

# OC OF THE MONTH

October 2018



## ALEX SCHLAGMAN (SH 2002)

**A LEVELS:** ECONOMICS, ART AND ENGLISH

**UNIVERSITY:** LEEDS UNIVERSITY, BA in Economics and  
Philosophy and MSc in International Marketing  
Management

### **1. Tell us about yourself – where do you currently work, and how did you get into that?**

I'm CEO and founder of Colex Connect Ltd. We trade as SaveTheHighStreet.org and Jo (JoinJo.com).

SaveTheHighStreet.org is a coordinated industry movement accelerating the transition to a stronger, better connected, digitally enabled high street

Jo is the 1st digital assistant for local businesses. We are building towards our vision of an AI assistant powering businesses across the high street of the future.

I started the business because everyone was talking about the 'death of the high street' and I believed the internet would ironically save it (while changing it in a number of important ways).

### **2. What are some of your proudest achievements since graduating?**

I had the conviction to make a number of difficult decisions that weren't popular with others at the time.

In 2007 I joined the founding team of a digital agency instead of a graduate scheme at a bank or carrying on my own business interests in Leeds.

18 months ago I risked the whole business to launch the SaveTheHighStreet.org movement and it worked. 6 months later I forced through a pivot on the core technology product, rebranding to Jo in the process. Changing a business can be a harder decision to make and execute than setting up a business.

### **3. What advice would you give someone who is looking to follow a similar career path?**

If you want to start a business, focus on something you genuinely care about. Whether it's a problem you personally want to solve or a domain area you are deeply passionate about.

If you want to just 'make money' you're far less likely to get through the incredibly challenging times that everyone goes through on the way to success. For a long time you'll likely earn far less money each month than you could make just working for someone else so you need other drivers.

Having your own business is all encompassing for most of the entrepreneurs I know. You have to be obsessed by what you are doing. Perspiration is just as important as inspiration

**4. Which A Level subjects did you choose at Highgate, and do you have any advice for pupils currently choosing A Levels?**

Economics  
Art  
English

Choose things you enjoy. You'll always be better at things you genuinely like doing and you won't get bored

**5. Where did you go to University? What did you study? Do you have any advice for pupils currently thinking about University options?**

Leeds University. BA in Economics and Philosophy and MSc in International Marketing.

University education is much more than your academic degree. Get involved! The best way to learn business is to run one and I founded my first 2 start-ups while on campus. I also learnt much more about social and emotional intelligence than macro-economics.

**6. Did your time at Highgate help you? If so, how?**

I was at Highgate from 7-18 years old and am incredibly grateful in hindsight for the opportunity to grow up as a Highgate boy.  
Very few people grow up with access to the mix of academic and sporting facilities we had while living in an amazing city like London.

**7. In three words, how would you describe Highgate?**

Friends for life

**8. What is your strongest memory of Highgate?**

So many hilarious experiences with the cricket teams through the ages... from captaining in junior school to an unforgettable 1st XI tour in Barbados straight after my GCSEs to the recent years playing for the Old Cholmeleian's.

**9. What drives you?**

Making our long term vision a reality. I also get genuine pleasure from completing my daily to do list.

**10. What's next?**

Jo is currently being rolled out in South West London in partnership with local government and a range of other partners.  
We will be opening a new funding round and expanding nationwide this year