



## Good to meet you Ashish Poddar

The Saturday Guardian signals the start of the weekend, even just the smell of the magazine. The paper shares my view of the world. You can read about people in the Guardian that other papers ignore, and it is especially good at presenting an alternative view about how businesses can operate.

I notice that sort of thing because just over 12 years ago I gave up the rat race to run a not-for-profit social enterprise. I was a City lawyer in London and one day I was walking to work and I knew that I had to get out. It was that feeling of going to sit at your desk and wondering if that was where you were going to spend the rest of your life.

When I told people I was giving up my well-paid job and moving back home to Wales to live with my parents and set up a business, they thought I was mad. It did take a major lifestyle adjustment – all of a sudden not simply being able to buy things on impulse, and getting used to having my mum do my laundry again for the first time in 14 years – but I never regretted it. I didn't think I had it in me to be an entrepreneur, although looking back on it I had found novel ways of making money when I was a teenager, selling cleaning products door-to-door and getting up at the crack of dawn to pick strawberries, which I then sold to local restaurants, totally undercutting their ordinary suppliers.

My new venture, [www.freshties.com](http://www.freshties.com), didn't get off the ground properly until 15 months ago (it's tough selling a social philosophy that can engage the mainstream). The idea is quite simple. It links up people who have something to offer – knowledge, experience, skills, or something material – with those who need it. We've got over 10,000 members now, which shows that people are wrong to say that Britain is become a more selfish place.

**Interview by Helen Pidd**

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