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No. 008.18 3 May 2018

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

**Sales whizz kids take on ‘big Bucks’ challenge**

**Eight local schools across Buckinghamshire have gone head-to-head in the county’s second Sales Apprentice Challenge, organised by** [Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership’s](http://www.buckstvlep.co.uk/) [Skills Hub](https://oppsinbucks.org/) to help students gain essential sales experience in a fun and practical way.

Building from last year’s initial pilot, eight schools this year were teamed up with entrepreneurial local businesses to compete against each other for the CV-enhancing challenge – Highcrest Academy, John Colet School, Buckinghamshire College Group (Amersham campus), The Misbourne School, Buckinghamshire College Group (Aylesbury campus), The Buckingham School, Sir William Ramsay School and Buckinghamshire University Technical College.

Serious Brands, Webmart, ANT Telecom, Shirley Parsons Associates, Zenopa, The Garnett Foundation, Thomas International and Lucy Electric joined forces to deliver the exciting opportunity for year 12s, developing the core sales skills everyone needs professionally and in life, and to gain valuable real experience.

Marina Jackson, Under 19 Skills Manager, Buckinghamshire Skills Hub, said: “The challenge gives students the opportunity to discover traits common to all sales professionals, exploring and developing confidence, knowledge, presentation, communication, research, resilience and persistence.”

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Teams of year 12s competed in schools in the first round. The winning team from each school then spent a day with their employer mentor in the workplace training for the final, which took place on 25th April at Pinewood Studios.

The final was judged by Ailie Smith, CEO of Creative Media Skills, Athol Hendry of the Careers and Enterprise Company, and Marina Jackson the Under 19 Skills Manager at the Bucks Skills Hub. Competition was tight, but Sir William Ramsay School mentored by Thomas International were the overall winners.

"It was so rewarding to be involved in this inspiring event for local young people. As a business owner, I feel it is crucial to take responsibility for guiding the next generation, using opportunities such as this event to ensure a capable and confident future workforce", said Ailie Smith.

Athol Hendry, Director Marketing & Communications, Careers and Enterprise Company, said: “The quality of the entries in this year’s competition was particularly high and the judges really enjoyed the great presentations from all the school teams taking part. The Buckinghamshire Sales Challenge is a brilliant opportunity for young people to begin to develop skills that will be of real benefit to them in the future world of work.”

The winning team received the prize of an exclusive talk from Paralympic gold medallist and Guinness World Record holder, Naomi Riches MBE for their school, sponsored by Thomas International. Naomi will be sharing her inspiring story of resilience and overcoming adversity in a 30 minute talk to Sir William Ramsay Schools’ Sixth Form.

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Reuben Conibear, Marketing Executive, Thomas International, said: “Thomas International are passionate about empowering young people to achieve their true potential. We are so pleased to be supporting the Sales Apprentice Programme as it gives us the opportunity to impart real life skills and experience that the students will use in the future, but do not necessarily get the chance to learn until they’re in the workplace. We look forward to our continued partnership with Bucks Skills Hub, bringing these important programmes to life.”

Robert Evans, Highcrest Academy, said: “This challenge provides a rich learning opportunity for our students and helps them develop essential skills which will help them succeed in the world of work.

“I know that this sort of experience provides essential skills including team working, problem solving, resilience and written and oral communication, I know employers and higher education providers value these highly.”

If you’re a business or school in Bucks and would like to get involved in next year’s ‘Big Bucks’ Apprentice Sales Challenge, contact Marina Jackson at Bucks Skills Hub via email [Marina.Jackson@btvlep.co.uk](mailto:Marina.Jackson@btvlep.co.uk) or call 07766 654335.

**Ends**

**Photo caption:** *Winners from Sir William Ramsay School who took part the 2018 Sales Apprentice 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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