

Business students face the ‘Dragons’

A team of four promising business students from Merthyr Tydfil College have won a unique competition by pitching their business and marketing ideas to promote two local attractions.

As part of the Global Enterprise Week 2009, The Innovators beat stiff competition from other teams with their creative approach to market Parc Taf Bargoed Lakeside Activity Centre and the Welsh International Climbing Centre.

Loosely based on the BBC Dragon’s Den concept, where budding entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to five potential Dragon investors, the challenge for the college students was to present their marketing ideas and plans to a panel of South Wales business leaders.

The Innovators, David Cardoso, Jamie Dinham, Josh Jones and James Shilton impressed the panel by recommending the activity centres should be more proactive in their promotional activities by targeting potential visitors using internet marketing tools.

The event, sponsored by Cardiff-based public relations and marketing agency, Equinox and the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP), was held at the Orbit Business Centre, Merthyr Tydfil and provided the youngsters with the opportunity to gain new skills, self-confidence and improving their job prospects.

Each team was tasked to research and develop a marketing and media campaign to raise the awareness and promote the activity centres by delivering a short presentation to an audience of invited guests.

Event organiser and HOVIP Manager, Phil Burkhard said: “The event supports the work we are doing to promote the location and related facilities as well as engage the local community. This is the first time we’ve organised such an event, which was hosted by the Merthyr Tydfil Enterprise Group, and it was great to see that the students have also benefited.”

The panel of ‘Dragons’ included Steve Evans, managing director of Rhymney Brewery, Christine Bissex, Head of Enterprise at Merthyr College, Helen Thomas, Trustee of the Taf Bargoed Centre and Eryl Jones, managing director of Equinox.

Mr Jones said: “We were impressed by the efforts of every team who took part but the Innovators edged it by adopting a well-researched Internet approach to their campaign which would have reached new potential visitors to the centres both locally and from outside the Valleys. Their approach was certainly innovative!”

Local dignitaries were also impressed by the students. Jeff Edwards, Leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council said: “This competition gave the students the opportunity to tackle real life challenges faced by local businesses and offered practical and often innovative solutions to these businesses. As Leader of the Council I was impressed with the young people who participated and would encourage other students to become actively involved in future years.”

John O’Shea, Dean of Merthyr Tydfil College and FE Collaboration added his praise. He said: “We are enormously proud of the way that the students attacked real life problems and came up with practical and imaginative solutions based on sound business principles. The Dragons concept provides an excellent opportunity for College learners to work with enterprises in the community and develop their entrepreneurial skills. The Trustees and Parc Taf Bargoed now have a wealth of ideas to work with, thanks to Merthyr Tydfil College learners’.

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