

A secure future for local business



From left: Steve Matthews from Yorkshire Bank, Alan Holloway, Chartered Accountant, Andy Chaffer, from SYIF and Simon Nicholson, owner of Floor TO Ceiling

A FURNITURE design and manufacturing business in Sheffield has secured its long term future after it was bought with assistance of a loan from South Yorkshire Investment Fund (SYIF).

Rationalise Ltd received a £75,000 loan from SYIF, as well as other funding from Yorkshire Bank, so businessman Simon Nicholson could complete a management buy-in of "Floor TO Ceiling". The business, which designs and manufactures fitted bedroom furniture and home offices, is based at Fitzwilliam Street in Sheffield.

Employing 20 members of staff, Floor TO Ceiling is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and, as new owner Simon explains, he saw this as the ideal time to takeover the business.

Said Simon, "Manufacturing has been on the decline in recent years but bespoke furniture is becoming more and more desirable and the demand for it is increasing. I saw this as a great opportunity to get involved with a business that has really strong foundations and a skilled workforce, but also has the potential to move forward

"Without SYIF, I would not have been in the position to make this acquisition happen"

The company was introduced to SYIF by Alan Holloway, Chartered Accountant - a member of the AIMS group of independent accountants.

Andrew Chaffer, Business Director for South Yorkshire Investment Fund, added: "We were delighted to work alongside Yorkshire Bank to provide a full financial package to enable Simon to acquire this excellent business."

For more information on how South Yorkshire Investment Fund can help your business please visit www.syif.com or call 01709 386 377.

The mirror man

By **John Highfield**

HE'S worked with some of the country's top sportsmen - including many of Sheffield's finest - but now Jez Cartwright is using the techniques developed to enhance performance on the pitch to achieve the same effect in the business community.

You could call him a life coach, except he doesn't really feel that captures the true essence of the sort of thing he is trying to achieve with his corporate clients.

"It's basically personal coaching or executive coaching if you like," he explains. "When you're working in the city, you're dealing predominantly with males who have high levels of ego and pride and the thought of them having a fluffy life coach isn't going to happen. But performance coach or life coach...whatever they want to call me they can call me!"

Originally from Guildford, Jez came to Sheffield in 1993 to study for a Masters degree in science and sports coaching at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital.

His first South Yorkshire client was the Great Britain diving team at Ponds Forge and from there he went on to work with both Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday - "I'm probably one of the few people in the city who ended up working for both teams" - as well as the Sheffield Sharks and Steelers.

"My time in Sheffield was a great time and I really loved it," he recalls. "After Wednesday I went to Middlesborough and actually commuted for a while.

"The job during all that time was really about fitness and psychological coaching, not just getting them fit physically," he explains. "It's difficult to motivate players at times because all they



want to do, for instance, is play football. But when a player is coming back from injury and going through a low patch - you know what men are like when they even catch a cold - they need encouragement."

He left the Middlesborough job in 1998, heading south with the intention of getting himself more involved in the business world and also developing his interest in personal development through the mind as well as the body.

The catalyst for real personal change, however, came when his own private gym business failed almost five years ago, a personal disaster maybe but also the kick start he needed to make positive change in his life.

"We all go through life coasting along, accepting the good and the bad," Jez says. "But there comes a point where that's not good enough. Somebody sat down with me when I lost my business and said that the definition of insanity is doing something in the same way and expecting a different result.

"He pointed out that every successful person has gone bust at least once and that really

encouraged me to change, to do something different with my life." The first step towards a new approach to business success, Jez believes, is accepting that failure is your own fault and nobody else's.

"If you're saying it was somebody else's fault that's basically crap!" he insists. "In my case I wasn't passionate about the business, I was passionate about people and I realised that was what I should be developing. The mind is the most important thing of all and that is basically what gave me the impetus to do what I do now and it's why I am so passionate about what I do now." The key to the sort of programme he offers clients, he explains, is self-awareness, understanding the self before learning how to utilise that knowledge to greater business success.

"We are all great at lying to ourselves but I want my clients to look at reality," he says. "I am the mirror that never lies to you. If I see something I will pick it up."

It's the sort of technique which can work at many levels, either for individuals or perhaps a company that

wants to take a member of staff up to the next level of management. The first meeting will begin with the client talking about themselves, telling their own story in their own words. "I need to know that story," Jez says. "If the story includes some quite tough stuff, I need to know about it because that may give me an indication about why things are happening in a certain way, why a person reacts in a certain way.

"Then we point out that that is all in the past and now we are going to move forward. People always say we learn from our mistakes but actually we don't because the brain doesn't want change.

"But by looking at their business, their home life, their past, you build up a picture and when you have that picture we can be more aware - and that's where the magic started to happen!"

There's a taster of that magic in *The Handbook for Exceptional People*, Jez's new book, which started out as a venture in self-publishing but has now been picked up by top publishers Macmillan under their Pan imprint.

"I know how hard it is because I have gone through a similar process myself and I am still seeking out coaching from a couple of people," Jez admits. "There's no point saying everybody needs a coach and then not having one myself. It's like going to the gym and seeing the overweight personal trainer - it's no advert for what you do.

"Most people want to be understood and heard and that is the service I am providing with the addition of saying let's make life the best it can be because we don't want mediocrity any more.

"The hardest thing, I find, is for people to love themselves in a healthy way. We are told it's arrogant but if we don't look after ourselves, why would anybody else want to do it for us?"

Jez uses his skills in a new way



Left: Jez Cartwright

Above: Jez with Owls star Des Walker in his days in Sheffield

■ **The Handbook for Exceptional People** is published by Pan at £7.99. Visit www.Akindred.com for more details

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