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**N E W S R E L E A S E**

**Pitch perfect students pronounced Sales Challenge winners**

Sixth formers from Highcrest Academy in High Wycombe triumphed after **a head to head final with schools from across the county in the 2019 Big Bucks Sales Challenge held at Pinewood Studios (Wednesday 27 March) and organised by** [Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership’s](http://www.buckstvlep.co.uk/) [Skills Hub](https://oppsinbucks.org/).

The seven participating schools were teamed up with entrepreneurial businesses to develop essential employability skills. The schools were: Amersham School, Buckinghamshire College Group, Highcrest Academy, John Colet, Sir William Ramsay School, The Buckingham School and competition runners-up, The Misbourne.

Align JV, Serious Brands, ANT Telecom, June Medical, Career Workshops and Recruitment, Verizon and Thomas International joined forces to mentor the teams and provide them with real life experience of the workplace.

Marina Jackson, Careers Hub Lead for Buckinghamshire Skills Hub, said: “It’s the third year we have run the Big Bucks Challenge and it’s going from strength to strength. Everyone gets something out of it: students get practical experience of skills vital for all jobs, and employers get the opportunity to develop their talent pipeline.”

In the first round of the Challenge, each school ran a competition within the year group, with teams of up to six students presenting a sales pitch to sell their school to a prospective student. The winning team chosen then went to visit their supporting business and spend the day seeing for themselves what happens behind the scenes in the real world of work. In the final, it was the students’ job to now sell their supporting business to prospective young recruits as a great place to work. **more…**

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Rob Evans, Careers Leader at Highcrest Academy, explained the value of the Sales Challenge: “Activities like this make a real difference for our students and the impact can be transformational. Seeing a group of students forming a supportive team and developing their skills is a very rewarding experience. I’m very proud of our students: they worked really hard and delivered an excellent presentation. Thanks to the Bucks Skills Hub for organising it and to ANT Telecom for their excellent support.”

# Paul Owen, MD of Sales Talent recruitment firm and author of the best-selling book ‘Secret Skill, Hidden Career’, was keynote speaker and one of the judges: “There is no job in the world that doesn’t need sales. Sales is all about the ability to deal with people and no robot will ever replace human interaction. I was hugely impressed with the talent I witnessed at the Big Bucks Challenge and hope the students seriously think about considering sales as a career.”

# Klaus Allion, Managing Director at ANT Telecommunications Ltd, echoed: “We’ll now use Highcrest’s presentation to attract future talent to our workplace. It’s allowed us to see our business through young people’s eyes and has been so rewarding to see the team evolve throughout the challenge.”

If you’re a business or school in Bucks and would like to get involved in next year’s Big Bucks Sales Challenge, email Marina Jackson at Bucks Skills Hub on [Marina.Jackson@btvlep.co.uk](mailto:Marina.Jackson@btvlep.co.uk)

**Ends**

**Photo attached:**



*Highcrest Academy: winners of the 2019 Big Bucks Sales Challenge*

**Note to editors**

The aim of BTVLEP’s[Skills Hub](https://oppsinbucks.org/) – one of the first LEPs to develop such a hub – is to make a difference to young people’s employability while addressing the needs of employers. In Bucks, the level of employer engagement activity in schools can vary from school to school, and the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub is working to ensure all schools have access to effective and impactful employer interactions.

In order to help young people gain the valuable, constructive, rewarding work experience required, the Bucks Skills Hub launched WANNABE ([www.wannabebucks.org](http://www.wannabebucks.org)) where employers can post opportunities for young people to apply for. The site provides extensive information, guidance, a careerometer tool to explore earning potential and career prospects, as well as work experience, apprenticeship and part/full time job vacancies. Young people can look for work experience opportunities which are in line with their ambitions, rather than perhaps spending time at their parents’ place of work or finding placements via their parents’ network. There is a broad range of opportunities for young people to apply for.

The [Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership](http://buckstvlep.co.uk/) (BTVLEP) is a business-led ‘partnership of equals’ between local government and the private sector, building the conditions for sustainable economic growth in the County. Formed in January 2012, the partnership balances a uniquely strong collective business voice with a cohesive elected local leadership. Coming together to engineer the conditions needed to drive forward business prosperity in the county and beyond, BTVLEP recognises that an important part of this is to support education and skills providers and employers to ensure our young people have the right skills to meet the needs of the economy, including the growth sectors such as life-sciences, space, creative industries and advanced engineering.

[Buckinghamshire Business First](http://www.bbf.uk.com/) (BBF), is the Growth Hub for Buckinghamshire and is backed by Buckinghamshire based entrepreneurs, thousands of SMEs and Local Authorities.  BBF provides the link between public policy and the business community in Buckinghamshire and works with partners to create a dynamic business environment in the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain.

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