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# £100,000 loan funds factory expansion

A MANUFACTURER on Tyneside has increased the size of its factory after securing a £100,000 loan.

AAP Metal Fabrication Services, based at the Bede Industrial Estate, got the loan from Gateshead-based commercial lender Evolve Finance and has used it to complete the 10,000 sq ft extension of the factory, which now stands at 21,000 sq ft.

The loan is part of a £550,000 investment plan by AAP, which will involve increasing its staff from 55 to

65 within a year as well as updating its machinery. The cash will also go towards increasing its number of pick-up trucks from two to eight.

The company was able to make up a large part of the investment by securing a £120,000 grant from regional development agency One NorthEast and a £30,000 grant from South Tyneside Borough Council.

AAP's managing director Paul Bradley believes that the expansion will help it to increase this year's

turnover from £2.4m to £3m, with 10% growth a year from then on.

A deal last year with the Newcastle-based shipping repair group A&P has helped to boost AAP's revenue, with 35% of its turnover attributed directly to this business.

AAP's speedy growth follows last year's management buy-out by Mr Bradley, who took on the fabrication business from founder Lloyd Oley following his retirement.

Mr Bradley first joined the firm

two years after its launch in 1985 and worked his way up to managing director.

He said: "The expansion is vital and will help to improve quality and service levels and meet the existing and future needs of customers. This is an extremely exciting time for us all here.

"We are looking at an expansion programme to take the business forward and Evolve is one of our key partners in this."



Peter Jackson

**ACCORDING to the Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal**

**Sir Jock Stirrup, our troops in Iraq are currently engaged in "transitioning".**

Transitioning – that's an interesting choice of word. I suppose the British soldiers in Basra are "transitioning" in the same way that Napoleon's army transitioned its way back from Moscow.

I assume that the Air Chief Marshal – whose real name is Graham, but who mysteriously allows himself to be called Jock – learnt this strange way of speaking from his business acquaintances, for whom it is meat and drink.

They would also, no doubt, have impressed on him the virtues of "forward planning" and, I hope, would also have stressed the absolute importance of never confusing that with backward planning. We are all familiar with bullshit bingo, the game for spotting management-speak, but it doesn't seem to have done anything to restrict its use. Not so very long ago a Cumbrian Tourist Board spokesman was telling

**The truth is too painful to express in plain English**

Radio 4 Today listeners it was a shame there had been an outbreak of Legionnaires Disease in the county and that torrential rain had blighted the Blairs' holiday there, because the county had some "wonderful brands".

"What are those?" asked a merciless John Humphreys.

"The Lake District" was the reply.

But why do people do it? Is it because the mundane doesn't sound important enough, so that in the 1970s and 1980s, trade union leaders, who were often poorly educated men desperately trying to sound learned, would portentously intone: "At this moment in time," or, even worse, "At this present moment in time".

"Why not just say, 'now'?" one wanted to scream at them.

Or maybe sometimes we use such language for the opposite reason. In the case of "transitioning" troops from a theatre of war where we are losing, or when "downsizing" a company by laying off staff, the truth is simply too painful to express in plain English. But sometimes, just sometimes, there can be a new expression which cuts right through the bull. My current favourite is "blamestorming", which describes an impromptu gathering to work out who precisely is responsible for the current mess. I strongly suspect that Sir Jock Stirrup and his colleagues are currently engaged in a spot of blamestorming.



NEW VENTURE: Entrepreneur Jora Bassi with a Pura smoothie.

# Smoothie bar chain on way

By Iain Laing

**A FORMER newsagent has launched a chain of smoothie bars in the North-East after getting bored with his old job.**

Jora Bassi will open his first Pura store in Sunderland at the end of this month.

The flagship branch will offer a wide range of smoothies, fruit juices and healthy foods.

Following a six-figure loan from the Royal Bank of Scotland, Jora is planning to spin out a chain of the smoothie bars over the next 18 months, with the next branches in Newcastle and Durham.

The opening of the first three sites is expected to create around 50 jobs.

The 42-year-old comes from a family of entrepreneurs and ran a London-based chauffeur business before following his family up to the North-East three years ago to turn around a failing newsagent's in Peterlee.

His mother, sister and two of his three brothers left London for the North-East in the early 1990s and now run a number of businesses in the region, including a chain of convenience stores in Durham as well Bassi's Golden Chippy in Seaham and Mahils Indian restaurant in Peterlee.

He said: "My family has always been involved in running businesses, especially newsagent's. However, as soon as I turned around the newsagent's in Peterlee, I knew I had to take on something more challenging.

"No disrespect, but working in a newsagent's

can become a little boring after three years. Pura is a very exciting business to be part of."

The entrepreneur is aiming to turnover £1m for each of the stores after one year of trading and hopes to be in a position to expand the chain on a national scale after two years.

Mr Bassi believes the smoothie bars, which will also stock hot soups and snacks, will be able to capitalise on the increasing popularity of healthier options on the high street.

He said: "The smoothie market is currently worth around £134m and I hope to capitalise on its growing popularity.

"Smoothies are becoming more and more common in London and in the South generally, with chains such as Crush doing big business.

"I wanted to bring the concept to the North-East region, which has a traditionally poor image in terms of health, and do my bit in starting to change that."

Mr Bassi highlights a report by a consumer research company which showed that Britons drank 34 million litres of smoothie in 2006, and estimates that this will treble by 2011.

He added: "Smoothies and fresh juices fit perfectly into the lives of today's more health-conscious consumer and Pura will offer these as a real alternative on the high street."

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