

Edinburgh Reporter chats – Jon Cooper

✖ WHO ARE YOU AND WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?

I'm Jon Cooper and I'm from Edinburgh. I also live and work here, where I run my business Pekoe Tea, on Leven St. We stock around 80 loose teas, as well as teapots, cups, bowls and caddies. We also have a tea bar within the shop, so visitors can have a cup of tea, coffee, or hot chocolate, with delicious macaroons or pastries.

WHAT IS THE BUSINESS BOOK YOU RECOMMEND THAT EVERYONE SHOULD READ?

The business book I have most enjoyed is 'It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want To Be', by Paul Arden, who was responsible for some of the world's best known advertising campaigns. It's an invaluable, motivational book for any business owner who wants to take their success to an even higher level.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE YOUR BUSINESS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

One of my main strengths is that I am passionate about what I do. Tea is a fascinating subject and I love meeting so many other tea lovers in the shop.

I have always been interested in tea and finding out more about its history, how and where its grown and the many different varieties and tastes. This led me to set up Pekoe Tea in 2008, initially as an on-line business and then we opened the shop last year.

Demand for our teas and tea-related items has rocketed and our

tea tasting events have all been extremely popular too – they have sold out very quickly and we've now got a waiting list for the next ones.

As for weaknesses, like many business owners, I become very engrossed in my work and sometimes don't take as much time off as I should.

WHAT WAS THE DEFINING MOMENT ON YOUR CAREER PATH THAT GOT YOU WHERE YOU ARE NOW?

I went on a trip to China and when I came back, decided it was now or never to create a business out of my passion for tea.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR SPARE TIME?

I have played bass guitar in various bands in the past, so when I do get some time off, I like to play my guitar. My girlfriend is in the fashion business, so I often go along to fashion shows with her in my spare time too. Also, as I travel to China regularly for the business, I am currently learning to speak Mandarin.

DO YOU THINK YOU ACHIEVE A GOOD WORK/LIFE BALANCE

It could be better. But I love what I do for a living and I thrive on it.

WHAT MAKES EDINBURGH THE BEST LOCATION FOR YOU TO LIVE AND WORK IN

One of the best things about Edinburgh is its size. Although it's a capital city, it's relatively small, which means there is usually only one degree of separation between us all.

WHAT IS YOUR SPECIAL AREA OF EDINBURGH OR SPECIAL PLACE IN EDINBURGH AND WHY?

I love the Botanic Gardens, especially the hothouses, as you can feel you have escaped to the tropics, when it's cold and wet outside.

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER THE PINNACLE OF YOUR CAREER?

I am still in my twenties, so would hope the pinnacle of my career is still to come!

WHICH NETWORKING GROUPS IN EDINBURGH HAVE YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY USEFUL?

I don't get much time to network, but I'm a member of Atlanta, which I have found useful. It's always good to meet other business owners and share ideas and experiences.

WHO ARE YOUR BUSINESS HEROES?

The late Steve Jobs is an inspiration, for his creativity and business success. If you aim to make your brand the Apple of its sector, you can't go far wrong.

WHAT ARE YOUR BUSINESS GOALS FOR THE NEXT YEAR?

There has been a huge demand for our products on-line as well as in the shop, so we are about to launch an enhanced version of our website. Our goal for the next year and beyond is to further grow the business – ideally to become a household name.

DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY FOR US

During the day, I'm at the shop, serving customers, finding out more about their interest in tea and suggesting new teas they can try. I am also always looking for teas to stock, which means a lot of research.

WHAT WAS THE BEST JOB ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED?

I've been advised to follow gut feeling and also to learn from mistakes – two suggestions I've found very useful in starting

and growing a successful business.

YOUR PLAN OF ATTACK FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

I'll be visiting our suppliers abroad regularly, especially in China regularly, to stay as well informed as possible about the products we offer. I'm also planning to attend trade shows around the UK.

At the moment, though, we're gearing up for Xmas and will be offering a wide range of gifts, including hampers and our Xmas tea blend, which smells of mulled wine.