After meeting at a creative writing agency, Cristina Harvey and Neil Martin decided to set up their own business, offering copyrighting, branding and training workshops for organisations wishing to improve their team's writing skills. Nearly a year later they had been very successful in securing clients, but with their increasingly hectic work schedule, they sought the guidance of a SMILE mentor to help them develop a long term strategy, reassess their finances and consider new contracts to enable them to make the business more sustainable.

SMILE matched The First Word to mentor Francis Seriau, an experienced mentor and entrepreneur in the music industry. He has helped several other creative businesses through SMILE and has particularly enjoyed working with The First Word. Francis was able to help Cristina and Neil refocus the business, concentrating on their goals and objectives for the future, a particularly crucial step for a business still in its relatively early stages. Neil found that "...one of the most difficult things about running your own business is that you don't have anyone to bounce ideas off..."

Cristina and Neil recognised that they had taken on a vast amount of work in setting up their own business and with the strategies they developed with Francis, were able to feel much more confident about the future and gain a crucial sense of perspective when assessing how they would develop. "...when you're tied up delivering work it's hard to think about anything beyond the next week, never mind the next year! Francis has helped us appreciate what we were already doing well and to identify where we can more be more efficient in the future. We intend to grow over the next year, and without Francis' help we wouldn't have a clear strategy for doing so."

This was clearly a mutually appreciated mentoring collaboration, as Francis in turn commented that to work with Neil and Cristina are "very nice people and a very nice company!"
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
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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.

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