

Glass half full with...

Tom Sinel



It's easy to talk down the Island in this time of economic gloom, and take the proverbial 'glass half empty' view – but there are many who look on life positively, such as 17-year-old Victoria College student Tom Sinel who has just won the Managing Director of the Year Award with Young Enterprise Jersey.

Young Enterprise is a national charity which aims to inspire and educate young people to understand and value the role of business. This year four teams of 16/17 year olds were formed from schools around the Island. The teams worked with a business adviser from an established company to come up with their own idea for a product or service.

Tom didn't just win the Managing Director of the Year Award, he was also named the Highest Achiever in his team, making the greatest contribution as nominated by the advisers – and to top it all his team Venture won Best Company of the Year. Beating Guernsey, they went forward to represent the Channel Islands in the South-East regional competition.

So why did 30 youngsters meet up weekly and form a business of their own – why not just stay at home and perfect their Xbox skills? One of the motivating factors was that, for the first time in Young Enterprise Jersey's history, Venture decided to donate all their profits to a charity, the Antoine Trust.

'This was an incentive for us,' said Tom, 'but for young people in general you always have to look for new things to make your CV stand out, and Young Enterprise helps tremendously with that. The experience also offered additional contacts within the local business environment. I was offered a

job at the presentation evening, so the opportunities are amazing.'

Finding new opportunities is critical in today's work environment. School leavers and graduates are coming out and finding themselves up against those with experience in a tight jobs market.

'You need a positive attitude towards your prospects', said Tom.

'Although jobs are limited they are still there and if you are better than everyone else you will get the job. It is all about standing out and adding to your CV and making sure you get qualifications to a high standard.'

On a small island, those opportunities can be even more limited, but Tom is still upbeat.

He said: 'Personally I am looking forward to the experience of going away to university and experiencing life, but obviously there are jobs available on the Island. I am interested in the finance industry and there is an abundance of companies interested in taking on students and post graduates who want to settle in the island and work for them, and they want to help develop them because there is a lot of emphasis on local community.'

There is sometimes criticism of Jersey's education system for not providing young people with the skills they need for today's world, but Tom has nothing but praise for his experience.

He said: 'I have been to a fantastic school that provides numerous opportunities to develop skills and understanding of what life can be like after school. We have assemblies and lessons on how to make ourselves appealing to universities and companies in the future, and this helps push us forward into successful lives.'

'I appreciate that some people struggle at school, but academic qualifications are important to me and that's why I try to push myself. Applying for jobs is an incentive to get out of bed in the morning – you can't just sit around all day and watch TV, it's ok for a week, but you would soon get bored out of your brains.'

So in another ten or twenty years could we see Tom Sinel with 'Managing Director' by his name for real?

'I don't know what kind of a boss the others thought I was, I was quite demanding of commitment and expected high standards of whatever tasks we set,' he said.

'I wouldn't accept that some people hadn't done work or contributed as much as others, but at the same time I understood that not everyone was completely able to commit and you just need to move them forward and encourage them more.'

Wise words from a young man who could well turn out to be a leading Jersey businessman of the future.