

YO!® SUSHI



## Enterprise

### The idea

Sushi – Japanese-style raw fish with rice and vinegar – was quite a small market in the UK in 1997. Furthermore, most restaurants in the UK certainly didn't serve their food on conveyor belts! Simon Woodroffe, founder of YO!® Sushi, took the risk to be different and opened a conveyor belt restaurant specialising in sushi. The customers loved it and found it fun.

The innovative format of a YO!® Sushi restaurant gives people the chance to eat in a Japanese sushi bar adapted for the West, enjoying a quality, fast and fun dining experience where customers pick and choose their food from a conveyor belt in front of them. If you miss the dish the first time – wait for it to come round again!

The idea for YO!® Sushi came from a remark made by a Japanese friend of Simon's who had suggested to him that he should open a conveyor belt sushi bar with waitresses in black PVC miniskirts. Two years later Simon had invested £150,000 to develop the idea and the first YO!® Sushi restaurant opened in London. The girls in PVC miniskirts weren't there but robots, talking drinks trolleys, the latest music and 'cool' staff were. The public loved it.

YO!® Sushi represents a concept that is popular and profitable. It's just as well that Simon registered his **trade mark** 'YO!® Sushi', a simple combination of the words 'YO!®', a Japanese greeting, and sushi – a Japanese food. This gave him the exclusive rights over that combination of words and how it is used.



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## The enterprise

Simon Woodroffe had 30 years' experience in the entertainment business. Having designed and staged concerts for entertainers, such as the 1970s/80s band 'Madness', and Rod Stewart, and run events such as Live Aid, he understood the importance of establishing and protecting a brand image. He also had a very good understanding of what people enjoyed doing in their leisure time. He used this experience to create a brand image for his chain of restaurants which has a daring, energetic and fresh image, giving it the potential to expand into many other areas of the leisure industry. Expand it has!



## Issues

### The YO!® trademark

Through Simon Woodroffe's vision, and the risks he was prepared to take as an **entrepreneur**, YO!® has been built into an **enterprise** with a brand known for **innovation** and creativity. The brand projects a concept that appeals to all sexes, ages, cultures and people from all walks of life. Registration of the **trade mark** YO!® gives the company exclusive rights over how the YO!® image is projected and the products and services that carry its name. It jealously guards the colours, style and font of the logo, and the way it is displayed. If, for example, another company were to use those colours, styles, letters and words in a similar way to promote its products, consumers might be confused over which company was which.



This could be very damaging to YO!® in two ways.

- YO!® would lose control of its image and reputation. The rival company may be producing sub-standard goods or not portraying the lifestyle concept that YO!® wishes to establish for itself.
- The rival company may be very successful by 'cashing-in' on the investment that YO!® has made in advertising and brand establishment. It would gain rewards which, of course, should rightly go to YO!®, whose business would suffer as a result.

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## Development

Employing 500 people, not only has YO!® Sushi opened branches in the UK and across the world, the company has now moved into the world of clothing and accessories, producing a range renowned for their quirkiness. Future projects planned include health spas and a hotel, to be called YOTEL!®, described as a cross between a British Airways first class cabin and a Japanese capsule hotel. All these **enterprises** will carry the YO!® brand. Simon has even written a book entitled The Book of YO!®. A leading newspaper described the YO!® **enterprise** as thinking of itself less as a business than a way of life.

### MANAGEMENT BUYOUT – YO!® Sushi

YO!® Sushi, with investment funding from Primary Capital, has been bought out by the managers for £10 million. Founder Simon Woodroffe, who continues to hold a 22% stake in the business, said “This deal now gives me the time to develop my other YO!® interests while still retaining involvement in YO!® Sushi’s future growth”. Simon Woodroffe has ambitious plans to extend the YO!® brand.



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## Protection

The protection given by the trade mark

YO!® has registered the trade mark, with its distinctive colours and style, which gives it the right to take legal action against any company that it feels may be using it in an unauthorised way.

Exclusive ownership of the **trade mark** gives YO!® confidence that it alone will gain benefit from investment in new projects and brand extension; it has the incentive to look at new markets and grasp new opportunities control over how its brand is portrayed. These are some of the words the company feels describe the perception that it would like to create in consumers' minds.

**Nutritious Informal Health Inclusive Japanese Quality**

## Outcome

Every piece of advertising, every new product YO!® makes, every new service it provides, every in-restaurant environment it creates, is driven by these concepts. It doesn't risk these concepts being damaged by someone else using the **trade mark** to promote a different lifestyle and image.

## Overview

The protection acquired from registering the YO!® Sushi brand has enabled the business to build on its innovative and enterprising ideas, expand its number of outlets and enter new markets, without fear of anyone damaging its reputation by improperly using the brand name or logo.



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## Additional Learning

### Salty Dog® Crisps

#### The idea

Dave Willis is the founder of Salty Dog® crisps. Follow his story to success. Delivery day at the Cross Keys pub. Dave Willis jumped out of his battered old van, opened the doors and started unloading the boxes of crisps. Paco the barman came out and helped him move them into the pub.

"I see you've ordered more of those hand-cooked crisps again this month," said Dave. "They seem to be going really well at all the pubs I deliver to. I have often thought you could probably sell even more if the packaging was a bit more stylish and the bags were a bit bigger so they could be shared."

"Yeah, I think you might be right," said Paco. He held up two bags. "Why doesn't someone combine these hand-cooked crisps with this larger bag size and put a snappy design on them?"

That set Dave thinking. Why couldn't that someone be him? He started his research. He had to make contact with companies that specialise in crisp seasonings, check that the seasonings had certificates to prove they are suitable for use in the food industry, find a company he could work with to make the crisps for him and then run consumer tests.

In 2002, Dave's idea started to take shape and he decided to produce hand-cooked crisps for his company Chiltern Snacks. His sister Kerry was a graphic designer and she came up with the name Salty Dog® and designed the bags. It was at that point that Dave knew he had to protect his name and his idea. After all, at least one person agreed with him that there was a good opportunity here. How did he know Paco wasn't doing exactly the same as him at the same time?



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Salty Dog® was a brilliant name - Dave didn't want to lose that to someone else. He was aware of the need to find out if anyone else was already using that name, so he contacted the UK Intellectual Property Office to register his trade mark. This prevented anyone else using the name. Salty Dog® crisps were launched in 2003.

By 2004, Dave Willis' Salty Dog® crisps were being sold at the rate of 360,000 bags a month, with business growing dramatically. A new flavour in the Salty Dog® brand portfolio, Jalapeno & Coriander, was launched for the 2004 Christmas market and he is planning to produce a larger 150g bag for supermarkets. The protection that exclusive use of the name Salty Dog® had through owning the trade mark meant that Dave, as a very small business, could develop his ideas, extend his brand and establish himself in a large and highly competitive market.

