

SHAF Rasul

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One in a million

MEET The Scottish Sun's latest columnist — millionaire Shaf Rasul. The star of *Dragons' Den Online* knows business inside out — and is here to help with **YOUR** ideas and problems.

Scotland Needs entrepreneurs



CHARITY
BID TECHS
BRAVERY

IT MAKES
ME LAUGH



I HAD a chuckle when I heard a group of London technology entrepreneurs had stripped off for a charity calendar.

London 'Nude' Tech, above, features racy pictures of men and women with carefully positioned laptops to spare their blushes.

The calendar aims to raise money for Take Heart, a charity that teaches IT skills to blind children in India.

Someone without a sense of humour would say that to be taken seriously in business rule number one is to keep your clothes on.

I thought it was great, just a bit bitter they didn't ask me!

YOU MUST
BE DIRECT

IT MAKES
ME WEEP



CHARITY cards are as much a part of Christmas as turkey and presents, but not all retailers extend the festive spirit to good causes, according to research from Which?

The worst hand over a miserly six per cent of their sale price.

UK charities are in need of funding to ensure they can continue providing services for the beneficiaries they exist to support. If people want to make a difference perhaps the best route is by giving donations directly to the charity of your choice — the donations can be money and unwanted goods or by volunteering your time.

CHILDREN In Need fund fantastic projects which help make positive changes to the lives of disadvantaged children and young people right here in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

When I was asked to take part this year I didn't have to think about it — the answer was yes!

It's for a great cause and it's not often that I become the butt of jokes. My colleagues and staff would have loved it.

Being part of Children In Need gave me the opportunity to call some of my entrepreneur buddies that I haven't spoken to in ages to try and get them to make a pledge.

For those of you who missed it, I was in Pudsey's Jail, above right, and had to rely on



my fellow entrepreneurs, friends, family and associates to bail me out.

Calling them reminded me of all of the qualities and traits of an entrepreneur, and why this strong and vibrant group is the life-blood of our economy.

Dundonian Mike Souter, CEO of Shortlist Magazine, knows how to drive a hard bargain.

He offered me a grand but upped it to a very worthwhile £2,000 if I braved the Glaswegian weather to hand out his publication at Queen Street station.

Shortlist's slogan is 'for men with more than one thing on their mind'.

The only thing on Mike's mind was making a Dragon seem foolish and cold — I agreed!

My old mate Oli Norman, Glaswegian entrepreneur and PR guru showed his competitive streak.

He was locked up in Pudsey's Jail in the morning and called me for a pledge.

I pledged £2,500 to get Oli his bail on the proviso that I would call him if I was stuck. Twenty minutes after being locked up myself I had a call from Oli who pledged £2,501, £1 more than I pledged to him.

Oli's extra pound didn't make a difference as my team beat his team

by an extra £30k! Secret Millionaire star Kavita Oberoi, left, has an even more competitive streak.

She offered me the opportunity to name my pledge size but wanted to race her Maserati against my beloved Aston Martin.

I told her to come back with a serious offer — she'd be eating my dust in that old heap.

She quickly got her own back with a more reasonable offer... £1,800 to keep me locked up.

Westpoint Homes boss Stephen Cullis, head-hunter Neil Irvine and Diane Cartwright, the lady who runs the local kiddies' nursery, heard about my predicament on the radio and telly and called me out of the blue and made a pledge.

Guru

Jim McColl, Clyde Blowers supremo, demonstrated how he became Scotland's most successful businessman by using his ability to think outside the box when he said he would up his £500 donation to £1,000 if I agreed to help distribute his staff's Christmas presents. That was a no-brainer.

Thanks for the grand Jim, and I guess I'll be seeing you in my Santa Suit in December! Business Networking guru Beth Edberg displayed some strong leadership qualities and an ability to motivate others.

She was one of the first calls

that I made. She asked if I would call her back last and began emailing all her friends and associates and came back within the two hours with a respectable £1,050 pledge.

Not bad for emailing a few people in your address book.

Chris Bishop, founder of online marketing agency 7thingsmedia, showed what a risk-taker he was when he decided he would push me out of my comfort zone.

He said he wanted a video of me rapping and dancing to Hammertime by MC Hammer.

He pledged 50p for every view once it had been put on YouTube.

I refused to take him seriously and asked him to make a decent pledge and he came back with £500.

So thankfully Scottish Sun readers will not be subjected to my dancing just yet.

Even in the midst of the worst economic depression we have known entrepreneurs are willing to make sacrifices to benefit others and their generosity helped me raise £46,812 during my two hours' jail time.

Overall, the morning jailbirds — Taylor Ferguson, Tessa Hartman, John Amabile, Oli Norman, Jim Gellatly and Scottish Sun columnist Martel Maxwell — raised £31,220, whilst the evening jailbirds of Neil Butler, Alison Craig, John Quigley, Scottish Sun Fashion Editor Janis Sue Smith, Fiona Best and myself raised £61,856.

Not bad for few hours' work.



PORTAS
IDEA CAN
REALLY
AID KIDS

RETAIL trouble-shooter Mary Portas has just opened Scotland's first charity boutique.

It is in Edinburgh's Stockbridge and is in aid of Save The Children.

Portas, above, has a company called Yellowdoor, with a client list that is a who's who of the High Street, including stores such as Oasis, Louis Vuitton and Swarovski.

But she is best known for the BBC2's show *Mary, Queen Of Shops*.

Her new store opened at 10am on Saturday and has proven to be a hit with fashionistas throughout Scotland.

The first people through the door had a choice of stock donated from



celebs including Jamie Oliver, Lauren Laverne and Peaches Geldof, above. There were also current season donations from top designers, but without the High Street price tag.

Portas said: "It may seem crazy to sell such quality goods at reasonable prices, but the money raised will be well spent and it costs as little as £5 to save a child's life."

"This is a shop for everyone and we want it to be a place that will inspire Edinburgh to give."

"The designer bargains in our charity shop will be fantastic and the store has the potential to attract people from across the whole of Scotland."

The store aims to create a real buzz around second-hand shopping and make the old fashioned charity shop a thing of the past.

To remain shopping neutral the store encourages people to donate high quality goods each time they buy.

It also acts as an incubator to local start-up businesses. Jewellery designers, painters and even bakers can trade from the shop floor with a per centage of the turnover going to charity.

ASK SHAF...YOUR MONEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Dear Shaf,

MY secretary says that we should have a suggestion box so that anyone can give their ideas anonymously.

She says that the one in her old workplace — once it had settled down — came up with some good points that the owner of the business acted on.

SHAF SAYS: Well, my way of getting suggestions is to have a drink with key people on a regular basis.

A suggestion box can be quite good, however, but you've got to do it properly. I don't like doing these things anonymously.

I'd rather offer rewards for people who come up with a suggestion that you act on — so then

they don't mind giving their names. You should put a list of the suggestions up on a notice board and show what has happened to them, that they've been discussed and for the following reasons accepted or rejected.

Dear Shaf

IS it just my customers or is

everyone slowing down paying their bills?

My best payers have become reasonable payers, my reasonable payers slow payers and my slow payers chronic.

What's going on?

SHAF SAYS: I don't think it's just your customers.

It seems to me that everyone

has to look after the cash and one of the ways of doing that is to slow up payments.

I would suggest that you look at your terms of trade.

Is there some way that you can encourage people to pay up front?

Don't forget that if they do that you can give them a small discount at no real cost to you.

Send your problems to the Dragons' Den star. Email: shaf@thesun.co.uk