

# Virtual trading makes champion money men

Novice traders were transformed into market-savvy prize winners by the British Trading Challenge, writes Peter Archer

**N**o money changed hands but competition was real. Virtual trading began on November 16 and by December 1 the winners had crossed the finishing line.

The first eToro British Trading Challenge saw the overall winner amass a profit of US\$26,000 (£15,600) in just two weeks, with trade results based on real-time market data.

Top trader in a field of more than 1,000, the winner used eToro's trading simulation software to familiarise himself with the markets.

Chief executive Jonathan Assia says his company's online financial trading platform supports a growing interest in foreign exchange dealing.

"Where forex trading was once largely confined to financial-sector experts, we are now seeing a steady increase in clients, from all walks of life, taking control of their finances."

The development represents the "democratisation" of online trading by creating an easy-to-use trading platform, he says.

"Trading is not gambling but is a skill based on research and experience. For the short term you can ride the trends, but for long-term trades, do the fundamental analysis and research the economic indicators. Diversify and don't rely on too few investments. When a trade goes bad, get out. Don't be stubborn and hold on."



## AND THE WINNERS ARE...TRADERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

**Sajith Valiyaveetil** is the 2009 eToro British Trading Challenge champion. Aged 22, from Forest Gate, east London, Sajith achieved the biggest virtual profit of \$26,000 (£15,600) on the forex market. He began the competition by exploring trading across all currency pairs but later focused on the euro and US dollar, the most traded forex pair. He successfully identified selling opportunities at recent highs and ultimately reached first place by concentrating on the quality, rather than quantity, of his winning trades. An MBA student, who works part-time in a souvenir shop, he describes himself as a "novice" trader. "I just started one-and-a-half months ago and have learned by myself," he says. "I opened a demo account and the competition was my first trading experience. I discovered forex while browsing the internet. I was searching for ways to increase my earnings online which wouldn't get in the way of my studies. I really knew nothing about forex but, after I started trading, I learned a bit each day. I think I will be able to earn some extra money for my future. I'm amazed to have won the trading challenge on my first try and I really think it shows that anyone can start trading forex."

**Andrew Omara** is the runner-up with a profit of \$10,500 (£6,300). A professional poker player and former car wash owner, Andrew, 43, from Morecombe, Lancashire, traded the silver market with nerves of steel. He rode the market as a "silver surfer" but also tried his hand at forex. Profiting not only from buying silver in a clear bull market, he also showed great timing by managing to gain from every correction. He exhibited intuition and quickness-of-mind to know when to sell in a skyrocketing commodity market. Andrew says he is a "beginner", despite having traded real funds before the competition. "I don't believe my background as a professional poker player helped, but maybe I'm just a gambler at heart," he says. "Initially I lost but learned where I went wrong. At the beginning, I left money in too long. I also took high risks, using high leverage which was costly. My trading strategy basically entailed watching the markets prior to opening a trade. I entered the five and 15-minute interval graphs, and watched how currencies changed." But it was silver that caught his eye. "I was drawn to commodities as it was a lot faster paced and I enjoyed the challenge," he says.

**Tamas Kalanyos** came third making \$9,646 (£5,800). From Hungary, where he trained as a computer programmer, Tamas, 35, now lives in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, and is currently a factory worker. He started the challenge on the wrong foot, trading mostly euros against the pound. He also focused on short-term trades on the pound against the US dollar without much success. But his fortunes turned around in the second week of the competition as he continued to trade on the forex market, adding the euro against the dollar to his strategy and allowing the trades to flow a little longer, giving them a chance to maximise gain. He says: "I started about six weeks ago. I have been searching for a way to make money or work from home. I have not traded for real yet. I am thinking about it. If I could make even £100 a week, that would be good. I was constantly checking the dollar. I checked the pairs going up or down – the trends – and after this I got some information from the internet on the dollar, euro and pound, and calculated whether the euro would go up and then would buy it."

**Leslie Wilson**, in fourth place, finished the challenge with a profit of \$8,643 (£5,197). The 45-year-old property developer from Coventry in the West Midlands, mainly traded the pound against the Japanese yen. Leslie displayed discipline and self-control, employing a two-part strategy. First he let losing trades close automatically by using a "stop loss" feature on the trading platform. Then he started trading in small quantities and gradually increased the size of his trade as profits built up. He followed this pattern throughout the competition, proving the importance of formulating a plan and sticking to it. "I started forex trading very recently, in the past few months," he says. "I still consider myself a beginner, although I would say that I do understand the fundamentals of forex trading. I started trading for real money in the recent past, as opposed to using virtual funds. In fact, I'm considering embarking on real trading again in the near future. I initially thought that trading would require a lot of knowledge about the financial markets. But, after doing some initial research, I perceived that forex trading is basically open to anybody."