



**Cass Business School**  
CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON



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### ***Cass Entrepreneurship Fund makes first investment in Alva with £675,000 funding round***

The Cass Entrepreneurship Fund, a new £10m investment fund providing finance for start-up and early stage companies across the Cass Business School community, has made its first investment in corporate reputation analysis firm Alva.

The funding round of £675,000 was led by Cass alongside a group of angel investors including Charles Lewington, Managing Director of hanover, and Andrew Vickerman, the former Global Head of Communications and External Relations at Rio Tinto Plc.

The Cass Entrepreneurship Fund was created with the support of Peter Cullum, a high profile Cass MBA Alumnus and the Founder and Executive Chairman of insurance group Towergate. The Fund forms part of the Peter Cullum Centre for Entrepreneurship which provides a focal point for entrepreneurs at Cass, offering access to entrepreneurship teaching programmes and venture capital expertise, as well as the opportunity to apply for investment.

Alva is a company that specialises in analysing corporate reputation and reputational risk, founded by Cass MBA alumni Alberto Lopez-Valenzuela and Richard Fleming. Alva's services equip organisations with the analysis tools to manage reputation and reputational risk in the same way as any other valuable business asset. Current services inform organisations of the emerging reputational issues in their sector, and later in the year the company will be launching a near real-time dashboard to analyse reputation and additional specialist consultancy services as required.

Alva was initially incubated within the Peter Cullum Centre of Entrepreneurship at Cass, which helped to support it both practically with a professional space to operate from as the company was being established, and by providing the support and facilities of the Cass academics and services.

Nick Badman, Chair of the Centre for Entrepreneurship at Cass, says: "Alva is an exciting new business led by a top quality team. We have been thrilled to support its development over the past year through our incubation facility and hope that this will be only the first of many successful new businesses created with Cass and supported financially by the new Fund".

Alberto Lopez-Valenzuela, CEO and Founder of Alva says: "Over the last months, we have formed a strong partnership with the Cass Entrepreneurship Fund team, which has been instrumental in ensuring that Alva received the right backing to launch the business. Thanks to Cass's ongoing support Alva has been able to attract the right investors, an incredibly strong Board and top talent in the sector"

Peter Cullum, Executive Chairman of Towergate Partnership said: "I have been heartened by the quality of budding entrepreneurs to date. The key to any investment is not just a good idea, but a clearly executed business plan and Alva certainly has this in spades."

Budding entrepreneurs also have the opportunity to sign up for The Peter Cullum Centre for Entrepreneurship's New Venture Creation Programme at Cass, a five day course consisting of expert mentoring and support for entrepreneurs.

This new programme, led by Professor Julie Logan and other Cass experts, will connect participants to the people, investors and networks who know what it takes to turn a great idea into a great business. It is a serious and intensive programme which requires participants to have a

viable business plan, idea, or early stage business in order to qualify. Participants in the programme also have the chance to submit their business plan to the Cass Entrepreneurship Fund and be considered for initial investment.

**For more information contact:**

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**Notes to editors:**

**Cass Business School**

Cass Business School, City University, London, delivers innovative, relevant and forward-looking education, training, consultancy and research. Located in the heart of one of the world's leading financial centres, Cass is the business school for the City of London.

Our MBA, specialist Masters and undergraduate degrees have a global reputation for excellence, and the School supports nearly 100 PhD students. Cass offers the widest portfolio of specialist Masters programmes in Europe and our Executive MBA is ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in the world by the *Financial Times*.

Cass has the largest faculties of Finance and Actuarial Science and Insurance in Europe. It is ranked in the top 10 UK business schools for business, management and finance research and 90% of the research output is internationally significant.

Cass is a place where students, academics, industry experts, business leaders and policy makers can enrich each other's thinking. For further information visit: [www.cass.city.ac.uk](http://www.cass.city.ac.uk).

**Cass Entrepreneurship Fund**

The Cass Entrepreneurship Fund is a commercially driven for-profit investment fund backing start-up and early stage businesses which have significant growth potential and strong management teams. The Fund has a service sector focus but portfolio companies will operate across a broad range of sub-sectors including financial, professional, business and support services.

Investment opportunities will be considered for both start-up and early stage companies including:

- Start-up or seed funding for companies seeking to commercialise an existing business concept or service
- Development capital in the form of equity or quasi-equity funding for the growth of more established businesses

Initial investments will range from £50,000 to £500,000, depending on the stage of development, structure and financing requirement for the investee company.

In 2007, Peter Cullum was awarded an honorary doctorate of Science in Entrepreneurship by Cass Business School. Following this he provided £10 million for Cass Business School to form a new Centre for Entrepreneurship.

**Alva**

Alva specialises in analysing corporate reputation and reputational risk.

Its services equip organisations with the analysis tools to manage reputation and reputational risk in the same way as any other valuable business asset.

Alva's services are industry sector specific. Reputation analysis services for the automotive industry are already being delivered with services to the energy and utilities and financial services communities following shortly, with 32 industry sectors planned in total.

The Alva founding team brings more than 50 year's experience in media intelligence, business analysis and technology innovation. The Alva Board of Directors consists of industry experts with extensive first-hand experience in managing reputation at PLC level. Alva Chairman Andrew Vickerman is the former Global head of Communications & External Relations at Rio Tinto Plc. Alan Schofield, Former Press Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott and Mark Rigby, Director of Corporate Affairs at Sainsbury's PLC, serve as Non-Executive Directors.

For further information please contact Alastair Pickering at 020 3176 7855, [alastair.pickering@alva-group.com](mailto:alastair.pickering@alva-group.com), or visit [www.alva-group.com](http://www.alva-group.com)

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**hanover**

1. hanover is an independent corporate communications and public affairs company with 50 clients and 36 consultants from the public, private and third sectors.
2. hanover is a member of both the Public Relations Consultancy Association and the Association of Professional Political Consultants and was recently shortlisted as Consultancy of the Year in the Public Affairs News Awards.

More information about hanover can be found at [www.hanovercomms.com](http://www.hanovercomms.com)