

*Practical Guide To Help You Achieve Success
In Your Life and Your Business!*

'PERSONAL SUCCESS - AN INNER CITY PERSPECTIVE'

Written by: Joel Graham-Blake

"Inspiring, empowering and genuinely cares about people"

Ruth Badger, MD, Ruth Badger Consultancy

"Joel has a real commitment to getting the best out of people. I have watched him enthuse a room full of surly teenagers, transforming them into the highly aspirational and excited young adults that they deserve to be!"

John May, CEO, Young Enterprise UK

'Joel is a powerful communicator who can express a message clearly and appropriately to any audience and crucially is able to deliver and follow up with blistering action that always exceeds expectations.

He is also flexible and innovative and able to draw upon a broad network and specific experience that makes him an excellent business partner and speaker'

Aaron Reid, Equality Manager, London Development Agency

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Dedications:

This e-book is dedicated to the following people (you know who you are):

D, for the cheeky little smile and the unconditional love that you give me, every single day of my life.

Yegi, for the love, strength, determination and sense of dedication that you have given me, through your own endeavours.

Lloydyman, for empowering me to be myself no matter what people say, do or think and for helping me understand the importance of wearing a good suit!

Lolly, for being there for me through the dark days till the present time and your refusal to leave my side, no matter what happens.

Antz, for not being just another youth statistic and inspiring me with your passion for the classical arts.

Clove, for amazing me with your sense of independence and for being the other half of me.

You all have had a positive influence in my life and I shall never forget it, now and forever.

Joel x

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Foreword:

I wrote this e-book, initially, out of sheer frustration.

Frustration because I try so hard to achieve my goals and find that people enjoy putting obstacles before me that test my patience, passion and commitment, every single day.

Frustrations because I consistently find myself in danger of losing the things that are most important to me, yet I refuse to douse the fire that rages inside me.

Frustration because I see others achieving success in ways that go against my morals and values yet I can see the simplicity in what they do and know how I would do it better.

However, the biggest frustration is that I can see PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY DYING. Mentally, spiritually and physically.

I see young people with no care for tomorrow because they don't even know if they will be alive to see it; I see children having children and expecting life to give them what they need to survive, but not having the chance to grow individually; I see parents failing their children because they lack the ability to even take care of themselves yet have more children than they can cater for⁹the list goes on.

Furthermore, we live in a system where the colour of your skin, the accent of your speech, the postcode where you live, the age that you are and the choices that you make, all cloud the perception that people have of you, whether it is politically correct or not.

They say the western world is a free world but I'm not so sure....

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My aim for this e-book is for you to think about who you are, where you have come from, where you are going and to identify how you are going to get there.

I have detailed **FOUR KEY STEPS broken down into chapters**, which can help you achieve success, in whatever way that means to you.

My insights are based on my life experiences of growing up as an inner city kid with a dream.

I encourage you to:

- Be the person that you are destined to be – the influences in your life, condition your character and personality. Use them wisely.
- Learn how to develop yourself within your organization – your personal commitment will determine the success of your business.
- Keep open minded at all times – helping the community or others is not about handouts or charity. It is about inclusion, warts and all.

With the current economic climate causing people to lose their jobs and homes, with countries at war amongst many other important factors in our lives, we have to create a change.

But that change must start from each and every one of us, or it will never come.

I hope my humble words inspire you to make the right choices, choices that bring you the success you deserve! Joel x

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CHAPTER 1- SEED UPON THE GROUND

Sacrifice – *(n) giving something up; making an offering*

People often say that you must be grateful for what you have. That you must think about others who would give their right arm to be in your position. But is that strictly true?

Just because you may have a little bit more (not necessarily money, I must add) than others does not automatically mean that you are better off.

What it does force you to do, is analyse what is of most importance to you and more importantly, why?

For example: There are people in the world who live on less than 1dollar per day, yet they have a family structure that gives them a sense of belonging and love, enabling all to survive and work together to make life better.

There are also people in the world who live on more than 1000 pounds a day who would give away all their money and assets to have the love and the security of a family around them.

There are those in the middle, who on the surface, seem to have everything in order. But they make sure you don't see that they have to scrape together money for electric and gas tokens or put £2.00 petrol in their car daily because their last ten-pound has to stretch!

Having a huge pile of money and having none at all is irrelevant unless you make it relevant - icons from Warren Buffet to Gandhi alone teach us that. Money is just a means of exchange that is worthless until you place a particular level of value on it.

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The crucial thing to remember is that the little things have a bearing on your mental ability to survive and become successful.

It is easier to react against larger problems but it is the build up of little things that keep chipping away at your sanity, which can send you over the edge.

Let me give you any example:

I spent my early teenage years believing that people from deprived areas of urban areas, are destined to go through life struggling to survive.

As I sit here reflecting, I remember that it was normal for my mother to create gourmet meals out of cheap beans, eggs, bread and a glass of sugar and water, until the next giro day!

It was normal for us to go to bed at 5pm wrapped in double blankets because BOTH the gas and electric had ran out.

It was normal for us to use a wire hanger to get reception on our portable black and white TV that only showed Channel 4 - Rising Damp was our favourite show!

It was normal for me to play a game of catch, using a black torch and the mice that ran around the bedsit, that we lived in.

The worst thing is that it was normal for me to blame her for the fact that we were living in such a situation, even though she worked her fingers to the bone for us.

I was very insecure and lived with a feeling of constant vulnerability because I believed that society did not care about people from my racial, social or economical background and I felt that life would never ever be different, from what it was.

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I used to hear my mother sobbing in the room next door, lying that she was alright when I asked her what was wrong. Things got to the point, where I convinced myself that I was the one burden she did not need and contemplated suicide.

We moved from the bedsit, to live in a block of flats with very small balconies. One evening, my mother had to go to her job at the local bingo hall and had to leave me by myself because no one was available to look after me.

I remember going onto our balcony, lifting myself up and sitting on the edge of the rail for about an hour, thinking about all the reasons why my mother would be better off without me, convincing myself I was worthless.

As I prepared myself to jump, I looked down and saw a woman dressed rather shabbily down below. She was really struggling to manage the five or six shopping bags that she was carrying plus she had a young daughter walking just ahead of her.

What struck me was that they were both singing! I mean, really joyful singing, loud and without a care in the world!

This image of inner city struggle vs. personal empowerment struck me in a way I still find difficult to describe, to this day!

In that moment, I realised that no matter what life throws at you, it is only a test of your personal power - you can change your mindset instantly to cope with the problems that you face, because you are in control of your response to situations that you encounter.

I wish I could have thanked them for the inspiration they gave me and for saving me that evening.

Committing suicide never crossed my mind again...ever.

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Self Analysis:

The question to ask yourself is:

**What is most important to you RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW
and what will you sacrifice to get it?**

But hold your horses! Before you grab a piece of A4 paper and start listing your needs, desires and all the things that you feel you deserve, there are a few things that you need to consider.

Background

- What are the most positive things that you can identify with in your background or business?
- What are the most negative things that you can identify with in your background or organisation?
- What impact will those things have on your ability to move forward?

People

- Who do you know / spend time with, who build your self-esteem and support your drive and determination?
- Who do you know / spend time with that drain your self-belief and undermine your efforts?
- What can you do to spend more time with the first set of people and less time with the second set of people?

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Conditioning

- How has your background or work culture conditioned the way you think, act and feel?
- What do you need to change / release / get rid off?
- How are you going to do that?
- Who will feel the impact of your decision/s?

The Power of Sacrifice

There is great power in taking decisive action but there are times when you may feel that you can't. The world seems against you and no matter which way you look, there is no way out.

It is not a nice place to be in, but it is in those times where you will be able to build personal strength and an awareness of what you can really achieve - fighting against adversity makes you stronger!

The key is to:

- analyse the consequences that will arise from the sacrifices that you make
- focus on dealing with them accordingly

This will result in a build up of your self-esteem and motivation, so remember that sacrifices make us stronger even when we feel weaker!

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CHAPTER TWO - SAPLING

Self-belief - *self (prefix) - of oneself or itself; belief (n) principle accepted as true, often without proof*

'Hero' is in my opinion, one of the greatest songs ever written.

If you put her little annoyances to one side, just for the moment, it would be hard to argue that Mariah Carey has sung a song better than that, ever.

Why? Because it epitomises the very essence of our desire, as humans to achieve whatever we can conceive in our minds.

It is one of those songs that you are afraid to listen to because it makes you feel uplifted about what you are going to do but disappointed with yourself about the things you have not done, simultaneously!

Also, I would be lying if I said that I have never, ever wanted to cry whenever I heard it! I won't tell anybody but I bet you have felt the same? Don't worry; it's our little secret!

But what is self-belief?

Self-belief is the ability to have supreme confidence to achieve whatever goal you wish, overcoming every hurdle, obstacle and challenge that is in your way.

It is created by understanding oneself to the point where you have an emotional attachment that cannot be broken by anyone or anything; when you feel at peace and invincible at the same time!

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It is when you have conquered your fears and forgiven those who have trespassed against you, even though you let them lead you into temptation – make sure you read the last line again, and be honest with yourself, ok?

It is a combination of confidence, fear, influence and an understanding of why you have self-belief or want it.

For young people growing up confused and unsure of what road to take in life, self belief is having the strength, courage, bravery and fearlessness to tell the *man dem round your endz that, yo, man aint into no knife and gun crime ting again, cos tekin' a life aint no joke ting and IT'S TOO PRECIOUS TO WASTE, u get me, blood??!!!*

But don't get me wrong... I know it is difficult to see life outside of the four walls that you are used to. It is even more difficult when that is the only life that you, your family, your friends, and your work colleagues have ever known - the vicious circle goes around again and again and again and you feel it will never stop.

But you are unique and that means you have choices. Every human being is entitled to that even if the consequences will cause harm and destruction. Are you prepared to walk through the fire to reach the stillness of the sea that lies in the distance?

Close your eyes. Can you feel the cool water of satisfaction lapping at your feet, the sunshine of hope and love beaming down on your face? How does it make you feel? Is it worth all the pain and sacrifice?

YOU MUST TAKE THAT FIRST STEP. Even if you need someone with you, as you move your foot forward, you have to take that first step to create a new path of personal freedom and success.

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Let me give you another example:

Apart from a paper round at 13, where I sold cakes on the side to those bought a paper, I started my first proper business at 21 years old.

My employer did not know it at the time but I used my holidays, evenings, and even my 'sick days' to run personal development workshops in schools and community groups.

At the same time, I knew of some people who were making more money in a week than I was earning in six months salary payments, tax free.

With a baby on the way, I found myself falling into debt because I never planned how to run a business and made all the classic mistakes that made my situation worse i.e. relying on one client.

As the bills kept coming in, I buried my head in the sand and did nothing. I refused to face up to my responsibilities. I drank too much, I smoked too much and developed a 'I don't care' attitude.

I had two choices: either take the easy option and engage in illegal activities or continue to strive for my vision of success?

I decided that the negative option would affect the people that I love the most and I could not live with that; the positive option would be harder but ultimately, more rewarding.

I created a mental picture in my mind, of what I would be like, feel like, sound like, smell like, who would be there with me and more importantly why when I achieved my vision, before I decided on the first step that I would need to take.

Change came when I decided to TAKE ACTION, but my support was in creating a Vision of Achievement that kept me focused.

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Self - Analysis:

Motivation

- What are the things that you know you can achieve?
- Why do you believe you can achieve them?
- What are the negatives things that you will change?
- What are the positives that you will bring into your situation?

Support

- Everyone likes to think that they don't need anyone to help them get what they want but who can you really rely on, trust, believe in?
- Who are the frenemies* that you need to distance yourself away from?

Mentorship

- Who can help to guide you in achieving success?
- How are you going to gain their support?
- Are you mentally prepared to receive their support?

Vision of Achievement

- What do you REALLY want – what makes you tingle at the thought?
- Picture it like a photograph in your mind!
- Replay the image, intensify it in your mind, and make it vibrant!
- What will it look like, feel like, smell like, and taste like when you get it?
- What positive impact will you getting it, have on others?

*** Frenemies – people who you trust, but then turn on you/let you down, when you least expect it.**

A true enemy is someone who you can identify and handle accordingly, whereas a frenemy breaks your emotional connection to them and thus has more of an impact on you.

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CHAPTER THREE - TRUNK

Commitment - *(n) dedication to a cause*

'I want to lose weight' is not a commitment. 'I want to stop smoking' is not a commitment.

'I will... (Whatever it is) because... (Whatever your reason) by (goal end)' is a commitment.

We live in a society that loves to dictate and influence who and what we are. The worst thing is that we know it, still get sucked into it and complain when things are not how we want them to be.

Are we our own worst enemies because of that? Are we not the hypocrites that we often claim others to be?

No, we are not. We just believe we are, and then make the type of statements and promises that we like to badge as commitments but which are really 'comforters'. We believe that if we say the right things to ourselves often enough, it will happen.

That is why it is important to know the difference and understand why you get the same results all the time. Anything can happen if you commit to whatever it is you say that you want and actually do something tangible about it.

If I asked you to go onto the internet and research people in history who you regard as role models, I guarantee that you would say that you admire them because they refused to waver their commitment to the task, cause or vision that they had set for themselves, regardless of the struggles and obstacles that came their way.

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Furthermore, I would also guarantee that the end target was achieved, even if it was not by them.

Do the names Martin Luther King and Barack Obama ring a bell?

I mention Obama in particular, not because a man of colour is in the White House, but that a man of multiple ethnic origins is in the White House.

Such is the power of commitment and the desire for unity!

But let me give you a word of warning about Commitment...

The reason why someone commits to something is easily and often influenced by the:

- Perception of the person creating it
- The perception of the person/s affected by it
- The overall context that has been identified

It is a fine line between good and evil, and unfortunately, we do have people in the world who are more than happy to cross it.

Some people use the essence of commitment to justify the negative action that they take and thus, it makes sense to them.

For example:

A young person who suffers from no self-esteem, has no positive role models, no real formal education or qualifications, has a criminal record, lives in an environment of drugs, violence and a wide range of negativity, may be expected by society as a whole to fail in anything positive that he/she may try to achieve.

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However, that young person would also be the most astute, sharpest, naturally intelligent, goal-driven and entrepreneurial person you would ever meet. Why?

Because the cards that life has dealt them, has made sure that they have to be, in order to eat, to live, to survive.

The problem is that the young person may use their abilities as a mechanism of personal battle, living with a 'me against the world' mentality, which undermines their progress.

They become consciously committed to doing this because that is all they can base their life upon therefore justification for negative action becomes automatic.

Society then states that these negative actions must be eliminated, for the protection of the wider society. However, I don't agree with the punishment of an individual, without solving the issues that created the environment that has conditioned them negatively.

Nourish the roots not the branches, Great Britain PLC!

In my humble opinion, we have very powerful people in our society that find it difficult to imagine what it is like to live a day in the life of people in our communities and use academic theory and their position, to make sure they don't have to.

Reminds me of a baby with a favourite 'blankie' – giving themselves a false sense of security because they feel vulnerable.

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We also have people who want to use their position and power to understand what it is like for people in our communities, but don't know how or where to go for the support they need to do this.

The question that I often ponder over is:

How long does it really take to change someone else's life, for the better?

Everyone is entitled to equal opportunities in this life but sometimes it feels as though the gap between the haves and have-not's is getting bigger and bigger.

When people feel as though they have no opportunity, they make the choices that they feel is right for them – some out of desperation, some out of hope, others because they just want to.

What worries me is that people may not say what they want or need, but expect it to come to them. If not, they take it!

The methods they use to get what they want, is the deciding factor between negative punishment and positive success. However, you forget the pain of feeling sorry for yourself because your ego, desire or plain stupidity got the better of you.

On the other hand, reaping the rewards of your positive endeavours is an uplifting experience, even in small doses.

The feeling of contentment and empowerment that you gain from positive results make you feel as if you are the king or queen of the world; you find yourself spreading love to others in ways that shock both you and them!

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For example:

I was asked to speak at The Treasury regarding Entrepreneurship.

I felt so proud for myself and my mother because as we grew together, we often discussed how the government failed us in regards to financial stability and basic public services.

Yet here I was, advising ministers on how to engage with and help people who come from the same environment as I did - and they were listening to what I had to say!

That was a truly ironic and powerful event in my life!

However, what keeps me grounded is that there are always people who would value direction and guidance - I have met so many people whose daily lives make my own life and experiences seem like a walk in the park, in comparison to their struggles.

I have mentored women who are putting themselves through university in the day by prostituting their bodies at night; young people suffering from sexual, mental and physical abuse but are tagged as 'liars' or 'uncontrollable'; pensioners looking for that last bit of excitement before they pass away; families living on the street because they have no where else to go and I'm sure there are many other harrowing real-life stories that are untold.

**No matter the personal challenges your life,
you must never stop believing in the real you
and what you will become in the future.**

**YOU ARE A STAR THAT CREATES ITS OWN SHINE AND
NOTHING AND NO-ONE CAN EVER
TAKE THAT AWAY FROM YOU.**

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Self – Analysis:

Acceptance of negativity

Every circumstance, situation, people, opportunities that you encounter and affect you negatively, is a part of your life. However, it is difficult to analyse these factors for the purposes of identifying the lessons that you are being taught.

But it is the lessons and what they teach us about ourselves that is the key. It is understanding that what we experience, is our experience and thus allows us to move forward with more knowledge and potential power, which in turns, gives us hope and faith for the future.

Drive

- What makes you wake up in the morning, on a natural high and ready to overcome any hurdle in your life or work?
- How can you magnify that feeling for yourself? For others?
- How will you monitor your progress – benchmarks, milestones?

Passion

- You ever had that feeling of butterflies in your stomach but it excites rather than make you nervous?
- What would it be like to have that feeling every second of your life?
- How can you create the passion to ensure that you stay committed to achieving your vision of success?

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CHAPTER FOUR – OAK TREE

Action - *(n) process of doing something*

Welcome to the beginning, of the rest of your life!

Let me tell you a story:

Once upon a time, a weary traveller was walking up a steep hill, on a dark stormy night.

Soon, he came to a cave that offered him some well-needed shelter. He climbed up and nestled himself into the cave, and started looking for materials to make a fire for the night.

As he began to build himself a fire out of dry sticks, he noticed a glint out of the corner of his eye. As the fire rose, the flames began to shed light into the cave. As he looked on the ground, he saw a single sack full of rubies, diamonds and coins.

As he looked more into the cave, he noticed a man fast asleep with a long grey beard dressed in rags, with cuts and bruises upon his face.

The traveller walked over to him and nudged him gently. As the man awoke, the traveller asked his name. 'I am The King of Success' he said, as he tried to pull his torn rags around his body.

The traveller looked him up and down, looked at all the jewels, and began scratching his head, confused and bewildered.

'If you are the King of Success' asked the traveller, 'then why are you here, amongst all these riches yet you do not present yourself as a King?'

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The King explained that he was involved in a vicious battle and that he had fled with what he was wearing and the bag of jewels.

Amazed by this story, the traveller asked how he could help him regain his status and power.

The King simply replied 'I'm tired, my son. I've fought for so long to become the person that I am. But in all my years, I have learnt but only one true lesson.'

He beckoned the traveller to come closer. 'Becoming King is a battle' he said 'but maintaining your kingdom is the real war.'

With those final words, he took his last breath and was gone forever.

Conclusion of my experience:

Achieving success in your life or business requires teamwork, knowledge of self, empowerment and support in order to develop the ability to make the right sacrifices and to grow and stay committed to the vision that has been identified.

But like an oak tree, once you have achieved success, you have to branch out and grow in many different ways to become stronger.

By doing so, you give others the shelter through your life and experiences, to achieve their own vision of success.

Take pride in who and what you are. Love the life that you lead. Keep your inner circle close and transparent. Refuse to accept the mental negativity that can undermine your power.

I thank you for taking the time to read my ebook. I wish you the best of success, in whatever shape or form that means to you.

Joel x

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



About Joel Graham-Blake:

Learning from his own struggle from being a full time factory worker to becoming an award-winning business consultant, entrepreneur and role model, Joel has harnessed the powers of self-belief and effective action, to help others overcome barriers and maximise their potential.

Over the past decade, he has developed a credible reputation throughout the UK for his straight talking yet nurturing approach, his charismatic personality and his unique ability to create commercial opportunities for businesses whilst ensuring they create a positive impact within the local communities they serve.

He is skilled at helping decision-makers to self-reflect on their performance, reduce fears and generate business strategies that create positive mindsets, inclusive work cultures and successful individuals – his work has supported the development of entrepreneurs, CEOs, Senior Managers, community leaders and young people across a wide range of sectors.

Work - Joel is:

- **Founder of Cultiv8 Solutions**, (www.cultiv8solutions.com), a leading diversity management consultancy firm for universities and professional service organizations.
- **Founder of The DEN**, (Diverse Entrepreneur Network), a mastermind development network for entrepreneurs.
- **An independent distributor** for leading body reshaping firm, Ardyss International.
- The first **National Diversity advisor** for the sport of Golf, in the UK.

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Other activities: Guest lecturer on both CIPD and CMI Business Management courses, Mentor for students at the prestigious Aston Business School and has even advised ministers at the Treasury on enterprise.

His growing list of awards and nominations include:

- Winner - Birmingham Young Professional of the Year 2010 – (Recruitment & Training Category)
- O2 X Award Male Entrepreneur of the Year 2009 finalist
- Man on Mission Business Award finalist 2009
- Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2007 nominee (Black Enterprise Awards)
- Urban Dreams Business Award Winner 2006
- Birmingham Young Professional of the Year 2006 finalist (Entrepreneur Category)

Volunteer Work:

He is proud of giving back to others and currently volunteers his time in the following roles:

- Chair of the West Midlands CSR Summit
- Local Advisory Board Member of the Birmingham MET Academy
- Partner in Business Mentor for Career Academies UK
- Non-executive director of the First Class Youth Network

Testimonials:

“Joel is passionate about the advantages all round experienced by people celebrating differences and adapting their style, message and so on to engage colleagues, customers and collaborators. His own background is proof of the power of seeing the world through others' filters and reaching out accordingly. He's a 'serial entrepreneur' always seeking out new gaps where his own talents and contacts can help people and their businesses grow.”

Jane Hunt, Regional Chair, The Academy For Chief Executives

“Joel is a hardworking and tenacious individual. As a young man he has worked tirelessly within the local community at grassroots and also a strategic level. Having worked with Joel in various capacities, I would be more than privileged to work with him again.”

Justice Williams MBE FRSA, Founder & Editor in Chief, Tru Life Magazine

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"I have known Joel for a while and he has fast become a genuine and trusted friend. He has endless energy and enthusiasm, always has time to listen and often has good advice or a contact to help."

Jamie Davies, Recruitment Manager, JP Morgan

"Joel has a real commitment to getting the best out of people, whether working professionally or as a volunteer. I have watched him enthuse a room full of surly teenagers, transforming them into the highly aspirational and excited young adults they deserve to be. I have no hesitation in recommending him."

John May, CEO, Young Enterprise UK

"Prior to meeting for the first time he had been nominated for a Young Entrepreneur of the Year award. On meeting Joel I was struck immediately as to why he was highly respected and had received such a nomination. His drive, his ambition, his enthusiasm, his knowledge and understanding were evident. But more importantly his ability to listen, to learn and drive change, no matter the hurdles faced, made him stand out.

**Dr Martin Beckinsale, Senior Lecturer in Strategic Management,
De Montfort University**

"Thank you for leading on our Sources of Power session. The feedback we received was excellent! The participants appreciated not only your insights and honesty but the way you asked questions, made sure everyone was involved and made them think. I look forward to working with you again in the future!"

Louise Teboul, Operations Director, Common Purpose.

"I have personally known Joel Graham-Blake for a number of years and found him to be trust worthy, reliable, and proactive. I am impressed with his humble character, obvious integrity and having used his services in the past, find him to be professional, timely and delivering above every expectation."

Karl George, Managing Director, KgISS

For further information, contact:

Email: joel@cultiv8solutions.com

Web: www.cultiv8solutions.com

Direct Business mobile tel: 07983 991 943

Social Media Links:

Linked In

<http://uk.linkedin.com/in/joelgrahamblake>

Joel Graham-Blake Twitter account:

@JoelGrahamBlake

The DEN Twitter account: @denbirmingham

The DEN Linked In group: The D.E.N (Diverse Entrepreneur Network)

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joel@cultiv8solutions.com

Nurturing the potential of businesses, entrepreneurs and young people.