

Schools need to help Gen Z tackle career crunch better, says entrepreneur who turned his life around at 20

UNITED KINGDOM, April 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Phil Mires sets out his vision for beating jobs crisis as he hits £1 million in classic Mini sales

Schools should teach Gen Z how to run their own business to help them overcome the career crunch. So says Phil Mires, one of Britain's hardest working young entrepreneurs, who has turned his life around and has sold £1 million worth of classic Minis.

When he started as a minimum-wage, zero-hours 'dogsbody' at his local golf course 12 years ago, the future looked bleak for Phil. But a year later, driven by an unwavering determination and using £2800 of savings, he took the bold step of starting his own business in antiques and collectables, transforming his life.

Expanding into the classic car industry in 2021, Phil decided to focus on classic Minis and modern classics. Now a decade on from scraping a living collecting golf balls from the rough, he boasts an annual turnover of more than £700,000 and has recorded £1 million in classic Mini sales alone. He's built quite the inventory, stocking around 100 of these iconic cars along the way.

Now Phil, from Chertsey in Surrey, who recently turned 30, wants to inspire other Millennials and Gen Z hopefuls to follow his example. And he wants schools and sixth form colleges to play their part too.

27% rise in youth unemployment

His call comes after [youth unemployment figures](#) showed a 27% year-on-year rise to 642,000 by December 2024 among 16-24 year olds, with a total of 3.03 million young people in the same range economically inactive.

"The jobs and careers market has been dire for young people recently, and I sense a level of despair that I haven't seen before. But my message is: don't give up, you can do it."

Phil, who left school with good A levels, hit rock bottom at the age of just 20. "I was stuck in this dead-end job earning peanuts with no prospects, but I had a vision and decided it was time to

take action, so I pursued my passion for antiques and collectables and turned it into a thriving business.”

Scraping together £2800 in savings and items purchased from car boot sales, he launched [PM Antiques & Collectables](#) in January 2015.

“It was a lot of hard work, but within five years I was offering a 1,300-item range online with a stock inventory worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. Then I moved into classic cars, specialising in Minis.”

Another five years on and he runs [Phil Mires Classic Cars](#) alongside the antiques and collectables business – his classic car stock boasts some rare and highly desirable classic Minis, including two John Cooper S editions, worth around £20,000 each.

“When I look at these two models and the range of cars in my inventory, it makes me think back to where it all started and how far I have managed to come in the past few years,” says Phil.

He also believes that he could have made it even faster with the right help from his school at the right time.

“Not everyone is academic, but if school is about anything, it is about preparing young people for life, and that means practical advice and giving them confidence in their own abilities,” he says.

“Academic grades don’t define your future. With focus, determination and a lot of hard work, anyone can be a success. It’s a message I’m keen to get out there.”

Part of that message is that you have to put in the effort, but also recognise where your weak spots are so that you can overcome them.

“As a sole trader, I handle nearly every aspect of the business myself, from sourcing stock, cataloguing, quotations and admin to overseeing courier logistics, stock control, bookkeeping and prepping cars, as well as conducting viewings, devising social media posts and even sourcing car parts,” says Phil.

Delegating is Phil’s biggest challenge

“My business is niche, and much of what I do is self-taught and instinctive, so it can be challenging to delegate tasks. I realise that this is my biggest limitation, so I’m going to have to find a way around it if I want to grow the business even more.

“That’s exactly the sort of skill that schooling could help you develop,” he says. “I work every day, completing over 3,000 transactions a year, constantly juggling multiple tasks and am always on call. I don’t mind that, but if I want to expand much further, I will need to embrace delegation.”

However hard he works, and however much attention he pays to detail, things can still go wrong: “It’s undeniably frustrating when things don’t go as planned, especially when they’re influenced by circumstances outside my control or when I’m reliant on someone else to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. For example, I might wake up at an unholy hour on a Sunday, embark on a long journey just to view a classic Mini, and immediately discover upon arrival that it falls short of what was described. It’s a disappointing experience to say the least.”

In his rare moments of downtime, Phil enjoys a passion for football and is a keen supporter of Woking FC. While he has the means to indulge in more luxuries, he has limited himself to buying a home and paying the mortgage.

“I manage my finances wisely and prioritise reinvesting into the business – a key aspect for success – but even though I have to be on call pretty much all of the time, I am my own master, have been able to build up considerable assets, and have crafted my own future. Now I want other young people to experience the challenge and exhilaration I have enjoyed as a result.”

Phil Mires’ top ten tips for success

Hard work and self-discipline. Dedicate yourself fully to your goals. Be prepared to work long, unsociable hours and sacrifice downtime. Remember, you’ll create your own opportunities – putting in the hard work will naturally lead to better chances for success. Make your own luck.

Patience and determination. Keep your focus on your vision for success and remain dedicated to it as you progress over time. Challenges are a natural part of the journey and offer valuable opportunities for growth. It’s completely normal to feel down when things don’t go to plan, but letting that negativity take control can distract you from your goals. Each day brings a new opportunity, so greet the morning with a fresh perspective and concentrate on the future. A genuine passion for your work is essential as it will help you navigate through the tough times. Likewise, when things are looking up, it’s important to stay grounded and not get carried away.

Time and lifestyle management. Plan ahead to ensure that you are effectively optimising your time. Maintain a healthy lifestyle to reduce the risk of sick days. Time is money.

Write a business plan. “This is where mentoring in schools could really help,” says Phil. What do you need to know? How do you start? What is a SMART analysis for achieving your goals? The Federation of Small Businesses (<https://www.fsb.org.uk/>) can also help here.

Create a financial model and adhere to your budget. Understand your financial outlook. Don’t get carried away by the heat of the moment as this jeopardises your profit – it’s easily done at auction where I often buy. Budgeting is another thing schools could teach.

Reinvest to expand and manage your cash. Don’t become a slave to debt. Set aside a portion of

what you earn to cover taxes and live within your means. Try to reinvest as much as you can afford, especially in the early days, to help grow the business. Again, financial responsibility should be taught in schools.

Build and maintain a positive connection with those you serve. Approach every interaction with sincerity, politeness and a welcoming demeanour. Make sure to respond to enquiries promptly while maintaining a professional and respectful tone. Strive for efficiency in each transaction, keeping your clients updated throughout the process. Commit to delivering an exceptional customer experience that not only encourages clients to return but also inspires them to recommend your services to others. Also, embrace client feedback so that you can continually improve your service.

Confidence is not arrogance. You may be young, but there is no reason why you should not succeed. Just because others are older, it doesn't mean they're better, so hold your head up, but be realistic with your objectives and what you can achieve over any given period of time. Yet again, schools could play a part in helping build confidence here.

Self-promotion is not vanity. Marketing and publicity can certainly help your business. People won't buy from you if they don't know about you. Promoting yourself for this purpose is essential – it's how you do it that counts. Lessons in building a brand and some marketing tips would be another great contribution from schools.

Welcome helpful advice. Someone you trust and knows about business can prove to be one of your most valuable assets. Consider reaching out to a business coach or an experienced entrepreneur for guidance and mentorship. They'll provide an independent view on what works and where you might be going wrong. Don't be too proud to listen and act on their wise words.

Expertise

One of the best things about Phil going solo in business is the expertise he has built up in the classic car market. Now a recognised authority, he focuses on limited edition, rare and highly sought-after classic Minis.

"My collection mainly features Cooper, Cooper Sport and special edition models. I'm always on the lookout for quality, well-preserved examples, although finding them can be quite a challenge due to their vulnerability to rust. Still, there's nothing quite like the thrill of discovering these gems," says Phil.

"Most of my buyers are collectors and enthusiasts, as well as individuals reminiscing about learning to drive in a classic Mini, or fondly remembering a Mini that a relative once owned. For many, purchasing a classic Mini is a heartfelt return to their youthful days and cherished driving adventures."

Phil's Minis are in high demand.

"I have an ever-increasing client waiting list for particular Minis. Prospective buyers contact me with their desired specification (model, colour, mileage etc) and budget, and I notify them as soon as a potentially suitable example becomes available.

"Classic Minis are fantastic cars to own, especially since their parts are affordable and readily available," says Phil, "they are also highly customisable, can be straightforward to work on and maintain, and they take up half the storage space of a modern-day car.

"Thanks to their ingenious design and configuration, they are surprisingly spacious within – I should know, I'm 6ft 4in – whilst providing a driving experience that can only be compared to a go-kart; sprightly, agile and easy to park in tight spaces."

Two of the models Phil currently has in stock are among the rarest he has seen: A Mini Cooper S Touring and Mini Cooper S Sport 5 by John Cooper Garages.

"Launched in 1997, these two iterations of the iconic Mini Cooper S were built to provide exceptional driving pleasure, combining the latest advancements from the Mk7 Mini with performance enhancements from John Cooper Garages," says Phil.

"Both models delivered impressive performance, boasting power outputs of 85bhp – an approximate 30% increase over the standard Mk7 Mini Cooper MPI – and torque figures 20% greater than the standard car. This translated to enhanced acceleration, with 0-60 mph times of 9.95 seconds for the S Touring and 9.65 seconds for the Sport 5.

"For the Sport 5, it marked a significant milestone as it was the first time you could purchase a Mini with a 5-speed transmission as standard. Although exact production numbers remain elusive, it is believed that as few as 30 units of the Sport 5 were produced, making it one of the rarest editions of the classic Mini. This example is particularly special because the passenger sun visor features the autograph of Mini rally legend Paddy Hopkirk, while the owner's handbook has been signed and inscribed by John Cooper himself."

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