

**2005: JAMES MURRAY WELLS**

Winning put us on the map. The recognition we got gave everyone who worked here a tremendous boost

**2006: CALYPSO ROSE**

The accolade made people take me — a girl with a handbag company — seriously

**2009: PRIYA LAKHANI**

Winning the award gave me so much confidence — it was invaluable

# N'S GOT TALENT



**CLAIRE WATT-SMITH** is mixing ethical business with fashion to make her mark. She set up her own handbag and accessories business BoBelle just under two years ago.

The handbags are, unusually, made out of eel skin, which is a by-product of the Asian food industry. Many Asian countries eat eels, but discard the skins, which are softer, yet stronger, than traditional leather. Claire, 26, worked for an accessory firm before deciding to go it alone.

She says: 'It has been a fairly turbulent ride during the past year, but the goods have still been selling well. People are actually becoming more ethical

## Eel skin bags? What a jelly good idea...

in the way they shop, especially at the luxury end.'

To cope with the economic downturn, Claire (above) has launched smaller versions of her popular handbags which are about half the price. She now offers clutchbags at £79 alongside her £163 handbags. Claire went to Headington School in Oxford before studying for a business management and

French degree at Royal Holloway University in Surrey.

Her products sell not only on her website — [www.bobelle.co.uk](http://www.bobelle.co.uk) — but also in 60 boutiques. Claire, who lives in West London, is now focusing on London Fashion Week and has signed a deal with department store Fenwick. She is halfway through her financial year and sales are already at £35,000 — double the amount for the same time last year.

Her advice to other young entrepreneurs is: 'Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for help. My boyfriend does my stock control, a photographer friend took all the pictures for the website, and I even ask people in the street for advice on colours.'

Pictures: MARK LARGE / JENNY GOODALL / ROLAND HOSKINS

## You can help Britain power a 21st century business boom



By **Lord Mandelson**

**BUSINESS SECRETARY**

THERE is no one blueprint for becoming a successful entrepreneur in the 21st century. Whatever your age or background, if you have a good idea and are willing to work hard to make it happen, it can.

Now in their sixth year, the Daily Mail's Enterprising Young Brits Awards — run by Enterprise UK and supported by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Institute of Directors — recognises the very best of young British talent succeeding through enterprise.

Not yet in their 30s, these young people are running their own businesses. Together, they are employing hundreds of people, generating millions of pounds and benefiting their local communities.

Winners of last year's competition came from sectors across our economy, and regions throughout Britain.

They include Priya Lakhani, the 2009 Business winner, whose company Masala Masala sells authentic Indian cooking sauces to 30 countries, and Dean Rhodes-Brandon, the 2009 People's Choice Award winner, who runs Your Local Cinema — an innovative not-for-profit website and information service.

Despite the tough economic conditions, British entrepreneurs such as these are making the most of the opportunities that are out there. They have the kind of drive and innovation that will power Britain's growth in the months and years ahead.

Their ambitions show no limits and can help us tackle some of the biggest global challenges we face, such as restoring growth and tackling climate change.

We want British entrepreneurs equipped to benefit from the latest digital technologies, global trends and new markets such as low carbon.

By acting now, Britain can be at the forefront of this 21st-century industrial revolution and win its share of the

growing £3 trillion global high-tech industry and others.

That's why competitions such as the Enterprising Young Brit Awards are so important to help inspire other budding British entrepreneurs make their mark.

It's why we're working hard with our schools, colleges and universities to ensure more people have the skills and support they need to turn their vision into a successful business.

That includes projects like the National Enterprise Academies, headed by Dragons' Den entrepreneur Peter Jones, which provide youngsters with the opportunity to set up and run their own business projects; the Premier League Enterprise Academies; and the Flying Start events aimed at students and graduate entrepreneurs.

Britain is already one of the best places in the world to do business. Sustaining this successful enterprise culture is essential to our prosperity in the decades to come.

The Government is committed to providing access to the business advice, support and skills that will help British companies design and make the commercially successful goods of the future.

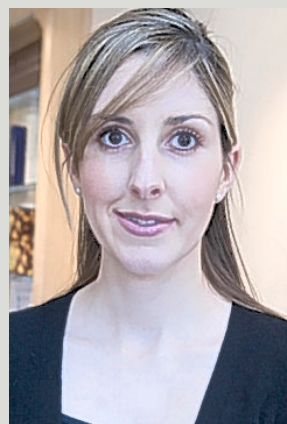
An important part of our work is ensuring our young entrepreneurs get the recognition and encouragement they deserve. The Enterprising Young Brits Awards gives them that chance, so if you have a good enterprise story to tell, please get involved.

■ **LORD MANDELSON** is Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

## Tailor made for success

BUSINESS is booming for two entrepreneurs who set up an online tailored suit service three years ago. Warren Bennett and David Hathiramani launched a *Suit That Fits.com* to undercut expensive bespoke suits on the High Street. The idea came from Warren, who bought two tailored suits in Nepal on his gap year in 2006. They started working with tailors in Nepal, selling suits in Hampstead Market, London. The pair, both 28, launched a website where customers can design their suit

online. They can also visit a store in London or be fitted by one of 13 tailors nationwide. Prices are about 80 pc cheaper than Savile Row suits, costing an average of £300. They work with 100 tailors in Nepal, who are paid 50 pc more than local rates. Some of the profits have funded a school in the country. Turnover was £250,000 in 2006 as the partners, who met at school in Cambridgeshire, broke even. It shot up to £1.2 million last year, leaving them with a £61,000 profit.



## I'm off to a healthy start

BUSINESS is looking good for Charlotte Nial (left), who set up her beauty salon a year ago. The 25-year-old bought a three-storey building in Ingatestone, Essex, last October, for her health and skincare business. She hopes to add to her success by entering the Daily Mail's Enterprising Young Brits competition. Charlotte worked for a skincare firm for six years before deciding to go it alone. She now employs four therapists and three receptionists. She says: 'A lot

of people said I must be brave to launch a company in the middle of a recession, but I've never had doubts. This business climate is all I've known as an entrepreneur. If a firm can ride out tough times, it should be well placed when things improve.' Charlotte is considering opening another salon in London. Her advice: 'If you have passion and drive, it doesn't matter what age you are when you set up your own company. I wouldn't say it was easy, but it's very rewarding.'