

## Here come the Chinapreneurs

### Sir Tom Hunter wants to build a bridge to Beijing through education

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Young entrepreneurs to witness Chinese dynamism first-hand, says Sir Tom Hunter

THE tables have turned so far in Asia's favour that Lord Green, the trade minister, has updated that long-standing piece of career advice.

"There used to be the saying, 'Go West, young man'. Now it is 'Go East, young person'," according to the former chairman of HSBC.

It's a sentiment shared by Sir Tom Hunter, the Scottish entrepreneur and philanthropist, who has spent the past week in China on a mission to bring that slogan alive for five would-be tycoons.

He is kicking off a new venture that will bring together British and Chinese business leaders for a three-day summit at the Cambridge Judge Business School this autumn, as well as give five young entrepreneurs the chance to spend a year in China studying for an MBA — free of charge.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for the young entrepreneurs to get a first-class, first-hand experience of what is going on in China,” said Hunter, who devotes much of his time to his charitable foundation after his business empire crumbled in the global financial crisis.

He spoke glowingly of the entrepreneurs he had met during his visit, including one who had started as a tailor in a small village and now, at 40, owned more than 8,000 stores across China. “Stories like that abound here,” he said.

Hunter’s partner is the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business in China, a not-for-profit institution founded in 2002 and backed by Li Ka-shing, the Hong Kong tycoon whose British interests stretch from ports such as Felixstowe to 3, the mobile phone supplier, and Northumbrian Water.

Gilad Tiefenbrun, who runs Linn Products, a manufacturer of home music systems, is one of the entrepreneurs who will attend the Cambridge summit. “We have identified China as our No 1 market for growth,” said Tiefenbrun, whose Glasgow company turns over £80m a year and employs 165 people. “We started investing in China about two years ago and it’s showing results and we want to go further. Europe is getting tougher all the time.”

Tiefenbrun, 39, took a basic Mandarin course at Glasgow University last year and will visit China in August, although he has no plans to outsource production there. “We see manufacturing as an integral part of the design process,” he said. “We don’t believe you can split that.”

He is looking forward to the Cambridge conference. “It’s an opportunity to meet our peers — potential future investors, suppliers and customers.”

For Tim Delaney, the advertising veteran who will also be at Cambridge, going to China is a voyage of learning as well as a chance to follow clients such as Toblerone and Brother. “You have to feel humble in the face of what they are doing in China and the scale of it,” said Delaney, 67. “The sheer volume of the population is daunting.”

He has been drawn to the summit by the fact that many Chinese entrepreneurs will be at Cambridge. “They will think they are coming to learn from us,” he said. “It’s more likely we will learn from them.”

The five students will be among 60 on the school's 2013 course. "All our MBA students have to learn Mandarin," said Oliver Shiell, the school's chief representative in Europe. "So by the end of the year, they are fully conversant."

The school is also serious about creating social value, said Shiell. "The other thing they have to do is seven days' community service — in schools, hospitals or charities — and they don't graduate unless they do that."

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