Are You the Next Great Food and Drink Brand? Accelerator Competition Will See Six Businesses Share Investment Pot of £360,000

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Are you an ambitious, young food and drink business looking to make it big - really big? In a UK industry first, fledgling food and drink entrepreneurs are being offered the chance to enter a competition to win a coveted place on a groundbreaking business breakthrough programme. Just six will be chosen to be part of the next Grocery Accelerator programme - each securing £60k investment and the chance to turn their emerging businesses into multi million pound success stories.

Each business will have to go through a rigorous selection process before they battle it out in a final pitch at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2015 this September. As well as crucial investment, the winning businesses will also be part of a unique and comprehensive six month support programme. This combines all the core components that determine how to make it big in the food and drink market. By providing practical experience, commercial insight, inspirational meetings with successful business people and one-to-one mentoring, the winners can accelerate their business.

What's the Accelerator?

This is a business growth programme led by a team with a proven track record in building substantial, and profitable, grocery and speciality brands in UK food and drink market. They are:

Paddy Willis - co founder of Plum Baby, the world's first premium baby food in the ambient sector. Paddy is passionate about mentoring entrepreneurs. After selling Plum Baby - one of the UK's fastest-growing new food businesses - he has been involved in a range of start-ups. He also runs the Bathtub 2 Boardroom incubator scheme for early stage start-ups, in London.

Simon Lacey - founder of Idea to Shelf Ltd, a consultancy specialising in helping SME food and drinks businesses with great ideas, to grow and prosper. Simon has more than 18 years experience in FMCG. He has an outstanding track record of bringing brands to market, from Kettle Chips, UB, Lily's Kitchen, Colgate and Plum Baby. His expertise includes strategic planning, building winning business plans and mentoring.

Rob Ward - Creator of one of the largest fruit businesses in the UK, supplying the multiples M&S, Tesco, Asda and Waitrose. Following its success, he created and built two farm retail businesses that both became nationally regarded as leading examples of food retailing. He is renowned for his practical and comprehensive understanding of the food market, and how to create and grow businesses in this sector.

There are also four associate partners - **Andrew King**, a classically trained FMCG specialist who is also a non executive director at Moma Foods; Entrepreneur **John Stapleton**, co-founder of New Covent Garden Soup Company Ltd and Little Dish; Entrepreneur **Emma Macdonald**, founder of The Bay Tree Food Co Ltd, and **Simon Taylor**, whose 15-year career at Heinz included a period as Chief Financial Officer Asia.

Pitch Perfect

Twelve shortlisted businesses will take part in a Dragons Den-style pitch at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2015 at Olympia National, London, on September 6th and 7th. The winners will be revealed on September 8th.

No brakes - just accelerate

The development programme starts with an intensive two-day boot camp in London featuring a series of seminars and workshops. They aim to give the winners the tools and skills needed to successfully grow a brand. There will also be the chance to hear from experienced industry insiders and entrepreneurs. Each will be assigned a personal mentor to provide ongoing support, and there will also be an international study tour.

We've done it!

Last year's winners are already part way through their programme. They are:

The Rutland Charcuterie Company Ltd - The creators of a range of premium quality British Charcuterie products from Rutland in the heart of England. Nick Brake, marketing director, said: *"Being a Grocery Accelerator winner takes it all to another level – it will undoubtedly be the most important factor in the success of our business."*

t plus drinks Ltd -A new vitamin-enriched tea company which has developed a range of functional, super green teas mixed with all natural vitamins, natural fruits and powerful herbs. James Dawson, partner, said: *"Grocery Accelerator has been instrumental in helping us understand the FMCG market and enable us to accelerate our growth in a way we simply couldn't have done alone."*

Arctic Power Berries - 100 per cent pure and natural berry powders created from wild grown, handpicked berries from Finland -with nothing added! Simply sprinkle on porridge, cereal or smoothies. Anna Ojutkangas, co founder, said: *"The people behind Grocery Accelerator are enthusiastic professionals who have your back throughout every step of the entrepreneurial journey."*

Genius Drinks Ltd - Creators of a new type of soft drink - Botonique. Hilary Marsh created the 'Prelixir' nutrient formula in Botonique over many years enabling her to enjoy great nights out and great mornings! Hilary said: "*It's wonderful suddenly having a team of experienced, intelligent, passionate people who are totally on your side."*

Davina Steel - MannaVida Ltd - A home baking kit to transform the home baking category. This breakthrough product enables simple, fast and delicious bread making. All gluten free. Davina Steel, co-founder, said: *"From workshops to mentoring... even holding our hands in crucial meetings, Grocery Accelerator has already taught us more than we could have imagined."*

Applications for The Grocery Accelerator are now open and they close on August 16th. Simply follow the link[**http://groceryaccelerator.co.uk/apply/**](http://groceryaccelerator.co.uk/apply/)

Paddy Willis, for The Grocery Accelerator, said: *"This is an incredible opportunity for ambitious and passionate food and drink businesses looking to scale up to the next level. The Grocery Accelerator is designed to support promising young brands with high-growth potential. Funding and industry know-how are often a key barrier to entrepreneurial success - but we will give them all the tools they need to break through."*

ENDS

Editor's Notes

The co founders are available for interview. Interview opportunities can also be arranged with the current programme participants

Each of the six qualifying businesses win a slice of the £360,000 investment pot - in exchange for 15 per cent of their business

Commercial partners include Booths and ocado.com. For more information visit **https://youtu.be/ac3QmT1ahpE**

Speciality & Fine Food Fair on 6th, 7th and 8th September is the UK's leading B2B showcase of fine food and drink. Join their Twitter parties with The Grocery Accelerator, and gain invaluable advice, on July 14th and July 28th **@Speciality_Food #SFFF15** and **#AskGroceryAccel**

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