

Case Study

The Four Seasons Art Gallery at Norton College



Norton College had identified opportunities for students with learning difficulties to engage in social enterprise initiatives in the city, once they leave college. With a strong enterprise culture existing throughout the college, Norton drew up a rationale for teaching enterprise to students with learning difficulties to prepare them for such progression pathways. The result is a student-run art gallery, a winning entry in the BiG Challenge and a rewarding and real experience for all involved.



Students carried out market research throughout the college. This interaction with peers helped students to develop valuable interpersonal and communication skills.

Norton College's Practical Life Skills course helps students with learning difficulties to develop the skills which will enable them to lead an ordinary and fulfilling life. Students can choose from a variety of options to study, one of which is Enterprise. To maximise the learning opportunities available to students of this module, the college handed them management of its art gallery.

Over the course of the academic year, three different groups of students worked on the re-opening of the gallery, launching it as a brand new venture with a new name, new logo and new stock. The students also entered the BiG Challenge, working with Norton's Enterprise Development Manager, Sally Johnson, to develop a profitable business model.

The weekly lessons provided students with clear objectives, activities and learning outcomes surrounding various enterprising activities. Due to the meticulous planning of Course Lecturer Emma Blackburn, every activity that the students undertook was designed to develop skills that could be applied to business and enterprise, and to everyday life.



Students were introduced to the project with a session on company names and logos in which they carried out market research throughout the college. This interaction with peers helped students to develop valuable interpersonal and communication skills. Once the new name of 'The Four Seasons Art Gallery' had been decided on, the students recruited the expertise of the college's publicity team who helped to create the new logo.

Case Study

The Four Seasons Art Gallery at Norton College



Each student was interviewed for their position in the company and this was followed by group evaluations of each individual interview. This was an opportunity for the students to learn about the different roles and responsibilities that make up a business. The interview process helped students to develop their communication and presentation skills and also enabled them to identify each other's strengths and offer feedback to their peers.

One of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of the project was to bid for investment in a 'Dragon's Den' style presentation to the college's enterprise team. Following a successful pitch, the students were loaned £100 to buy materials to make cards and gifts which they then sold in the gallery. This marked a significant point in the students' development. Emma explains:

"When it came to the pitch the students practised some key social skills such as making eye contact with the 'Dragons', shaking hands and projecting their voices so they could be heard clearly. This was a really important achievement."

The project culminated in the opening of the gallery which was organised by the students and demanded the countless skills that contribute to event management. For Emma, seeing the students demonstrate a newfound level of confidence and a variety of different skills indicates the value of the project. She comments:

"This enterprise experience has been fantastic for the students. They have gained a real sense of ownership as they are involved in all parts of the decision making process. It's been fantastic to witness the sense of pride that these students have felt in their hard work paying off."

For more information contact David Kay on:
david.kay@sero.co.uk



The project culminated in the opening of the gallery which was organised by the students and demanded the countless skills that contribute to event management.



The Four Seasons Art Gallery was a winning entry in the BiG Challenge 2010.

Project Part-Financed
by the European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

