

START-UP YEAR IN INDUSTRY PLACEMENT

Here we meet three of the students who took part in the trial year to hear how they found it.



Chris Hurley is a Business and Management student based at Medway. He launched Notify, a communal online learning app that helps students trade hints, tips and revision notes, through his start-up software development company Craftwork Software LTD.

Chris said: “The independence that you have on the programme is very good. It makes you push yourself. You have to do all the work – but everything that you get out of it is for you as well.

“I’m coming out of the placement year with a lot of new skills. Unless you have a team around you, then it’s just you doing it all - from the finances to the marketing.

“You learn about things that you had never thought about. For example, I have been getting into UX (user experience) and UI (user design interface) which is something that I knew nothing about before.

“One of the hardest things is staying positive and keeping energy about your business. It’s hard when people start pushing back against your idea – you have to keep your motivation. I found that having people around me who I can talk to about my business was really important – having that network to turn back to for support.

“I have learned lots of things about myself. One is that I focus on attention to detail and I’m a perfectionist. I had the designs for the second update and it took me two months to complete because I wanted it to be perfect!”

Chris is now working on a second app and sees his career after graduation in app design.



Rayyan Petkar, is the founder of YoungFundr and a Business and Management student. YoungFundr is a crowd-funding website for young entrepreneurs.

He said: “This placement year has been one of the best years of my life. It has made me realise that start-ups are what I love, and that’s what I’m going to do.

“My approach to things has totally changed. I am now much more structured and scientific about how I tackle things.

“It’s really hard when things don’t work out like you thought they would. You focus so much on how it will be a success, and when the business doesn’t work, that’s really hard. I had a hypothesis which was good, but in practice it didn’t work.

“After graduation, I’m going to try to make YoungFundr work, but if it doesn’t, I’ll set up another start-up.

“I’m networking all the time to meet people who I could work with. It’s all about having those contacts, finding new connections – finding people with the same core values.”



Emmanuel Enemokwu, founder of Jehu-cal street fashion brand, is an accounting and management student. He has been working on his business since he was at secondary school. In his placement year he has released five collections and worked with partners including Nike and featured in iD magazine.

Emmanuel said: “The best thing has been putting everything that I’ve learned from Year 9 until second year of uni into real life. I’ve been able to think about what I learned in different seminars – and then implement it.

“I have started to use 50% recycled raw materials in my tracksuit bottoms – that came from a CSR module. I considered the issues and thought ‘what could Jehu-cal do’ and decided that using the recycled raw materials was important – I’m planning to increase that amount as well.

“I have also brought production back to the UK. Everything I make is now either produced in London or the Midlands. I did that because I just didn’t know enough about the production process when it was overseas – I didn’t know if it was ethical.

“One of the biggest challenges is staying motivated. I had taken a break from my company, I hadn’t put out any collections and needed to get my brand back on track. When sales went down, so did my motivation. I didn’t know what to do. But doing an internship at Dune London as part of the placement was the thing that changed everything.

“I worked in all the departments from design, buying, merchandising and PR – I realised how much more planning I needed to do for my business.

“I have learned a lot about myself – my motivation and mental strengths, time management.

“It’s really helped me to decide on my future career. I have realised that I love accounting – I can spend all day on Excel – but I also love fashion.

“When I graduate I’m going to run Jehu-cal full time and try to scale it up, but if it doesn’t work out, I’ll do accounting. I will complete all my accountancy exams when I graduate.”

Self Employed Placements run for the same period as traditional Year in Industry placements and are assessed in the same way.

Students on the Selfies are supported by the ASPIRE team, particularly the entrepreneur in residence, Adam Smith, who is on hand to guide and advise throughout the 12 month placement.

There are regular one-to-ones as well as monthly meetings which bring the Selfies students together to discuss the challenges of running their own start-ups.

There is an induction which covers business essentials such as diary management, customer relationships, cash flow and the legal side of being in business.

An individual development plan and programme for the year is created to help guide the students in developing their business.

*To find out more about the Self Employed Placement programme and the criteria for joining either email ASPIRE@kent.ac.uk or Kimberley Munden K.E.S.Munden@kent.ac.uk