

Steven Bartlett hopes to inspire budding entrepreneurs as Dragons' Den adds 700,000 extra viewers

Steven Bartlett has said he hopes to have inspired budding entrepreneurs with his Dragons' Den debut which saw a surge in viewers for its first episode.

The businessman, who co-founded Social Chain with Dominic McGregor in Manchester, has also revealed exclusively to BusinessLive how it felt to go up against his fellow Dragons as well as [what made him make his first investment](#).

According to BBC figures, not including iPlayer or future plays, this year's opening episode secured an average 3.2 million viewers, up from the 2.8 million from the prior series.

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The show also peaked at 3.7 million viewers, up from 3.1 million for the corresponding episode for series 18.

How did it feel going up against the other Dragons for the first time?

"Honestly, I have the greatest deal of respect and admiration for my fellow dragons.

"These are the people that have played a role in inspiring my business journey since I was 12 years old.

"It's funny because you would assume that the role of a Dragon is to give your opinion and maybe even teach the viewer at

home something about business.

“What I didn’t anticipate was that I would learn even more, just by listening to my fellow Dragons, than I could possibly team myself.

“Debroah is so smart – a human calculator and she can detect bullshit, holes or dishonesty with her eyes closed.

“Peter isn’t just brilliantly smart, he’s a really good empathetic human being – and he taught me you can be kind and successful at the same time.

“Sara is real, she’s nice, she’s hilarious and very relatable – it’s not easy to be all those things and a fiery dragon at the same time but she’s mastered it.

“And Uncle Touker is one of the most entertaining wise individuals I’ve had the pleasure of working with – he brings a completely new, gripping, raw appeal to the den.”

What made you invest in cheesegeek?

“The entrepreneurs. That’s what I ultimately invest in – my conviction that these founders and their team will prevail. Also, the cheese was just mind-blowingly good.”

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What did the reaction on social media tell you about the importance of representation in business through Dragons' Den?

"Honestly, the reaction didn't have to tell me anything I didn't already know.

"Role models you can relate to, because they look, sound, speak or have walked the same path as you, are the most relatable.

"So if we want everyone to hold big dreams, we've got to put everyone on our screens."



Touker Suleyman, Sara Davies, Deborah Meaden, Steven Bartlett and Peter Jones

(Image: BBC – Photographer: Andrew Farrington)

What do you hope budding entrepreneurs took away from your performance in the first episode?

“There’s a lot of entrepreneurs that have followed me over the last 10 years – I saw some of them tweeting yesterday.

“Knowing that they saw me struggling 10 years ago – just a kid with a big idea, and now they see me sat there in the prestigious den chair, I hope will inspire them too.”



Steven Bartlett is the newest dragon on BBC’s Dragons’ Den
(Image: BBC/Grab)

Which is a better route to getting investment into a business, Dragons’ Den or The Apprentice- and why?

“Dragon’s Den. What you see on Dragon’s Den is real. There’s no script. I’m not told what to say.

“The producers don’t interrupt pitches. We sit there for anywhere between one and three hours and we have to decide if

we're giving our money to this business idea. To me this reflects reality.

"The Apprentice is more of a reality show, it's more centred on drama and antics. I love that show too, but Dragon's is THE business show in my opinion. Of course I would say that."

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