

The Honorary Graduand: Jamie Murray Wells OBE

The Orator: Patricia Voaden

Jamie Murray Wells is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Master of Business Administration.

Jamie grew up in Shipton Moyne, a village near Bristol and attended the University of the West of England from 2000 to 2004 where he graduated with BA Hons. English. During his study at UWE on the St. Matthias campus, Jamie researched and launched Glasses Direct. At that point, the entire global optical market had yet to establish any presence on the web. Over the ten years from there, he grew the business to ship to over 50 countries, employ 150 people and become Europe's largest online glasses retailer shipping over a thousand pairs of glasses a day. In doing so, he overcame strong industry opposition as he drove down glasses prices online, in what used to be a market offering few price and fulfilment options to consumers.

From inception, he directly managed development of in-house software to handle the backend processing and logistics of producing and distributing a bespoke physical product as well as a best in class consumer front-end web product. For a period in the noughties, Glasses Direct was a path-finder in retail innovation launching world-first products such as CustomEyes (2005) which was the first commercialised virtual 'try-on' software, and their 4 pair free 'Home Trial' box (2006).

During the growth of the business, Jamie oversaw the acquisition of SunglassesShop.com in 2010 extending the product line into sunglasses, and LensOn.com in 2012 taking it into contact lens retail.

In 2013, the business was sold and Jamie moved to Google UK where he is currently Head of Retail. He leads a team that looks at store, web, mobile and marketing experiences of the future. They support UK retail on best practice, and advise Google engineers on product requirements coming back from their conversations with the industry and out of their research.

Outside of business, Jamie served as an advisor to the then Shadow Chancellor George Osborne on his New Enterprise Council from 2007 to 2010, going on to co-found 'StartUp Britain', a campaigning initiative announced in the Chancellor's 2011 budget speech. Jamie helped create and manage this organization, incubating it at No.10 and launching it with the Prime Minister to promote UK entrepreneurship. Jamie speaks and advises widely on enterprise as well as mentoring and angel investing in emerging businesses and entrepreneurs.

In 2009 Jamie was named in the Queen's Birthday Honours list as receiving Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Jamie Murray Wells' proactive approach to business and entrepreneurship.