

Simon Shaps has struck a deal with producer Back 2 Back in his first step to creating a "virtual super-indie".

The former ITV director of television and chief executive of ITV Productions plans to build a loose network of indies that he will help to grow.

He had planned to take minority stakes in the producers but will now contribute time, contacts and expertise – sometimes called "sweat equity" – instead. It is thought he will receive some fees from the companies involved, with an option to receive equity.

First up is Back 2 Back, which made Take That: For the Record for ITV1 and Alex James: The Cocaine Diaries for the BBC. Shaps' early involvement with the indie saw him help secure Sky 1 as the broadcaster for its documentary Josef Fritzl: The Story of a Monster.

Shaps is also understood to have lined up deals with drama, kids and entertainment producers, as well as talking to advertiser-funded programme specialists, digital content companies and distributors.

"A lot of indies don't feel this is the right time to sell, but they can see the value of partnerships with Simon and with each other," one source said.

Shaps declined to comment.

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