



FROM
**CALL
CENTRE**
TO
**CALLING
THE SHOTS**

Pictured: Tom Harte | i.m creative

i.m creative

Tom Harte came up with his business idea when he took a temporary job at a call centre, having struggled to find work in his specialist field.

"I went to work at Gem, an outsourcing centre based in Belfast, to supplement my income from freelance multimedia design," explains Tom. "The company operated a very basic motivational games system to promote team interaction and increase productivity. I recognised the potential of such an incentive and suddenly realised that, with my background, I could create something much more dynamic which would properly excite the employees. Thankfully the management team at Gem gave me the opportunity

to create a prototype, which became Snakes and Ladders, the first i.m creative interactive incentive product."

Tom's bosses were so impressed with the game, which took the form of a 12ft x 12ft snakes and ladders wall board on which employees could move their own character around each time they achieved a certain target, that they offered him a contract to develop similar incentives games which could be used throughout the company. Two of the management team, Philip Cassidy and Anita Acheson, recognised the global business potential of Tom's systems and encouraged him to set up his own company, with them as Directors. So, in 2007, i.m creative was established.

Tom had already approached Invest NI for help with his business start up and they advised him to apply for the Transform programme. Since then the company has gone from strength to strength, expanding its global client base and picking up several awards along the way.

"Being accepted to the Transform programme was really the catalyst to pushing the company onto the next level," says Tom. "Obviously the financial support was very welcome, but from my perspective learning about all the financial and legal aspects of running a business has been the most valuable outcome. My initial idea may have been brilliant, but I now understand how to run a successful business."

