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INSIDE:



A HIGH flyer has said goodbye to her role at an international development company to create a range of organic skin products – read the full story on page 3

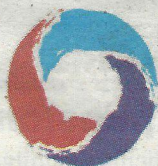


Thames Valley's Top Networking Club – p10

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Trio soar to success after rising

THREE bosses who saw their old firm go into administration four years ago are now part of a runaway success story.

Newbury-based ROC Technologies, employing 120 people, is the sixth in the list of Britain's 15 fastest-growing start-up companies.

Co-founder and director Mike Hockey said: "We have risen from the ashes.

"We are the only IT service provider on the list, have achieved the fifth highest turnover and are the only company in the top six to make a profit."

ROC is sixth in the Sunday Times Sage Start-up Track 15, which shines the spotlight on some of the country's

fastest-growing firms.

The list is sponsored by Sage and compiled by Fast Track, the Oxford-based research and networking events company.

In the past two years, its sales have grown by 315 per cent and it has turned over £8,204,000.

Lee Perkins, UK managing director of Sage, praised ROC and other fast-rising firms.

He said: "Entrepreneurs are the drivers of prosperity."

Included in the list are fashion retailers, software developers and popcorn sellers.

ROC are only one of two start-ups on

Go-getting pa to create 100

Target to meet skills shortage with d

BY ALEX DRURY

AN enterprising married couple who launched a centre of digital excellence in Bracknell will create 75 apprenticeships before the end of the year alongside 100 full-time jobs.

The £2 million TekHub centre on Cain Road designs software for everything from mobile phone apps to complex websites.

In the month since the programming hub launched, some 24 school leavers from Bracknell and Reading have started apprenticeships.

Barinder Hothi, 38, started the initiative with the help of her 39-year-old husband Dilshad.

She said: "We'd like to have all 75 apprentices on board by the New Year – 24 of those apprentices are al-

"Upon successful completion of the apprenticeships, we are looking to offer full-time employment opportunities.

"Our apprentices will be working alongside experienced staff to gain skills, experience and qualifications all whilst earning a wage.

"These roles offer young people an exciting opportunity to be involved in a rapidly growing business.

"The TekHub is looking to bridge the UK skills shortage, especially in the digital space.

"The UK is experiencing a massive void in IT skills which is a huge challenge for UK industry."

The husband and wife team have won top business awards including

Business Awards in 2014 and run The Knowledge Academy, the world's biggest training company with 250 staff and an expected turnover of £35 million this year.

They say they are keen to further the Thames Valley's reputation as the UK's Silicon Valley.

"We hope that it will be the first of many around the UK that provides a unique platform for digital innovation to the UK economy," said Mrs Hothi.

"It has already begun its mission to create new jobs, skills and innovation to lead Britain to the front of the digital innovation race."

Joint managing directors of The TekHub, husband and wife team Dilshad and Barinder Hothi

UK, with an operations... Slough, has celebrated its 30th birthday.

It is 300 years since the formation of the Plough Court Pharmacy, now GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) which has a base in Stoke Poges Lane.

On November 9, 1715, Silvanus Bevan from Swansea established the Plough Court Phar-

and Hamburys which, in turn, became part of GlaxoWellcome. GlaxoWellcome then merged with SmithKline Beecham in January 2001 to become GlaxoSmithKline.

The firm now has more than 100,000 people worldwide, some 15,000 of them working in the UK across six research and development centres, nine manu-

vaccines company and a leading global company in tackling respiratory illnesses, infectious diseases and HIV.

It is also the world's biggest consumer healthcare business behind many famous household brands. The Slough operation is based in the Horlicks building where it still manufactures the malt milk drink.

of GSK UK Pharma, said: "I'm extremely proud of all the history we have behind us and the foundation that these generations of people have given us to continue our mission to help more people do more, feel better and live longer. It is a remarkable achievement to be able to trace our roots back to one young entrepreneur in 1715."

Healthier life is the beauty of Maia's new role

BY MAXWELL KUSI-

A HIGH flying project manager responsible for setting up vital education programmes across the globe has embraced a new lease of life by launching her own beauty range.

Maia Smith gave up her job at a Reading-based international development company to set up her own skincare products from her own home.

Her personally developed range called 'H' offers natural and organic products which she blends by hand at her west Reading terraced house.

The idea was partly influenced when her mother Helga Smith was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008 and partly by Maia's difficulties in finding suitable products to tackle skin problems.

She left her role as an international project manager in August after launching her company in March.

But the first steps in her dream going out alone started seven years ago when she and her mother, who died in April last year aged 68, started researching into organic products - eager to cut chemicals and toxicity from every-day life.

Her beauty range is made with plant butters, virgin and



cold-pressed oils sourced off the internet.

They have a naturally long shelf-life without the need for preservatives, emulsifiers or thickeners commonly found in other cosmetics.

She produces a face cleanser, facial oil and shea butter and is in the early stages of developing a cream for men.

Maia, 42, has a Masters in health education and health promotion and 15 years' experience in working in maternal and child health in developing countries including India, Albania and Azerbaijan.

She lived in African and Asian countries when she was a child.

She explains 'H' stands for Helga, health, honesty healing and happiness and said: "I feel very passionately about this."

"Your skin is a living,



Maia Smith, from Reading, who has set up her own organic skincare range.

breathing organ, which absorbs what we put on it.

"So we should be just as concerned about what we put on to our body as we are about the food we put into it."

"I realised the only way I could make sure the products I used on my skin contained no nasties was to make them myself."

"I don't believe your skin

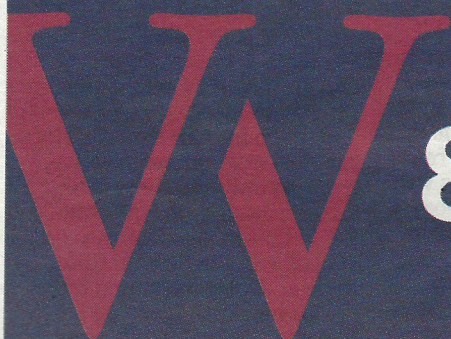
needs chemicals or synthetic ingredients so I don't use them."

She said self-employed was a big step, but added: "I am prepared to take a risk."

"The biggest challenge is constantly keeping yourself motivated."

"But clients say how happy they are with the products."

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