

# A county full of start-ups... What makes Wiltshire work?

🕒 1st September 2015

Wiltshire based entrepreneurs seem to have a particularly strong chance of making a success out of a start-up.

So what is it about this green and pleasant land that makes it such a fertile place to grow?

Starting a business is a risky business. Whatever you do, and wherever you are.

Some gloomy statistics even suggest more than half will fail.

And there are countless reasons why so many start-ups quickly end up winding down.

Poor timing, poor funding, the wrong team, the wrong place, even the weather can put paid to your best laid plans. You name it, you can probably blame it.

Yet today in the UK there are more start-ups launching than ever before, with **entrepreneurial Brits expected to set up a staggering 600,000 new companies in 2015.**

And in Wiltshire, there is a section of the business world where the odds are far more favourable,



• **Charlie and Adele Marshall-Reynolds** with entrepreneurs enjoying a success rate of 94%.

Business appears to be booming in the county, across a range of sectors from quality craftsmanship to digital creations, and bespoke cupcakes to candles made from beeswax.

So what makes Wiltshire such an attractive place to set up a company?

Rob Perks of the Wiltshire Business Hub says

**Because there are relatively few large employers in the county, starting out on your own can be the perfect path to career development and fulfilling potential.**



Rob Perks  
Wiltshire business hub

The business hub exists purely to provide publicly funded support and advice to local businesses whatever their reason for being based here. For some, the reason is simply the fact that this large county is undoubtedly a pleasant place to live.

The leafy lanes and wide open spaces make it an appealing location for work and play, so if you're planning a new start, you might as well plan it in beautiful surroundings.

Fellow businessman Chris Taylor was driven to create his company by what he couldn't find in Wiltshire. And that was high quality bacon. As a butcher in Chippenham, this was a particularly frustrating situation to be in, so he set up **The Wiltshire Bacon Company to fill a pig-sized gap in the meat market.**

Three years later, the business is expecting to record a turnover of £750,000, and looking to take on a sixth member of staff.

Chris sources his special free range outdoor reared animals from farms across the county, and their bacon, which is hand cured, is enjoyed in kitchens across the UK.

The 48-year-old moved to Wiltshire in his early 20s, made his home in the county, and now values local expertise to help his business grow.

He is using a small Wiltshire based company to build his new website,



• Wiltshire Bacon, Trowbridge

to deliver what he required – another factor which makes the county a favourable environment for start-up, according to Rob Perks, whose team at Wiltshire Business Hub provided Chris with support and advice on his venture.

Rob said: 'Lots of customers like to deal with a small business rather than a big company. As people we like to feel as though we are being looked after.'



For his business idea, Wiltshire resident Richard Paget took inspiration from what he found while driving through the winding country roads... **And what he found was apples. Lots and lots of apples.**

Apples which were rotting away in country lanes, in gardens and fields, never to be consumed, while supermarkets sell us imported varieties from across the world.

Taking inspiration from the co-operatives of small-holders in Mediterranean countries, Richard set up a service for anyone with an apple tree to make better use of their fruit fall.

**On delivery of as many apples as you can carry, he will wash, pulp, and press them into juice which is then pasteurised and bottled for you to take home.**

The service costs £2 a bottle – including a personalised printed label, and is already

making a dent in the huge number of apples which may previously have gone to waste near his base in the Savernake Forest near Marlborough.

Richard, a former salesman who is 58, and describes himself as 'a late starting, rather surprised entrepreneur', says normally 90% of all apples in private gardens fall to the ground and simply rot.

And the desire to avoid the wastage is at the core of his project which received particular help from WBH on the subject of social media for business.

'Learning about Facebook and LinkedIn from a business point of view was very positive,' said Richard, who is now in his 6th season and **hoping to produce 60,000 bottles in the coming months**, with the help of Mother Nature, half a dozen seasonal staff and what customers find in their gardens.



“

The WBH says that 94% of the 4,500 businesses they have supported so far go on to succeed – compared to the national average of 45%.

And they certainly helped butcher Chris Taylor bring home the bacon. ‘I went to them for finance advice,’ he said.

“We were growing at such speed. Being your own boss can be one hell of a lonely place, so it’s nice to talk to people who understand what it’s like to run a business. It was also great to get totally impartial advice.”

The Wiltshire Business Hub offers financial advice on everything from funding and grants to pay rolls and budgets. The Hub’s Rob Perks, who has a banking background, says he has been involved in thousands of companies over the course of his career, but still finds the prospect of new start-ups in Wiltshire fascinating.

Rob says there are all sorts of reasons for starting your own business, but they all start with an idea, and they all need a sound business plan and a

good marketing strategy.

‘There’s no point having the best idea if it remains a secret,’ he said.

For budding businessmen and women, the WBH offers three distinct ways to help get things up and running.

The first is a ‘strategy work shop’ which lasts a day, and is free to attend.

Next comes a personal follow up visit from one of WBH’s experienced business managers, who provide a one-to-one mentoring service.

Lastly, members can sign up for a long term program which gives access to specialised seminars in subjects such as marketing, tax, and social media.

Talk to one of our experts



It is crucial that start-up businesses have a robust financial plan in place and just as important that they keep close to their figures. Measuring actual performance against the plan on a regular basis will help identify any problems early thereby offering a much better chance of survival.

REQUEST A MEETING



Rob explained: ‘Wiltshire Business Hub is the small business answer to continuous professional development.

‘The seminars keep changing because the world keeps changing.’

And his message to anyone considering a start-up is simple.

‘Have a go, don’t be afraid of failure.

You might not get it right first time, but the true entrepreneur gets up and dusts themselves off and tries again.

Everyone has the potential to start a business. But do take advice.

There is a lot of funding available and it would be a bit bonkers not to

take advantage of that.’

He continued: ‘Wiltshire is a great place to start a business. It’s a rural county with nice surroundings, a pleasant place to live and work in.

It’s also very accessible and well connected – ideally located with easy routes to the M4 and M3 corridors, London, the south coast, south west and the Midlands.

We haven’t got many large employers, which means starting a business is sometimes the best way to develop your career.’



Rob Perks  
Wiltshire Business Hub

**Kerry Gover, founder of PinkBox Boutique Ltd, says** the support she has received from WBH has been invaluable.

PinkBox Boutique has no physical shop, and instead sells gifts online, at markets, and at home parties, where customers can feel, smell and taste the selection of bags, scarves, candles, skin care and food, which come from small producers who make natural products.

And just over two years after she set up the company in Coate, near Devizes, Kerry is already looking to expand.

The second year of business has seen orders and revenues **double** compared to the first 12 months, which means the business owner is now set to open a dedicated showroom in a converted barn, where customers can check out the goods and host shopping parties for their friends.

She said: ‘I always wanted to run my own business, and had the idea of running a different kind of boutique.

## The second year of business has seen orders and revenues double compared to the first 12 months.



Kerry Gover  
Managing Director at PinkBox

‘I’m an all or nothing girl, and I wanted to give up my day job and get started.’

Kerry got stuck into her research and then looked to WBH’s business support service who sent an advisor to give her an assessment.

She recalls: ‘The business advisor challenged me on some things, and encouraged me on other aspects, and **together we honed the plan, and he said it was great.**

‘I felt like I had really good support and really good advice. And they have held my hands all along the way.

‘I’ve also received useful feedback

from WBH on my plans to expand the business.’

She added: ‘If I need advice on marketing, or sales coaching, or networking, or even something like business rates, I can give them a call for some help. I’ve had lots of free training and strategy planning. It’s been brilliant.’

Kerry, who is 45, and spent years in marketing helping other people to run their businesses, says she is delighted she took the leap herself.

‘I was worried when I started out that there were lots of things I didn’t know, but thanks to the support I’ve had, I’ve got a much better chance of being successful.

‘I work more hours than I ever did, but I love what I do, and that’s important.’

### WBH offers you:

1. A strategy work shop
2. One-to-one mentoring
3. Regular specialised seminars



“

Thank you so much for presenting a technical subject in a way which was easy to understand...



Androulla Derbyshire  
Founder of Cullinary Capers

# WB3

GIVING YOU THE  
★ TOOLS ★  
TO SUCCEED

[www.wiltshirebusinesshub.co.uk](http://www.wiltshirebusinesshub.co.uk)

Telephone 01225 402096

[wiltsbizhub](#)

Add us on Google+

**If you're thinking of starting a business, you can attend a free 'Becoming Your Own Boss' or 'Start Up Saturday' seminar.**

We can help you assess whether your business idea will work in practice, work with you to turn your idea into a more solid plan and help you take the first steps towards making your business a reality. Free seminars are held every month in Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury.

If you've started in business or you're in your first year or two of trading, fresh challenges emerge! How best to market your Business, beat the competition, keep tax to a minimum, get the right IT package, recruit and retain good staff, avoid pitfalls and so much more.

Our Inspire knowledge programme could be just what you're looking for, keeping you up to date with the latest developments in every aspect of business, delivered by professionals from every field of expertise. We also offer the service of one of our expert Business Managers to support you with one to one advice and help.

We can even help you find affordable office space in one of the enterprise centres in the county. Thanks to funding from Wiltshire Council, we can bring this invaluable ongoing programme of support to you at an incredible price of just £25 per month, plus VAT.

See our full list of events on our website to find out more and book your place.

[www.wiltshirebusinesshub.co.uk](http://www.wiltshirebusinesshub.co.uk)