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Words by  
Lauren John

LORD SUGAR WAS BROUGHT UP IN A COUNCIL HOUSE ON AN ESTATE IN HACKNEY, SOUTH LONDON, AND SHOWED ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT FROM A YOUNG AGE. WHILE MANY SCHOOLCHILDREN WERE IN BED, A YOUNG LORD SUGAR WOULD BE UP AT 6AM BOILING BEETROOT FOR A GREENGROCER.



It seems like only yesterday that these immortal words last ricocheted off the walls of the boardroom but, now that last year's candidates' performances have been consigned to the Youtube bloopers vault, it's time to welcome the class of 2012 and the 8th series of *The Apprentice*.

Once again, Lord Sugar has invited a shortlist of 16 of the UK's most ambitious business brains along with him on a 12 week journey full of tears, tantrums, egos, mishaps and mayhem, before finally, one victor will walk away with the spoils. Once again, the winner of this year's *Apprentice* will become Lord Sugar's business partner, walking away with a £250,000 investment to give their new venture the best start in life.

Any viewers of previous series will know, this isn't a task Lord Sugar takes lightly, and in series 8 he will no doubt once again testing the candidates creative, sales, marketing, leadership, and organisational skills to the absolute limit. With the eagle eyes of Nick and Karren following their every move, the class of 2012 will no doubt be eager to prove their commercial insight and business sense, and hopefully avoid some of the pitfalls that have sealed the fate of previous contestants.

One thing Lord Sugar is never very impressed by is the candidates claiming any affinity or similarity to himself. One of his classic one liners in series 3, 'Don't start telling me that you're just like me, because no one's like me, I'm unique', may ring true, though you couldn't do worse than learn a few lessons from Lord Sugar's business experience.

The original 'Del Boy', Lord Sugar was brought up in a council house on an estate in Hackney, South London, and showed entrepreneurial spirit from a young age. While many schoolchildren were in bed, a young Lord Sugar would be up at 6am boiling beetroot for a greengrocer, and by the age of 16 was earning more than his father, from weekend and evening work alone. Business acumen, and ingenuity played an important part in his early years; he even built his own bicycle from an old frame when his family couldn't afford to buy him one. After



selling car aerials and cigarettes from his equivalent of Del Boy and Rodney's Robin Reliant, he started his first electronics company aged just 21. Although Lord Sugar has never been immune to the perils of business, he made his first million with one of his most well-known success stories, the Amstrad computer. Amstrad also had a lucrative line in set top boxes, a business which is now owned by BSkyB.

Today, Lord Sugar, his wife, and his collection of classic cars, have found a home in Chigwell, Essex, from where he can not only enjoy his passion for cars, but also puts to good use his 30 year's experience as a qualified pilot as he owns a Cirrus SR20 four seat aircraft. Lord Sugar certainly has a few 'boys toys', but they are just rewards for a businessman, who, when not playing the role of 'belligerent boss' in *The Apprentice*, also has his current business portfolio to oversee. He owns and/or is chairman of Amsair, a business and executive jet company; Viglen, an IT solutions business; Amscreen, a digital signage advertising business - and Amsprop. Amsprop is Sir Alan Sugar's property investment firm, and forms the core of his business activities. Now of course, he is well known as a TV personality; perhaps, some might say, as famous for his business record, as his acerbic wit and archive of one-liners.

As the BBC wrote when they profiled him on their website in 2007, "Sir Alan is living, growling proof that you can reach the top and yet retain a distinct cockney flavour". With such a solid business record, Lord Sugar's success is something this year's potential Apprentices hope to emulate one day, although to a certain extent they might want to avoid adding too much 'cockney flavour'. Hopefully, they've also had a look at some of the 'best bits' from past series of the hit BBC show. While the ever

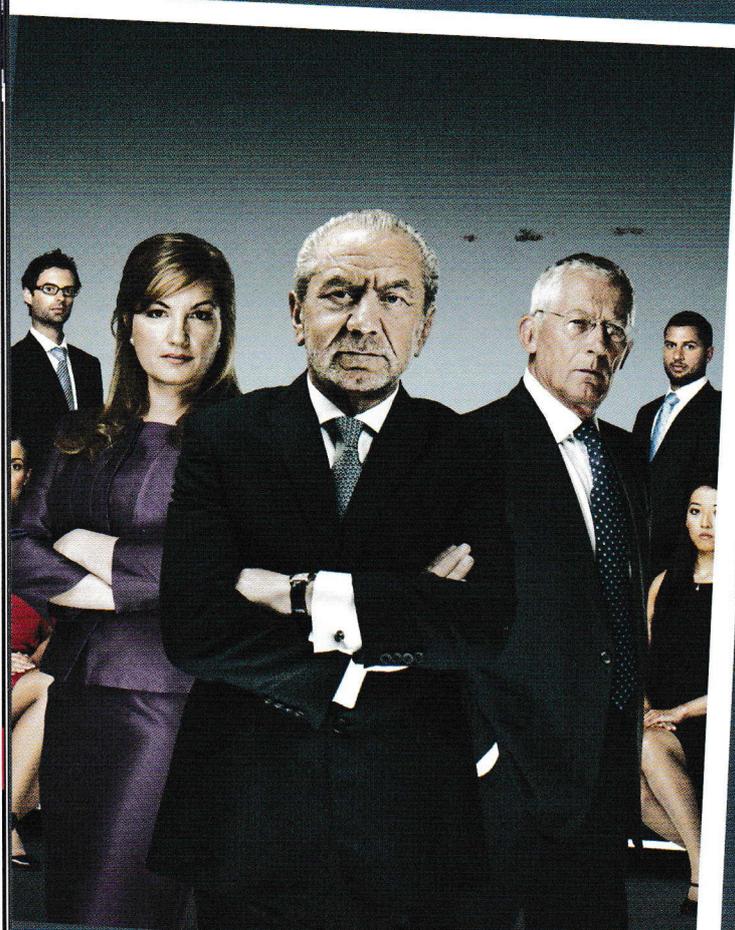


so catchy 'Dance In Your Pants' ad jingle, and the equally questionable catchphrase 'Hasta La Vista Gravy' might have provided some TV Gold at the time, the novelty might wear off if any of the candidates decide to attempt something similar this time round.

The series kicked off on March 21st, and prior to this we were given an opportunity to 'meet' this year's candidates and measure up their business potential. The 16 men and women taking part this year include an architect, beauty salon owner, market trader, a recruitment team leader, a national sales manager, and a technology entrepreneur. There's also a co-founder of a food manufacturers and a restaurateur in the line-up. They won't have any trouble identifying a cloche in a buying task then, except oh wait, that was part of last year's buying tasks.

Whatever tasks await in this year's gruelling 12 week process, one Apprentice we'll definitely be looking out for is local candidate, Michael Copp. 31 year old Michael is a Londoner, whose 'drive and tough background' has led him to become the Managing Director of Dream Bedrooms and Kitchens in Woodford Green. Unlike some of the other contestants, Michael can't include moonlighting as a wrestler, or ice skating alongside Olympic champions Torvil and Dean, in his personal profile, but it's character and business skills that matter in this process.

Saying that, it's interesting to note the quote that candidate Azhar Siddique has chosen for his personal profile. He states that "It's not about who shouts the loudest, it's who has the ability to control the conversation." Whether this shrewd insight will apply to Michael or any of the applicants, only time will tell, but one thing's for sure, when it comes to whittling down the candidates and picking an overall winner, Lord Sugar will be the only one in the boardroom controlling the conversation.



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