

42

under forty two

Jumping in

YEAR AFTER YEAR OF INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE ISN'T
THE ONLY WAY TO GET UP THE LADDER

Welcome to our second selection of the best the Midlands has to offer in rising talent – the 42 Under 42.

The following 14 entrepreneurs and business leaders, each aged 42 or under, join those we highlighted last month as among the most promising of the region. We have selected them partly on track record, but largely because of their potential. They, and the final 14 whom we name next month, are among those people who will dominate Midlands economy and beyond over the coming decade.

So enjoy the following snapshots of success and potential – and be inspired.

OLIVIER DELAUNOY 39

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR,
NITENITE, BIRMINGHAM
TURNOVER N/A

It seems a bizarre concept - a hotel with tiny, windowless rooms. Yet Nitenite's bijou budget bedrooms – complete with leather furniture and 42" plasma screen TVs - are winning positive reviews. Its first 100-room-plus hotel opened in Birmingham this spring and another 35 are planned across the UK in the next five years. Delaunoy, a Belgian with two decades of UK hospitality industry experience, is handling the daily running of a business hoping to radically change budget accommodation. "It's taken three years to design these rooms," he says. "People don't want huge glorious rooms - they want a nice space where they put their heads down at night."

DUNCAN BERRY, 35 & STEVE KELLY, 38

PRINCIPAL DIRECTORS
DBK BACK, BIRMINGHAM
TURNOVER £5.3M

Berry and Kelly were part of a

management buyout team that acquired the property company in a 2005 deal leading to an interesting role reversal. The average age of the buyers was 37 – the other directors 50. But since the deal, only one senior member of staff has left - others enticed to stay with business stakes - while turnover has almost doubled. They say their youth "has contributed to success in recruiting and retaining young, talented staff because they can see the channels are open to progress through the hierarchy". They plan to increase turnover by 15 per cent per year, primarily via new clients and new markets.

JENNY FITZPATRICK, 25

MANAGING DIRECTOR
THE FINE FOODSTORE, STAMFORD
TURNOVER £250,000

If there was ever a young role model for the importance of pre-planning, Fitzpatrick is it. Having studied small enterprises as part of her degree, she saw an opportunity for specialist delicatessens in well-heeled market towns. Realising banks might sniff



HARJEET JOHAL, 27

MANAGING DIRECTOR
UNDERFIVEPOUNDS, NOTTINGHAM
TURNOVER NOT FILED

In his mid-20s Johal took up the fight against "rip-off Britain" by launching shops which "do what they says on the tin". He now has a chain of 16 Underfivepounds stores across England selling gifts, gadgets and homeware at less than a fiver each. Last month Johal took on giants like Primark and Matalan by launching 'value' clothing with an advertisement campaign fronted by Coronation Street star Shobna Gulati. "Women are buying more clothes than ever," he says. "They used to boast about how much they paid for clothes. They're now boasting about bargains they've found. Shoppers can indulge in a spot of retail therapy without the guilt."

at lending money to a 21-year-old with no experience, Fitzpatrick researched her subject thoroughly, including stints at three other delis. Most of her staff are similarly minded graduates, able to genuinely advise customers. She plans more outlets in the future, and is currently negotiating terms for the next lease.

KARL MCKEEVER, 40

FOUNDER AND BRAND DIRECTOR
VISUAL THINKING, BLABY
TURNOVER £1.5M

Of all our 42-ers, McKeever is the one most likely soon to be regularly seen on national TV. He's helped sharpen up the shop floors and ranges of groups like Marks & Spencer, Boots and Adams. Over 13 years he has seen "customer experience" turn from a fringe

marketing sport into retail chief executives' chief concern. McKeever has gone so far as to take 250 senior managers on shopping trips to New York to show how retailing should be done. "Within our industry we're respected as pioneers in this field," he says.

STEVE DIGVA, 33

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
IN PHASE INTERNATIONAL, NOTTINGHAM
TURNOVER £8M

IPI is now the UK's biggest privately owned car audio distributor, but Digva, who built the business with his brothers, says success has been in the face of scepticism from banks, suppliers and manufacturers. "We finally forced their hand when we sourced products from Europe at

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a lower cost than a direct customer – then they were queuing to open my account,” he says. Digva’s next step is to build IPI’s own brand and retail network, opening 50 stores nationwide and winning a 5 per cent share of the huge audio market.

MARK BALL, 39

DIRECTOR

FIERCE EARTH, BIRMINGHAM

TURNOVER £500,000

Proving you can make a living out of left-field art, Ball’s first Fierce Arts festival in the mid-1990s was seen by hundreds of people. Now the annual Birmingham event attracts hundreds of thousands by

**DANI SAVEKER, 33**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SAVEKER, BIRMINGHAM

TURNOVER £4.5M

Saveker admits it was not part of anyone’s plan for her to head her family’s century-old metalwork and joinery company. She has no formal business training. However, this proved to be no bar. Relying instead on instinct, after proving herself at the age of 21 by reviewing the business’s production and design, Saveker rose rapidly through the ranks.

She took the firm through a management buyout and two acquisitions – and has overseen a series of major reorganisations, notably in training. If that wasn’t enough, Saveker is rumoured to be a dab hand with a welding kit.

placing shows in unexpected venues, from street corners to lap dancing clubs. Far from disdaining corporate cash, Ball believes arts and entrepreneurship should work together. “We need less reliance on the public sector,” he says. “If producers are to survive they need to be entrepreneurial. Similarly the corporate sector often wants quirkiness to make its events work.”

SIMONE SCHEHTMAN 33

JOINT FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR,

TEAMWORKS KARTING, BIRMINGHAM

TURNOVER £750,000

Clean, classy, corporate karting. Schehtman and partner Michael Bryant have put a fresh spin on what can be a rather grubby pastime. Schehtman gave up a well paid City job to launch Teamworks, which has wooed clients looking to provide corporate entertainment by replacing oily engines and dodgy burgers with electric motors and sushi at an indoor, all-weather track. Although only launched in 2004 Teamworks plans other sites – a planning application for one is already in – and eventually a listing on the alternative investments market.

IVAN GAYLER, 30

JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR,

LIVING GOLF, BIRMINGHAM

TURNOVER: NOT FILED

Where does a busy executive and ambitious golfer go during his lunch break? The answer could be Gayler’s premises in central Birmingham. Living Golf allows players to try their swing on virtual representations of the world’s great courses. Gayler and his partner quit sponsorship roles at UK Athletics to set up the business, importing simulators from the US. It was only launched last year, but Gayler plans to open another outlet in 2006 and ten nationwide by the end of 2010.

MO IQBAL, 33

MANAGING DIRECTOR

TILE GIANT, STOKE-ON-TRENT

TURNOVER £4M

Junior sales experience at Topps Tiles gave Iqbal the industry grounding he needed to take his

**STUART LAWSON, 38**

GROUP FINANCIAL AND IT DIRECTOR

TRIFAST, BIRMINGHAM

TURNOVER £104M

Lawson has been at the centre of transforming the industrial fastenings manufacturer from a Midlands business into an international player, acquiring 13 businesses worldwide – including major UK rival Serco Ryan last year – and setting up plants in Hungary, Mexico and China. As well as being in charge of Trifast’s cash-box, Lawson’s responsibilities cover the group’s IT, human resources and legal departments.

new venture to national prominence. “I became a director at Topps, but woke one day and realised I needed a break and to do something else,” he says. Just 18 months later, he and his cohorts acquired a two-store business in Stoke. Tile Giant now has 19 outlets, from Hull to Bristol, and plans a similar increase by the end of 2008. “We’ve spent a lot of money on environment - lighting, carpets - to make the stores attractive, particularly to women,” says Iqbal. “We’re not selling tiles, we’re selling a dream.”

SUKHI GHUMAN, 28

MANAGING DIRECTOR

OCTAVIAN SECURITY, NOTTINGHAM

TURNOVER NOT FILED

Former solicitor Ghuman accepted “a package [he] couldn’t refuse” to join Octavian, which met a rising demand for quality security following 9/11. Ghuman says the industry was then “sloppy, a complete mess”, with low stan-

dards, expectations and training. His selling point has been to train staff to NVQ standard and make sure clients’ individual demands are catered for. “There’s a huge difference between a doorman at a corporate HQ and guarding a warehouse full of MP3 players,” he says.

RAJ BANSAL, 25

PROJECT MANAGER

TELERESOURCES, WOLVERHAMPTON

TURNOVER N/A

After picking up a stream of awards, Bansal is generally reckoned to be one of the rising stars in social entrepreneurship, acting as a training provider in one of Wolverhampton’s most depressed areas, Bilston. Despite being broken into four times in her first few months Bansal easily surpassed her backers’ expectations. Bansal has made major efforts to work with the private sector, with close to 1,500 local contacts