

Cass Entrepreneurship Fund makes first investment

Fund created with the support of Cass alumnus Peter Cullum

Thursday, 20 May, 2010: The [Cass Entrepreneurship Fund](#), a new £10m investment fund providing finance for start-up and early stage companies across the Cass Business School community, has made its first investment in corporate reputation analysis firm [Alva](#).

The funding round of £675,000 was led by Cass alongside a group of angel investors including Charles Lewington, Managing Director of [hanover](#), and Andrew Vickerman, the former Global Head of Communications and External Relations at Rio Tinto Plc.

The Cass Entrepreneurship Fund was created with the support of Peter Cullum, a high profile Cass MBA Alumnus and the Founder and Executive Chairman of insurance group [Towergate](#). The Fund forms part of the Peter Cullum Centre for Entrepreneurship which provides a focal point for entrepreneurs at Cass, offering access to entrepreneurship teaching programmes and venture capital expertise, as well as the opportunity to apply for investment.

Alva is a company that specialises in analysing corporate reputation and reputational risk, founded by Cass MBA alumni Alberto Lopez-Valenzuela and Richard Fleming. Alva's services equip organisations with the analysis tools to manage reputation and reputational risk in the same way as any other valuable business asset. Current services inform organisations of the emerging reputational issues in their sector, and later in the year the company will be launching a near real-time dashboard to analyse reputation and additional specialist consultancy services as required.

Alva was initially incubated within the Peter Cullum Centre of Entrepreneurship at Cass, which helped to support it both practically with a professional space to operate from as the company was being established, and by providing the support and facilities of the Cass academics and services. Nick Badman, Chair of the Centre for Entrepreneurship at Cass, says: "Alva is an exciting new business led by a top quality team. We have been thrilled to support its development over the past year through our incubation facility and hope that this will be only the first of many successful new businesses created with Cass and supported financially by the new Fund".

Alberto Lopez-Valenzuela, CEO and Founder of Alva says: "Over the last months, we have formed a strong partnership with the Cass Entrepreneurship Fund team, which has been instrumental in ensuring that Alva received the right backing to launch the business. Thanks to Cass's ongoing support Alva has been able to attract the right investors, an incredibly strong Board and top talent in the sector"

Peter Cullum, Executive Chairman of Towergate Partnership said: "I have been heartened by the quality of budding entrepreneurs to date. The key to any investment is not just a good idea, but a clearly executed business plan and Alva certainly has this in spades."

Budding entrepreneurs also have the opportunity to sign up for The Peter Cullum Centre for Entrepreneurship's [New Venture Creation Programme](#) at Cass, a five day course consisting of expert mentoring and support for entrepreneurs.

This new programme, led by Professor Julie Logan and other Cass experts, will connect participants to the people, investors and networks who know what it takes to turn a great idea into a great business. It is a serious and intensive programme which requires participants to have a viable business plan, idea, or early stage business in order to qualify. Participants in the programme also have the chance to submit their business plan to the Cass Entrepreneurship Fund and be considered for initial investment.