

# venture @andy



# Giving business a boost

## Design & Technology

Today Metro readers have the chance to award one of Britain's most inspiring small businesses a package of prizes worth more than £50,000 by voting for their favourite finalist in the Venture Candy competition.

Last month, Metro and Venture Candy launched a search for new business ventures in five categories; design and technology, health and beauty, food and drink, green companies and fashion and interiors.

Two-thousand small businesses entered, hoping for a chance to win prizes including £50,000 worth of advertising, hosted IT and communications from Outsourcery, marketing and branding help, a PA service and free membership to The Hub. Seven small firms were grilled in a judging day involving big names from the business world. Here are the final three in the design and technology category.

‘The Venture Candy judging day was a refreshing reminder that the entrepreneurial spirit that drives the UK economy is still very much alive and kicking’

*Piers Linney, joint founder of Outsourcery and Venture Candy judge.*



### 1. Lightex Ltd

Textile and marketing graduates Oliver Van Emden and Bradley Rose set up Lightex Ltd in 2002 to invent and market a fabric which would end those embarrassingly sticky summer days in the office.

After eight years in a laboratory and £1.5million of funding, they have developed an innovative cotton fabric which prevents shirts showing ugly sweat patches. It works because the outside fibres don't change colour when they come into contact with moisture. The fabric looks and feels like normal shirt material and can be washed and ironed like any other piece of clothing.

The pair, who are former Manchester University students, are now preparing to produce their own FreshMax-branded shirts

that will be on sale to the public in June through [www.freshmax.com](http://www.freshmax.com) and they are also looking to sell the technology through licences to other shirt makers.

Van Emden and Rose hope the shirts will appeal to office workers, commuters and people who cycle to work in their office clothes but want to stay fresh and dry.

FreshMax technology is already protected by a worldwide patent. The trademark and the US patent have also been granted and there are patents pending for China, India and Australia.

‘Our dream is to see FreshMax shirts in every office in the country with worldwide sales,’ says Van Emden.

**Voting Code: TECH 1**

### 2. OfficePOD

More than 3million people in Britain now work from home and OfficePOD is a company which hopes to meet the need for workers to have designated office space in their house.

Measuring just 2.1mx2.1m, the space-age pods can be quickly built in pieces and are neat enough to sit in a garden or backyard.

While there are lots of firms offering garden rooms and offices which are usually made of

wood, OfficePODs are purpose-built units which have been engineered rather than craft-built using many recyclable or recycled materials.

For around £15,000 homeowners can buy an OfficePOD outright – complete with heating ventilation and cooling and built-in furniture and a desk, while companies can also provide them for their staff in a leasing arrangement.

One of the benefits is that most people won't need planning permission to install one outside their home.

Until this point OfficePOD has been supported by cash from business investors. The company's founders David Forbes, Stephen Tanner and Robert Walter have a goal of expanding into the US and Europe, and seeing OfficePODs added to new homes and hotels.

‘First we want to achieve a successful launch in Britain with the brand being praised by all customer types,’ says Forbes.

**Voting Code: TECH 2**



### 3. DuoFertility

The DuoFertility company was founded by a group of Cambridge University students in 2006 who came up with the idea of helping women get pregnant with a new sort of body monitoring and analysis system.

‘Our aim is to help create thousands of babies,’ says Dr Shamus Husheer (right). The monitoring system means women wear a small patch the size of a two-pence coin against their skin. The data collected by the patch is then analysed by a small egg-shaped handheld device which can predict ovulation and fertility.

Crucially, though, this device can be connected to the internet where the information can be relayed to the company's fertility centre for analysis by a team of experts who can identify any underlying conditions which are proving a barrier to conception.

DuoFertility has already received European medical device approvals, and a Europe-wide trial and the first units are being sold online for just less than £500,



although Dr Husheer hopes to reduce the price.

‘A cycle of IVF in a private clinic can cost between £3,000 and £5,000,’ says Dr Husheer.

**Voting Code: TECH 3**

## HOW TO VOTE

Text TECH followed by a space and your voting option (1 for Lightex Ltd, 2 for OfficePOD, or 3 for DuoFertility) to 65400. For example, to vote for DuoFertility, text TECH 3

Texts cost 50p plus your standard network charge. Lines close at 11:59pm tonight. If you text after the closing date your vote will not be counted but you may still be charged. Usual rules apply – see [www.metro.co.uk](http://www.metro.co.uk).

You can also vote on [www.venturecandy.co.uk](http://www.venturecandy.co.uk) until 11.59pm next Monday