 staff and supplies most of the UK's taxi and chauffeur drivers.



DRIVEN Shaun Cunningham of Chief Rentals

Earlier this year it won an exclusive contract to supply the UK's biggest taxi insurer and now has long-term contracts with four of the five largest customers in its sector.

### 9. ANDY TWEMLOW, 40

MANAGING DIRECTOR, PENINSULA

In five years the Peninsula Group has become one of the largest independent

office print providers in the South West, employing 50 customer-facing staff and turning over £4.7m in 2008. Managing director Andy Twemlow puts this down partly to the in-depth print audit the company carries out when a new customer walks through the door, but also says work-life balance is important to the company, so staff can enjoy the benefits of being in the South West.

### 10. MELISSA NICHOLSON, 40

OWNER, KETTLEWELL COLOURS

In 2004 Melissa Nicholson spotted a niche in the market for good quality T-shirts – and she hasn't looked back. This year her Somerset business, Kettlewell Colours, is performing strongly and she has started investing for the future in IT systems and new designs and colours for the autumn.

"We have been working on ways to strengthen the brand, which we hope will be well received in our autumn catalogue," says Nicholson. "Excellent customer service remains at the core of our business and the positive feedback has kept us all going."



### 11. ANDREW WARREN, 41

MANAGING DIRECTOR, UK PRECISION

UK Precision is a subcontract precision engineering company specialising in supplying machined components and prototyping. After a bumpy start to the year, managing director Andrew Warren says business is picking up. "It feels like 2009 has the potential to be a year of two halves. We entered 2009 full of trepidation about what it would yield. As a sub-contract component manufacturer we are dependent on customer peaks and troughs. But we've discovered we are good at tackling our customers' problems and finding solutions, and have also become much better at taking cost out."

### 12. EMMA WARREN, 41

MANAGING DIRECTOR, PORTFOLIO DIRECTORS

Portfolio Directors in Chard, Somerset, offers services such as coaching, training and change programme development, as well as providing non-executive directors to businesses. Emma Warren, the managing director of this business advisory specialist, says the South West is a great place to be delivering the service.

"There's a real energy in the South West and it's being driven by entrepreneurial talent – homegrown and imported – as people move to the area from other counties," she says. "With the advent of high-speed broadband, more professionals and start-ups are choosing to base themselves in or near their own home. With the beautiful scenery and improved travel links for those times when you need to venture out, why wouldn't you base your business here?"

### 13. CHRIS JENKINS, 29

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, WITTD0

Wittdo is a new not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to save councils and businesses time and money by offering a What Is There To Do? search platform accessible via local websites such as hotels and attractions. It's the brainchild of Chris Jenkins and will go live in Dorset first, but has the potential to be rolled out nationwide. He says: "We are at the beginning of this journey but the appetite is there: being about to access comprehensive, local what's-on information is not easily done just now and Wittdo can fill that gap."

### 14. JULIA LOWE, 42

FOUNDER, FARM TOYS ONLINE

Julia Lowe set up Farm Toys Online in March 2008 as a one-stop shop offering farm-



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themed toys and gifts for children. The online store stocks products including ride-on toys, toy tractors and wooden farms, toy horses and children's gardening tools. With a varied career that includes stints running a children's farm, setting up a parenting newspaper in Somerset and establishing a web design agency that is now ten years old, Lowe says her latest venture meant she could start practising what she had been preaching to her web clients for years.

"With my experience on the educational farm, my children's love of horses and tractors, and my web agency background, selling farm toys online seemed like an obvious choice," she says. Eighteen months in, sales are starting to climb rapidly.



**15. ANDREW RANSFORD, 41**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, HIHO SILVER

Hiho Silver is evolving. Thirteen years after the jewellery and homeware business opened its first shop in Lyme Regis, managing director Andrew Ransford says the next move is to build on what the business has achieved with multi-channel retailing.

"By the end of the year online will be the largest area, accounting for 15 per cent of business, but the model we have means online and the 14 retail outlets are complementary. The retail branches drive online sales and vice versa," he says.

A rebrand is the other piece in the puzzle: these days the business calls itself Hiho rather than Hiho Silver, reflecting its diversification beyond silver jewellery.

**16. JOHN ANDRIUNAS, 29**  
DIRECTOR, ARIBA TEAM

Ariba Team in Totnes combines excellence in composite material product design and production with marine and yachting know-how. Set up 18 months ago by Andrew Moore and John Adriunas, the two sides of the business help to set the company apart. "We know about the products we are helping

to design. We have sailed around the world in these yachts, which makes the difference," says Adriunas. "From us you get an honest, first-hand experience."

The talent pool in the South West in this field also makes a difference. So far the business is flying and on target to turn over £650,000 this year.

**17. GILES COLBORNE, 40,  
AND RICHARD CADDICK, 34**  
CO-MANAGING DIRECTORS,  
CXPARTNERS

Cxpartners is a user-centred design consultancy in Bristol that looks at how users interact with technology to design the best possible user experience, maximising usability and accessibility.

Giles Colborne and Richard Caddick set the company up five years ago and say the technology landscape is changing so fast that businesses ignore usability at their peril these days.

"Our clients are typically blue-chip companies working in travel and financial services, but it's not something for small companies to ignore because technology – and the way people related to it – is evolving," says Colborne. "It's pervasive now in a way it wasn't even five years ago." The company now has 16 staff, compared with the two of them when it started.

**18. LAURIE PETERS, 36**  
DIGITAL DIRECTOR, 30STMARTINS

"Laurie is great. And fast," says Ricky Gervais. With supporters like him, Peters' creative agency 30stmartins, not to mention sister venture stinkywinkles, will surely continue to thrive. Peters says modestly that he is "quite talented" and can turn his hand to most things creative or digital, and is a mean animator to boot. With a base in Marlborough in Wiltshire, he's looking to build business in the South West.

**19. CHRIS TANNER, 29, AND  
ANDREW MULVENNA, 30**  
CO-FOUNDERS, PEARL

Bristol start-up Pearl has had a strong year, catching the attention of BBC Dragon Doug Richard, who has asked to join the board and help grow the business. Only 18 months into trading, founders and managing directors Chris Tanner and Andrew Mulvenna have already recruited six engineers as Pearl continues to develop its web-based systems for small businesses.

**20. FRANK CONNELLY, 41**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, IT AMBULANCE

Frank Connelly set up IT Ambulance in Dorset in 2005 when a hobby of fixing computers became a livelihood. By forming partnerships with contacts across the region, Connelly has been able to expand across the south of England, opening two offices each year since the company's launch. In 2008 Connelly secured private investment from the business angel network SWAIN for the company's three-year growth plan, which has enabled IT Ambulance to expand in Bristol and London.

**21. ALEX ROSE, 25**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, BEARDS OF  
CHELTENHAM

Alex Rose is the sixth generation of the family to run this jewellers and he's shaking things up. In 2005 the company started making jewellery again, rather than just buying it in, which has given the business a new edge. "It gives us so much more control," says Rose, "and if there is a problem you can sort it out the next day."

