

Client: Hamilton Bradshaw
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Interview: James Caan

James Caan, entrepreneur and star of TV's *Dragon's Den* talks about his new app, and shares his business savvy



Can you provide some background information about your *Business Secrets* app, and why you decided to launch it?

James Caan: The Government have put so much emphasis on SME's this year in boosting job creation and growing the economy. To do this there needs to be a cause to promote entrepreneurialism in the UK. I was thrilled recently to be asked to join the Entrepreneurs Forum, which advises the government on new business policies and focuses on the challenges SME's face. Sadly, so many businesses fail through simple lack of knowledge of business owners. Now that I've been in business for over 30 years and with a portfolio of 40 companies at Hamilton Bradshaw, the time feels right to share my insight and help others do the same. The app covers topics that are all fundamental to starting and growing a business.

How has the app gone down with would-be entrepreneurs?

JC: We've had excellent feedback so far from the content. Within two weeks there's been 50,000 downloads, far more than was expected in that time frame, and shot to number one in the business section. From the feedback I get from business owners, they don't feel that there is a definitive resource out there to help them with day-to-day advice on commercial issues. But we've also found that a lot of people are downloading the app to listen to my autobiography, which is a free bonus section.

How important are apps in business and how might they have affected your career path if they had been around when you were starting out?

JC: I think apps are really helpful tools that compliment all other forms of communication and they have the potential to play a pivotal role in business. I didn't have any of the information

that's available to businesses today, I didn't have anyone to mentor me and we certainly didn't have the internet! If this app had been available to me 30 years ago, I think the growth of my company would have been much more fluid. Instead of having to learn on the job, I may have been on an even bigger path now.

What is your favourite gadget and how has it made your life easier?

JC: It's got to be my iPad - it's changed the way I manage my business communications. In fact I was so impressed with it, it's the reason I launched the app. In any one week I could be attending up to ten board meetings, that means reviewing ten board packs, some of which can be up to 100 pages. Obviously it's not viable to keep printing up to 1,000 pages for edits or carrying huge files around. So now I have all

the information I need saved on to my iDisc - I can be in the office, or travelling and be able to access any documents at any time.

Which apps do you regularly use and how have you incorporated them into your daily routine?

JC: I would say time is the most valuable commodity in my business life, so anything that can save me time gets my attention. Because I'm usually back to back in meetings all day, it is difficult to find time to keep up with what is going on in the news. The *Sky News* app allows me to catch up with current affairs quickly and easily, with it's clearly laid out content and easy to use interface. *Bloomberg* is another app I am quite fond of - as well as keeping up with business news, I can manage stocks and shares on the go, setting updates suited to a particular preference, effectively cutting out the middleman. I downloaded the *BA* app recently, and I've found it's been invaluable to my travel schedule. I like being able to view all the information on my iPhone or iPad as it



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means I can plan ahead and make arrangements before I have even entered the terminal. It also gives you the option to download your boarding pass directly to your phone, with no hassle of printing off pieces of paper, all the information you need is stored on a barcode.

What business secrets do you wish you had been privy to when you were starting out in business?

JC: There is a much bigger network when it comes to finding finance nowadays. To finance my first venture, I maxed out credit cards and took out a bank loan. If I had known just how many more options were out there and how to strategically secure investment, I might have paid off my loans quicker (and more cost effectively!). I think the most important and critical aspect you will come across is writing a smart business plan. When I started Alexander Mann, apart from knowing the basics, I had to figure out for myself what sort of information to include and how best to structure it.

Do you plan to release any more apps?

JC: Budding entrepreneurs have such a thirst for business advice and I think there is a huge gap in the market for apps to help give them tangible advice. I am looking into developing a business app specifically for start ups to compliment *Business Secrets*; the current app can be applied to the business journey, through start ups to growing SME's. The new app will go into more detail, and go through the 'nitty gritty' of the journey when building a business from the ground up. I'd also use it to offer practical advice on whether an idea is a really a business, to help people avoid wasting time on a project which isn't commercial.

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How to... Get Rich?
Business Secrets contains a lot of content to digest



Step 01:
1 Each Volume has a short informative downloadable video of Caan summarising its content.



Step 02:
2 You can listen, read or share a chapter - but you don't want more potential rivals, do you?



Step 03:
3 Simply scroll down to read the chapter. It's well-written, although it can get a bit self-indulgent.



Step 04:
4 If you click listen you can go to the playlist to access volume and a link back to a readable version.



Step 05:
5 If you have any favourite secrets or chapters, you can list them here, but there's limited editing options.

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James Caan Business Secrets

Could Business Secrets earn you money for nothing?



James Caan is best known to British audiences as one of The Dragons from *The Dragon's Den*, where he would help budding entrepreneurs by financing their product if he deemed it worthy. However, this free app has got to be the second-best assistance a young businessperson could receive.

The Secrets section of the app consists of eight 'volumes', from 'People & Hiring' in the beginning to your 'Exit Strategy' at the end, and each of these volume consists of several downloadable tips delivered by Caan in audio form, and also in easy-to-read text. These clips only last for a couple of minutes, but they work well, and Caan mostly uses plain English to get his points across. Cringeworthy business speak is kept to a minimum, especially in the early chapters.

When terms like 'liquidity' are used, Caan usually offers a relatively simple explanation and definition.

Caan's style throughout delivering these secrets is quite anecdotal, and while some chapters may sometimes veer into self-indulgent arrogance, his personal examples lend more credence to his tips. This is a man who is clearly knowledgeable about the subject matter, and the content spans into the modern era, with advice on how to market via the internet and traditional methods.

But these secrets are only half the app. Caan's autobiography *The Real Deal* is on here in its entirety - you simply download each chapter to the Playlist section of the app, which is alongside the Secrets and *The Real Deal*. The book is read by Caan himself, and while it is perfectly listenable, his delivery is a little

slow, and we would have preferred the option to read it. But maybe that's asking a bit too much.

The Playlist, while functional, is the weakest section of the app. The design is where it suffers most, as it takes a good few presses to hit the play button without messing the volume, and even when you're listening to *The Real Deal* audiobook, a large button still implores you to 'Read This Secret'.

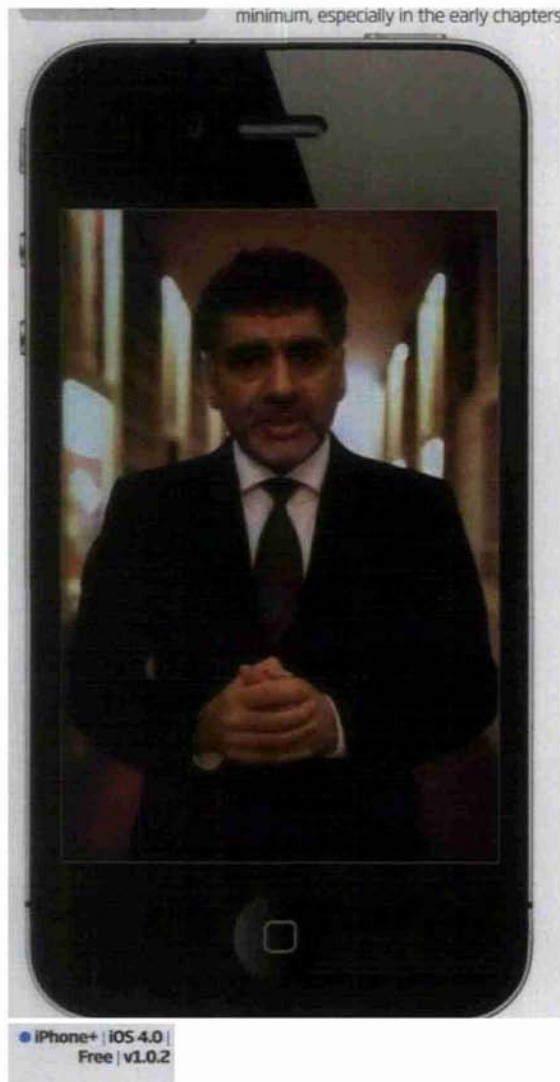
But such grievances don't matter, because *Business Secrets* is the perfect app for those seeking to start a new organisation or venture. But offering such advice and content for free - that can't be good business, can it?



A content-filled app that anyone with an interest in business should get.



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