

## Young Enterprise Case Study – Mock'D Mocktails, Cheshire College South and West, Crewe

In March 2024, Young Enterprise welcomed over 130 guests to an event at Chester Business School. Young people from eight schools and Colleges across Cheshire and Warrington competed as part of their Young Enterprise Company Programme experience, showcasing their businesses and competing for various awards. A panel of judges from the Westminster Foundation, Bentley, EMR, Tata Chemicals Europe and Equals Money assessed the teams to determine the award winners.

Company Programme is Young Enterprise's flagship entrepreneurship programme, through which teams of young people set up and run a real-life trading business over the course of an academic year.

Pictured below, the team from Cheshire College South and West, Crewe campus, showcased their business Mock'D Mocktails, which sold alcohol-free mocktail making kits.



The Mock'D team came up with their business idea as a result of recognising the need for under 18s to find a fun, alcohol-free alternative to traditional cocktails which are popular with adults. The alcohol-free drinks market is growing steadily and Mock'd saw the opportunity to capitalise on this market trend.

Speaking about her experience as a finance team member, sales team member and HR director, Hiu Shan Shih (Mary) commented: *“Participating in the Young Enterprise programme provided me with valuable hands-on experience in starting and running a real business. I had the chance to make strategic decisions, manage finances, and solve problems as part of our team’s journey. This practical experience allowed me to develop key skills such as leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving in a real-world context. I gained confidence by engaging in public speaking and navigating the challenges we faced in our business, learning to adapt and overcome setbacks. Moreover, the programme expanded my professional network significantly, as I connected with experienced mentors, advisors, and peers. These connections offered valuable insights into industry trends and customer behaviours, enriching my understanding of the business landscape. Although our results didn’t fully meet our expectations, the experience was immensely beneficial. It provided a safe platform to experiment, make decisions, and learn from mistakes without facing severe consequences, contributing to both my personal growth and professional development.”*

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Mary continued to describe the impact of taking part in the Young Enterprise Company Programme as follows: *“It has helped me figure out what I want to do in the future. I set my target of going to university to study business, and this programme gave me valuable insights into what that path might look like. I learned a lot about how businesses work and the challenges during start-up. I discovered that I enjoy taking on leadership roles and working in teams to achieve common goals.”*

Charlie Lee, the Operations Manager for Mock’D, shared his perspective on how the experience has helped to shape his future career plans: *“It has certainly given me a clearer vision of my future career aspirations. It solidified my interest in pursuing a career in operations management, as I found great satisfaction in streamlining processes and enhancing efficiency. I also realized the importance of adaptability and quick decision-making in a dynamic business environment, which are skills I am keen to further develop.”*

Charlie reflected on the skills and experience that he’d gained from taking part in Company Programme: *“I gained invaluable experience in managing the logistical and operational aspects of a startup. This role allowed me to develop critical skills in organization, problem-solving, and team coordination. I learned how to optimize our production processes, manage inventory effectively, and ensure that our products met the highest quality standards.”*

Mary drew out the key impacts for her personal development as follows: *“The experience of speaking in front of others and handling business challenges boosted my confidence and showed me that I’m capable of adapting and finding solutions. Connecting with mentors and industry professionals also gave me great insights into different career options in the business world. All these experiences have made me realise that I want to pursue a career that involves leading projects, making strategic decisions, and possibly even starting my own business someday.”*

One of the most significant developments to how Company Programme is delivered has been through the introduction of Company Connect in the 2023/24 academic year. This is a brand new, dedicated platform, that provides an engaging and easy-to-navigate online experience, enabling young people to take control of their learning.

With a student-centric design, Company Connect breaks down Company Programme into simple tasks, with points and badges available to celebrate achievements throughout. Given that not all teams will progress to their local or regional stages of the competition, this recognition provides timely and targeted celebrations for the achievement of key milestones.

Mary reflected on her experience with Company Connect as follows: *“The website was a crucial resource for our group throughout the Young Enterprise programme, providing us with the guidance and information we needed to set up our different objectives and move forward, especially when we were uncertain about our next steps. It offered structured advice and practical tools that helped us clarify our goals, plan our business activities, and understand various aspects of running a company, from marketing strategies to financial planning. The step-by-step support from the website ensured that we stayed on track and made informed decisions as we progressed through the stages of developing our business.”*

In concluding her reflections about the team’s Company Programme journey, Mary noted: *“One area where we could have improved was in our initial research on setting up and managing a young enterprise bank account. Early research into this aspect would have better prepared us to handle our finances more effectively, allowing us to manage and raise the necessary capital with greater flexibility and efficiency. Understanding the banking options and processes earlier on would have enabled us to make more strategic financial decisions, potentially enhancing our ability to fund and grow our business. For future projects, I hope our team can prioritise this research from the start,*

*ensuring we have a solid financial foundation and the freedom to manage our resources and capital as needed. This proactive approach will be essential in avoiding delays and ensuring smoother financial operations, ultimately contributing to the success of our business venture.”*

Charlie added his perspective on this as follows: *“Reflecting on the experience, one aspect I wish had gone differently was the initial planning phase. We encountered some unforeseen challenges due to a lack of detailed planning and risk assessment early on. If given the chance to do it again, I would prioritize a more thorough planning process, including contingency plans for potential obstacles.*

Charlie concluded his reflections by commenting: *“Overall, the experience was immensely rewarding and has equipped me with practical skills and insights that I will carry forward in my career.”*

We are grateful to Mary and Charlie for sharing their detailed feedback about their Company Programme experience, in order for us to create this case study about the Mock'D team.

For more information about Young Enterprise's work, please contact:

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