

## TALL OAKS

*From Small Acorns Grow*

*“...I had to start something up for myself because I thought that would be the only way to get the kind of career I wanted...”*

After my 'A' levels I wanted to work rather than go to university. My first job was book keeping. After that I ended up going from one job to another and several jobs later I started to wonder about progression and realised that without any qualifications I had to start something up for myself because I thought that would be the only way to get the kind of career I wanted.

I signed myself up to a short business planning course without a clear idea of what I wanted to do but I was sure it was going to revolve around the fashion industry.

On travelling to the course on the first morning I was looking through a magazine and found a beautiful picture of an acorn.

The phrase my mum always used 'tall oaks from small acorns grow' immediately sprang to mind.

Having previously worked for a girl who was pregnant I thought about how great that would be on a T-Shirt for pregnant women, with an acorn on the belly.

I was in the right place at the right time to start researching my idea. I started looking at the market and for appropriate help to plan the business.

I needed start up capital and spoke to The Prince's Trust. On the back of my business plan they gave me a loan to start the business. I used it to build a website and exhibited at a trade fair to launch the brand and from that got a couple of resellers on board. So that's really how it all began, although Babu is the nickname my dad gave me when I was a baby and the butterfly logo came from a pin badge I had when I was very young... so perhaps it all started way before that!

Whilst I was planning the business, I was also holding down three part time jobs to support myself but found that once I was up and running the more time I put into the business the more I was able to grow it and so very quickly decided to concentrate solely on Babu.

The hardest part of starting a business was the fear of failure but for me it would have been worse not to have tried it at all. There have been many times when I've thought, 'had I known then what I know now, I wouldn't have done this' but really I think it's a great thing that we don't always know what's ahead as it might stop us from attempting the things that we want to do! Now I couldn't be happier.

It can be lonely working on your own, and pretty stressful at times, but I have found myself relying on family and friends to discuss ideas and talk through problems. On the plus side being my own boss and the flexibility it allows is great... and the feeling of being so much in charge of my own future is fantastic.

The future is looking bright as I have recently joined forces with an Italian fashion group which manufactures and distributes several lines of children wear, going hand in hand of course with Babu.

I'm also involved with Young Enterprise, encouraging young people to start thinking about business and the world beyond the classroom. I got hooked by acting as a volunteer advisor for a local school running the company programme, which gives young people the opportunity to set up and run their own business whilst they are still in school. The outcomes are just mind blowing and their motto 'learning by doing' is just spot on.

Finally, if you are thinking of starting up a business, talk to as many people as possible and weigh up all the pros and cons. Approach support agencies, there is a lot of information out there to help you put your idea into action... 'Tall oaks from small acorns grow...'



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