

# The Apprentice finalist all set to share advice with students

## Courtney at college for special week

**T**his week marks the tenth anniversary of National Apprenticeship Week, a week designed to raise awareness of apprenticeships and showcase the very best on offer.

Chelmsford College is celebrating 'NAW2017' with some inspiration.

This week, our current apprentices, business students and apprentices of the future will get to hear, first-hand, from TV celebrity and BBC The Apprentice finalist Courtney Wood.

Courtney, 30, lives in Essex, running his on trend novelty gift business bubblegumstuff.com.

He was the finalist in the popular 2016 show, series 12, where he narrowly missed out on Lord Sugar's £250,000 investment to Alana Spencer.

In interviews, Courtney says he had the self-belief he'd win all the way through the process and it was only in the final he realised Alana's cake business had the potential to successfully upscale through a franchising business model.

### Success

Billed as "a job interview from hell," the reality TV show promotes lots of discussion around what it means to be an entrepreneur and which qualities are crucial to survival and success in business today.

Courtney, for example, was told his pitching skills needed work.

Despite believing confidence is one of his strongest attributes, Courtney, along with 56 per cent of the UK population, feared public speaking.

Chelmsford College students are thrilled to hear more from their TV idol.

"Watching how Courtney overcame his fear of speaking and went on to deliver a first class pitch to industry leaders at the end of the show was really inspiring," said business studies level 2 student Oliver Logan.

"It takes guts to move beyond something that's holding you up in life, let alone to do that on national television."

Whilst National Apprenticeship Week celebrates its tenth year, Courtney is celebrating his fifth year in business.

He chose to study BA Industrial Design at Brunel University in 2005. He enjoyed



**SELF-BELIEF:** Courtney Wood, from Essex, was on The Apprentice design and was good at it. Courtney said: "My generation was heavily funded for further education so it was a no-brainer to carry on studying."

"Would I do the same today? I honestly don't know as it's a big decision to make. However what I do know is that I would not be where I am without the things I learnt studying at university."

His business, Bubblegum Stuff, sells novelty goods, some of which were featured on The Apprentice, including the popular heart ice cream scoop and the Trophy Baby beaker.

His advice to someone wanting

to start their own business is to pick something they enjoy.

Courtney said: "Your business will need to be related to something you enjoy doing if it's to work. You will need to work hard, be passionate and never give up when the going gets tough. You will only succeed if you enjoy what you do."

Whilst real life apprenticeships may not mirror The Apprentice on TV, the key ingredients to success appear the same.

Courtney identifies these as "drive, ambition and attention to detail."



**PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE:** Catering students at Chelmsford College

Andy Sparks, principal of Chelmsford College, said: "Attitude is everything when it comes to learning. If you have the drive, the ambition and the right attitude our tutors can help you learn what you need, to achieve your goals."

Chelmsford College has about 3,500 students and their focus is on "learning a living."

"Apprenticeships offer the best of both worlds," said Andy.

"You have the support of college, great tutors, help where you need it, you gain real world experience and you earn money as you learn."

Sarah Hamilton, director of business services and responsible for apprenticeship recruitment at the college, said: "There are all sorts of options in apprenticeships, it's not just 'trades' any more."

"You could choose a career in business and retail, management, accountancy, journalism, fashion or IT."

"You really do get the benefit of having a real job whilst still learning."

Phoebe Rooke, HR apprentice at Chelmsford College, said: "You're treated like an adult, which feels like a big difference after school. Suddenly you're in



**BEST OF BOTH WORLDS:** Principal Andy Sparks

a workplace, on a career path, earning money whilst learning something new – and you get a real feeling of independence – that you can do this."

An apprenticeship can open up a whole career pathway, including progressing on to further study, like Jordan Knight who has undertaken a Level 3 Specialist Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools apprenticeship with Chelmsford College and has now applied for a teaching degree with Canterbury Christchurch University.

Jordan said: "The best part of my apprenticeship is the chance

to learn from professionals in the sector I'm working in, it has made such an impact to the learning process.

"It has given me a chance to practice what I learn in the classroom."

Courtney says he'd definitely employ an apprentice in his business.

### Ambition

He said: "My ideal candidate would have a passion for learning and the ambition to be the best that they can be."

"For me an apprenticeship is about giving the opportunity for someone to unlock their full potential."

At the beginning of the BBC show Courtney is on record for saying "I'm not one to sit back. I plan to assert my authority in this process."

After this week's talk Chelmsford College students and apprentices should certainly feel inspired to apply Courtney's entrepreneurial approach, focus and confidence to their own career ambitions.

■ To find out more about apprenticeships, please call 01245 293010.



**LEARNING FROM PROFESSIONALS:** Student Jordan Knight



**HARD AT WORK:** Catering student Jack Brewster making biscuits