

# Flying high for charity

The Knowledge to Action Foundation, trading the foreign exchange markets to empower the disadvantaged.

**I**n 2010, we set up the Knowledge to Action Foundation, improving the quality of life for disadvantaged children around the world. Knowledge to Action is Europe's largest trader-coaching company and specialises in teaching people to trade foreign exchange and stocks. We employ 150 people worldwide and have offices in London, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Sydney.

The company's success was highlighted when it attained a finalist position in the 2010 London Excellence Awards, 49th place in the 2010 *Sunday Times* Fast Track 100 Awards and most recently claimed first place in the World Finance Foreign Exchange Awards 2012 in the category of 'Best FX Education Provider'.

Greg and I first had the idea of launching our own foundation while we were at the Ubuntu Education Fund's New York fund-raising gala in November 2010. Almost 700 guests attended the event and a staggering \$2-million (roughly R17-million) was raised for the Ubuntu's Children project in Port Elizabeth.

We were blown away by how much people can achieve when they work together. We've both always been passionate about giving something back to the community, but this was different. We wanted to move away from merely making donations to good causes and take a hands-on approach to giving back.

Greg had always dreamt of leaving a positive legacy other than that of his business, and by this point, I had already been on the advisory board of Ubuntu in London for several years, so I had some great experiences and connections in the charity sector. Greg and I sat down on holiday in South Africa, put pen to paper and created what today is the Knowledge to Action Foundation.

We decided that we were going to focus on one cause about which we were both passionate: giving children the best start possible in life. On top of this, we wanted to support projects to which we both had personal connections.

I ended up choosing the Ubuntu Education Fund, allowing me to give something back to the rural communities of my home country, South Africa. From England, we opted to sponsor the children's charity Barnardo's. Greg's grandmother was an orphan and was taken in by a Barnardo's orphanage as a child, so this charity has always been important to Greg.

Our greatest fund-raising vehicle is our annual 'Flying Trader' project. Not only is Greg a renowned forex trader, but he is also a keen helicopter pilot. These events saw him take to the skies above London, trading the foreign exchange markets and sending down video clips of his trades and tips to an audience of more than 500 Knowledge to Action traders. Our graduates trade on their laptops for six hours from our training centre and can



make anywhere between £50 and £10 000 (between R660 and R132 000) a day. We like to make the charity days really fun and fill the room with balloons, play music and show video clips from the charities. Last year, we raised over £160 000 (an estimated R2.1-million) over the course of four events.

All the time we were thinking outside the box and asked ourselves how we could build a system that helps the company and charity simultaneously? The money we raise comes from ticket sales to attend the events, and our broker ETX Capital gives all brokerage commissions to the foundation. It is a perfect example of a symbiotic relationship. The more our clients trade, the more money they earn themselves and the more commission they generate for charity.

The broker is also happy because we are increasing the volume of people regularly trading and we encourage our clients to use ETX as a broker because of its charitable donations. Our delegates form a close and more trusting relationship with us because they can see we are not only teaching them to trade, but we are also helping charities in the process.

Last year's Flying Trader funds were used by the Ubuntu Education Fund to help launch its early childhood development (ECD) programme in Port Elizabeth, a project aimed at enabling disadvantaged children under five to enter primary schools with the same skills as their peers in London and New York. With the help of the £60 000 (R793 000) we donated,



the ECD launched in February 2012 and it has already given 43 children the opportunity to be involved with reading, writing, singing, art, movement and story time, three days a week.

Proceeds raised also went toward supporting the Barnardo's 'Hub' project. 'The Hub' is a constructive workshop for youths based in East London and provides training and education for young people who are care-leavers and young people who are disadvantaged by poverty, disability and abuse. They are then trained within carpentry, plumbing and decorating with the students then receive nationally accredited qualifications and the opportunity of contraction apprenticeships. The £60 000 (R793 000) they received through the Flying Trader allowed them to keep their doors from closing.

This year we are holding six more Flying Trader days, hoping to bring the total amount raised to £250 000 (R3.3-million) for our chosen charities. In addition to continuing to support the Ubuntu Education Fund and Barnardo's, the Knowledge to Action Foundation will also be working with Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Unite and Pride and Purpose charities to build a new crèche in one of the rural villages just

outside Ullusaba. Our goal is to complete the new school before the end of the year.

Besides the Flying Trader, the Foundation hosts a variety of initiatives throughout the year. Our other main project is the annual Knowledge to Action Youth Leadership Summit (YLS), which we established last October.

The Summit is a cornerstone programme in which world-renowned speakers and coaches mentor young people, teaching them practical rich-thinking strategies and essential emotional development tools. The Summit is a powerful six-day development seminar aimed at 13- to 17-year-olds, which includes days focusing on health, wealth, relationships, leadership, entrepreneurship, contribution and purpose. Previous speakers include Tony Robbins' lead youth coach Harry Singha, and Chicken Soup for the Soul contributor Marlon Smith.

The week gives previously shy and untrusting children a great boost in confidence and it is staggering to see the changes that can occur in a mere week. After the course is finished, we follow up with each of the attendees, ensuring they continue to meet their objectives and keep on the right track. This means we are fortunate enough to hear about the success

stories and there have been some great examples of previous YLS teenagers going on to achieve their goals.

Last year, Greg and I were lucky enough to go away with Sir Richard Branson and his Virgin Unite team on their South African connection trip to Johannesburg. Branson shared with us his passion for inspiring business leaders to invest in social enterprise. He believes it is fundamental to think of creative ways to partner with charities and causes that matter, simultaneously befitting the charity and boosting business.

Now, more than ever, the world needs businesses to play a role in tackling some of the tougher challenges facing our global community. As a catalytic organisation, Virgin Unite has been built in the belief that business can and must be a force for good. This is a message that resounds with us and we are passionate about spreading this ethos to other business owners. In the future, customers will demand this conscious synergy.

*Katherine Scott  
Director of the Knowledge to Action Foundation*