Who are Lemon Ribbon?
Mel had a ten year history in designing children’s wear and her partner Ed was a recent ex-serviceman when they established Lemon Ribbon in 2009. Having spotted a gap in the market the business slowly developed, it’s main activity being the licensing of contemporary children’s designs to retailers like GAP, Mothercare, Marks and Spencer and Paperchase.

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How did UCL help?
With the help of the SMILE team, Lemon Ribbon’s concerns have been put to rest and a robust business plan was designed, the main focus being to build on these strong foundations and expand Lemon Ribbon’s range as well as tackling entirely new sectors. In the words of Ed “we want to become the Cath Kidson for kids.”

In addition to the licensing of their artwork to the clothing sector, print sales offered a second income stream that was described as the “best chance of developing and expanding the business.” Print sales offered the opportunity for Lemon Ribbon to break into a wider market, including product, accessories and homeware, “We knew where we wanted the business to go, just didn’t know what we had to do to get there,” said Mel.

Through the SMILE programme, Ed learnt about the Goldman Sachs 10,000 small businesses programme delivered by UCL. This offers a range of workshops and consultancy for a select number of businesses, at no cost. The selection criteria is rigorous and businesses are chosen for their potential for diversification and growth.

Ed attended a one-to-one application workshop that helps applicants understand the application process and give them a better chance of success. Their application was successful and Lemon Ribbon was one of the graduates from the first cohort in 2012.

“The programme gives you a mix of academic help and advice from experienced business people. If someone in the room (another participant) didn’t have the solution themselves, they would know someone who did, people on the programme exchanged knowledge.”

Ed Weale, Founder, Lemon Ribbon
About UCL
UCL (University College London) was established in 1826 and is ranked as one of the world’s top-ten universities. The university is a modern, outward-looking institution, with more than 4,000 academic and research staff committed to engaging with the major issues of our times. It has a global reach, with 34% of its students coming from outside the UK, from almost 140 countries.

www.ucl.ac.uk

About UCL Advances
The centre for entrepreneurship at UCL, UCL Advances, offers training, networking and business support for staff, students and external entrepreneurs to encourage and enable new enterprises to get going. Unique in the UK Higher Education sector, its primary role is to promote a culture of entrepreneurship on campus and engagement with entrepreneurs and small businesses beyond UCL’s boundaries, and currently delivers over 30 activity programmes.

UCL Advances is affiliated with UCL Enterprise, which provides UCL’s structures for engaging with business for commercial and societal benefit.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances
www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise

About Business Support
UCL Advances provides direct business support for internal and external organisations through a variety of programmes and activities such as 1–1 advice, problem solving through student consultancy, student internships, mentoring and others.

• We help London-based businesses grow and develop by analysing business needs and connecting them to relevant interventions such as industry mentors;

• Through pairing teams of UCL and LBS students with businesses we deliver short-term consultancy projects addressing specific organisation needs;

• We broker relationships and fund exchanges between new and aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced entrepreneurs in another member state of the European Union;

• Individual angel investors connected to UCL provide seed investment to SMEs engaged with UCL Advances programmes; and

• We offer fully funded SME Internships where UCL students spend eight weeks in a London SME working alongside the director(s) to deliver real results and lasting impact in the host organization whilst learning about enterprise.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances/business/support

What were the results?
It became apparent that some of the most valuable advice came from the specialist workshops, for instance the Human Resources workshop. Lemon Ribbon has three in-house designers in addition to Mel and a host of freelancers; there is now need to employ a bigger creative team and establish a sales team. The programme has helped Lemon Ribbon deliver their plan, taking their turnover from £27k to £170k in two years, a growth rate of 600%.

The business has diversified and has grown – they are partnering and licensing to companies like wallpaper manufacturer Raham and Brown as well as expanding their range into bath and kitchen accessories. All with the longer-term aim of building the brand recognisable as a ‘Lemon Ribbon design.’

Ed speaks at events at Goldman Sachs 10,000 small businesses events and takes an active role in the expanding alumni.

600% growth rate in two years

For more information see:
www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise