



26 June 2008

### **Green tea supplier leaves no carbon footprint on road to export award**

Lambeth-based organic tea company Today Was Fun, which increased its international sales approximately ten-fold between 2005 and the end of 2007, has won the Best Newcomer category in the 2008 London Passport to Export Awards, the capital's premier international business awards scheme.

The awards recognise the achievements of SMEs in trading overseas under UK Trade & Investment's (UKTI) Passport to Export programme of advice and support for new and inexperienced exporters. They were presented to winners in five categories at a ceremony in Westminster on 24 June hosted by writer and broadcaster Hardeep Singh Kohli.

Guest speakers included Tim Parker, newly appointed First Deputy Mayor of London and Chief Executive of the GLA Group; and Alan Ainsbury, Head of Trade at awards sponsor Barclays Commercial Bank.

In his keynote speech, Tim Parker said: "The types of innovative and efficient business we are recognising tonight are critical to the success of London's economy. The Mayor's Office intends to do all it can to promote the capital's commercial sector to international markets, as well as working with the boroughs and trade bodies across London to create the right environment for our small businesses to grow."

Today Was Fun's award-winning Green Green Tea™, designed by company founder and CEO Sharyn Wortman and her team, is according to The CarbonNeutral Company, the first carbon neutral tea. Having built up its business in the UK – where it has around 350 stockists – Today was Fun looked to expand internationally. Seeking advice on

handling an enquiry from a potential Russian buyer, they contacted UKTI for assistance in compiling export documentation and tackling Russia's daunting import regulations.

In February 2006, Sharyn signed up to Passport to Export and an export plan was devised with International Trade Advisers David Hallam and Neil Wynne-Jones.

A trip to the Moscow Food Fair, and a meeting with local buyers arranged by the British Embassy, opened the company's eyes to the potential of the Russian market and the number of consumers there willing to pay for a premium product.

Soon, the company had its first Russian order, from quality supermarket chain Azbuka Vkusa, with more than 30 stores in cities including Moscow and St Petersburg. Today was Fun forecasts a 400% rise in sales this year, as the chain expands across Russia.

Sharyn Wortman said: "My UKTI advisers told me that Passport to Export would help me take the initial steps towards exporting – it was more like a giant leap! They assisted with everything from defining possible markets, to understanding complicated paperwork, and visiting potential retailers – without UKTI's help in breaking down these barriers, we would have found it very difficult to get into the Russian market.

"It has been invaluable to work alongside David and Neil. From their private sector experience, they had first-hand knowledge of what businesses face when dealing with overseas markets."

International Trade Adviser David Hallam added: "Today was Fun is an excellent example of a small, London-based, highly innovative niche brand development company in the Food & Drink sector, who have taken full advantage of UKTI international services to help them into first-time exporting, with a high degree of success. They deserve their award and have a bright future in developing their overseas business."

Alan Ainsbury, Barclays Commercial Bank, concluded: "These awards are indicative of the breadth and scale of successful London companies that recognise and act upon opportunities in trading internationally. We are committed to helping our customers' businesses grow through overseas prospects and I hope that some of the great success stories from these awards will be an inspiration for SMEs across the country."

## Notes to Editors

1. For further information on Today Was Fun, visit [www.todaywasfun.com/](http://www.todaywasfun.com/)  
If you are interested in an interview with Today Was Fun, please contact Penny Parkin on 0207 234 3054 or email [penelopeparkin@uktilondon.org.uk](mailto:penelopeparkin@uktilondon.org.uk)
2. The London Passport to Export Awards were presented at a ceremony on 24 June at the Church House Conference Centre, Dean's Yard, Westminster, SW1P 3NZ. For further information about this year's awards, visit [www.passportawardslondon.org.uk](http://www.passportawardslondon.org.uk)
3. The Passport to Export Awards scheme – the only one of its kind in the capital – recognises the achievements of SMEs in trading overseas under UK Trade & Investment's (UKTI) flagship Passport to Export support programme of strategic advice and support for new and inexperienced exporters. The winners in the five award categories were:
  - **Knomo Bags Ltd - Outstanding Achievement through Passport to Export (sponsored by Barclays Commercial Bank):**  
*This award goes to a company that has had exceptional success on the Passport to Export Programme and has exceeded all expectations. The recipient shows the initiative, the resource and a strong desire to succeed in exporting.*
  - **Dexela Ltd - International Innovation (sponsored by London Chamber of Commerce and Industry):**  
*This award goes to a company that has engaged in longer-term innovation activity or a product/service development that has made a significant difference to the success of its business overseas.*
  - **Today was Fun – Best Newcomer (sponsored by GLE Group):**  
*This award goes to a company exporting for the first time, which has had significant success in breaking into overseas markets.*
  - **Evolve Creative - Emerging Markets Exporter (sponsored by the London Development Agency):**  
This award goes to a company that has had considerable success in breaking into a high-growth emerging market(s).

- **Octopus Media Technology - Best Use of UK Trade & Investment Services:**

*This award goes to a company that has best used UK Trade & Investment services, resulting in exceptional success in overseas markets.*

For further information about the Passport to Export Awards, 2008, visit [www.passportawardslondon.org.uk](http://www.passportawardslondon.org.uk)

4. Passport to Export is UK Trade & Investment's flagship programme for new and inexperienced exporters, providing the training, planning and ongoing support needed to begin a successful export operation. Companies receive a business health check, mentoring from a local export professional, an individual export plan and a range of developmental training options. Now in its sixth year, the Passport to Export programme has attracted well over 1,200 companies in the London area.
5. UK Trade & Investment is the Government organisation that supports British companies engaged in international trade and those wishing to locate and invest in the UK. UK Trade & Investment in London aims to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through their network of International Trade Advisers who offer experience across a wide range of different markets and countries.
6. For more information on how UK Trade & Investment can help small and medium sized businesses, please visit our website [www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk](http://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk) or contact [info@uktilondon.org.uk](mailto:info@uktilondon.org.uk); tel. 020 7234 3000.
7. UKTI's London regional team is dedicated to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the capital through international sales development. A team of International Trade Advisers delivers tailored help to businesses who are either exporting for the first time or looking to enter new markets.  
The team can be reached at: 020 7234 3000; [info@uktilondon.org.uk](mailto:info@uktilondon.org.uk)

**Issued by COI News & PR on behalf of UK Trade & Investment For more information please contact Simon Holder on 020 7261 8342 or email [simon.holder@coi.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:simon.holder@coi.gsi.gov.uk)**