



STARTUP  CATALYST

**FEMALE
FOUNDERS
ALUMNI**

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FOREWORD



Andrew Johnson
Chief Executive Officer, ACS

With the mantra of *Born Local, Going Global*, **Startup Catalyst** was formed to assist in the cultural transformation of the Australian economy to one that is fast-paced, tech startup aware, and “global first”. We achieve this through the deep immersion of entrepreneurs, innovators and technologists into global tech startup and innovation hotspots, allowing our alumni to acquire best-practice insights that can be adapted for our local market, and to build networks and connections for trade.

Our purpose is clear – we are looking to re-program minds and inspire our alumni to build the next generation of high-growth technology startups right here from Australia.

All alumni of our Startup Catalyst missions are expected to return to their communities and be the contagion for change. Post-mission you are expected to share your learnings and experiences with as many others as possible and to put into practice new activities to make a bigger impact.

In this publication, we have twelve Startup Catalyst alumni sharing their journeys and experiences.

We trust that these stories will give you an insight into startup culture and maybe even assist in being bitten by the startup bug yourself, giving you a sense of what can be achieved building and deploying technology if you put your mind to it.

About Startup Catalyst

Startup Catalyst was formed to assist in the cultural transformation of the Australian economy to one that is fast paced, startup aware, and “global first”. We achieve this through the immersion of future and current entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, and investors in innovation, into high-paced startup-rich environments to help understand differences in our business cultures, and to build networks and connections for trade; on return to fully network these lessons back into the broader community.

Our individual missions are tailored specifically for the attendees, and include visits to tech giants, high-growth startups, local investors, corporate innovators, accelerators, incubators, and co-working spaces.

Through structured programs including site visits, private tours, guest speakers, events, dinners and social interactions, we provide participants with deep insights and personal connections into new international markets.

About ACS

ACS is the professional association for Australia’s Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. More than 44,000 ACS members work in business, education, government and the community. ACS exists to create the environment and provide the opportunities for members and partners to succeed. ACS strives for ICT professionals to be recognised as drivers of innovation in our society, relevant across all sectors, and to promote the formulation of effective policies on ICT and related matters.

Visit [acs.org.au](https://www.acs.org.au) for more information.



Kym Atkins

CO-FOUNDER OF THE VOLTE



BUSINESS

THE VOLTE



ESTABLISHED

2017 IN PERTH



EMPLOYEES

10



CUSTOMERS

100,000 MONTHLY USERS

What is your business all about?

The Volte is an online peer-to-peer marketplace for borrowing and lending designer fashion items. The best way to think about us is the Airbnb of fashion.

How did the idea for your business come about?

It came about a couple of years ago when one of my co-founders was going to lots of weddings. I looked at her wardrobe and wondered how could she monetise the clothes in there. She was often only wearing the dress once and felt like she had to buy a new dress for each event she was going to. On top of that, we felt that with fast fashion being the second largest polluter in the world, maybe if we could get people back into designer fashion – back into the real thing – and consuming fashion sustainably, that would be a good thing as well.

What problem does your business solve?

I guess it solves the problem of women having nothing to wear! One of the Volte's visions from the beginning has been that every woman in the world can have access to designer fashion and consume fashion sustainably.

Who is your ideal customer?

To be honest, we've found that it's any female from 18 to 55. We have a really broad range because everyone has an event at some point that they need to go to. I think a lot of people don't necessarily want to purchase an evening gown or even just a new dress for a one-off event.

What has been your biggest challenge to date with The Volte?

Probably funding to be honest

– and being female in a tech world.

Once we got the traction and the numbers started doing the talking, the money came in, but I think proving to everyone that females are just as good as techies as males has been a big challenge.

In terms of the business itself, probably just making sure that everyone understands to trust the site is secure has been challenging. I think we've been lucky that Uber and Airbnb have led the way in the sharing economy. Five years ago, you never would let a stranger pick you up from your house in a car. If you don't have trust at the core of your platform, you'll never be successful.

The way we do that is we have a really good customer service team and we really try to help both sides of the transaction if they need us.

We try and go above and beyond each time. For example, if your dress didn't turn up for an event because delivery was delayed, we will always find someone an emergency dress from the region or the city they live in. I think that's just building up the trust over time and making sure people know that the site is secure and is a safe place to transact.

Who has mentored you along your journey?

We've had fantastic mentors including Mike Rosenbaum from Spacer, which is a marketplace for linear space. He's been amazing. He's been one of our mentors from day one and he's obviously really prominent in the tech industry. Also, an amazing mentor out of Silicon Valley called Adam Broadway who's an Aussie who lives in the States. He's the CEO of the person who developed our marketplace and just took us under his wing as well. Then we did Springboard. We got accepted into that program and out of Springboard, we've had some amazing mentors as well that have continued with our journey.

What is the vision for your business?

We would like to definitely explore new markets. Our vision really is for every woman in the world to have access to designer fashion. We have all different price points, demographics, size range and we want to start people thinking about consuming sustainably. Let's get people back into the real thing. Let's support designers

“Our vision really is for every woman in the world to have access to designer fashion. We have all different price points, demographics, size range and we want to start people thinking about consuming sustainably.”

and let's try and move away from being disposable with our fashion.

What would you say has been your biggest stuff-up to date?

We delayed our development by six months attaching a courier service to the site. It was really tricky for the developers so we delayed six months, it cost a lot of money and within two to four weeks of launching, we realised that the Australian public only wanted Australia Post!

That was probably our most expensive and time-consuming mistake. We took the courier off straight away. It wasn't working.

With the benefit of hindsight then, what would you have done differently?

The funny, interesting thing is that we did ask the customers but we asked the wrong question. We were asking, "Would you like it delivered to your house?"

We didn't ask how you'd like it delivered. We liked the idea that it would come to your house. We just didn't realise that people didn't want couriers. People live in apartment blocks in Sydney and Melbourne and most people don't have a safe place at their house to leave a parcel. They want it to go the post office and be signed for.

I think we asked them the wrong question when we asked it and our mentor, Adam Broadway, told us for nearly every week for those five or six months to not do this and maybe just stick to Australia Post but we insisted that it was the secret sauce [laughs].

How have you funded your business to date?

Initially, we bootstrapped it ourselves then we did an angel round with some private individuals.

Do you see a further capital raise in your future?

Yes, we're working that out

now. Maybe at the end of this year, beginning of next year, just depending on what happens in the next few months.

Where would you like the business to be in the next five years?

Preferably have gone to a new market, wherever that may be, and then hopefully looking at an exit.

Any idea of the first international markets you'd like to enter?

We're just looking at that at the moment, actually. We will probably will look at Europe or potentially Asia. US was up there but I think that's dropped off now. I think the key with us is we don't own any stock. We are scalable and we have very low overheads. We can launch into a new market very, very easily compared to having to buy the stock ourselves.

Who would you say put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

Probably my dad. I'm one of two girls in the family and he was always very keen for us to get a really good education. We also did a lot of travelling growing up, lived in other countries – he really wanted our eyes opened up.

.....

“If you have a great idea I think it's worth just giving it a go. You never know where it might take you. At times it is relentless and challenging but it also gives you flexibility.”

.....

I did five years in London post-university working as a corporate lawyer. I got the global experience and learned resilience and skills.

I'm probably a little bit of a go-getter and quite motivated and we saw a good idea and I thought 'why not?' If you don't take chances, if you don't give it a go, you never know.

What's your advice to women looking to become female founders?

If you have a great idea I think it's worth just giving it a go. You never know where it might take you. At times it is relentless and challenging but it also gives you flexibility. If you are a mother – and I'm a mother of four – you can at least be flexible around the children but do not underestimate how hard it is. It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done.

Update

Since London, Kim says The Volte has completed another round of funding with existing investors and has a VC fund coming onboard. “The main reason for this funding is rapid expansion and to develop an app,” she says. “We have added to our customer service and tech teams, and our site now has over 30,000 items.” The Volte will focus on a push into sustainability this year, ‘Buy Nothing New 2020 (Buy Less, Share More)’, to get people thinking about the social impact of fashion and rent their clothes rather than buy. Kim says The Volte is on track to double its revenue this year.





Trish Mackie-Smith

CO-FOUNDER OF INNDOX



BUSINESS
INNDOX



ESTABLISHED
2017 IN BRISBANE



EMPLOYEES
3



CUSTOMERS
250

What is your business all about?

Inndox is a digital property logbook that passes from one owner to the next. Like you have a logbook for your car with all the service history, Inndox is a property logbook that covers the entire lifecycle of a property, starting from the builder or property developer who provides all of the data, manuals, warranties, certificates, specifications, plans, and approvals.

That then passes to the owner who can better manage and maintain their property, keep updating it, share it with a solicitor or property manager. When selling the property, it's passed onto the next owner – that's very valuable.

We have traction across four states of Australia. We're endorsed by Master Builders,

Property Council of Australia and Housing Industry of Australia as a best practice tool for builders.

What problem does your business solve?

Being a property lawyer and also a building consultant with my husband who's a commercial builder, we saw lots of issues around the history of buildings and property, like paperwork going missing when you really need it.

We thought there had to be a better way for us to know what's the real state of that building that you're about to buy or move into, or have work done on – having trusted records rather than paper that could easily go missing or be subject to fraud. I was looking for a solution and I thought technology could digitise all the property records, and help you better manage them.

I also think the 'buyer beware' law is an unfair law. The seller of a property doesn't need to provide anything. No information is needed to be supplied to potential buyers and buyers are getting ripped off. They're buying lemons and this is where I've been having to come in as a lawyer to try and sort things out.

Once you've bought the property, you've got no come back at the seller or the agent, especially if it goes to auction. A lot of buyers aren't getting building and pest reports done at a feverish time at auction, thinking it all looks great. They put down a lot of money and then they're stuck with it.

All these issues combined, I thought, if we only had records that you could trust, at a trusted central location so that everyone could know the history of that property, and then the true value of

that property, then that would answer a lot of problems.

I even have a petition in state parliament. I'm the principal petitioner in Queensland, and it's for seller disclosure. It was sponsored by Kate Jones, Minister, and it's being debated in parliament. Laws take a long time to change and I'm hoping that we can set a standard in the industry, improve the industry with transparency, safety, sustainability.

How long did you sit on the idea for a business before you did something about it?

I was talking to my husband about that recently. We remember that we were on a holiday, which is pretty rare [laughs]. We were surfing, bobbing up and down in the surf together. It was December 2015 and we thought, "We're sick of this, records going missing all the time, people getting stressed, losing sales. How can we digitise this? What can we do? Let's work on it. Let's do some research."

I was also fed up with a 'buyer beware' law, too. That's around Australia, except in the ACT. They have seller disclosure in the ACT which has been operating successfully since 2003. I thought, "Well, why can't the rest of Australia follow?" The world is changing. Around 30 states in America have seller disclosure. In the UK, they have a form of seller disclosure.

"I thought, if we only had records that you could trust, at a trusted central location so that everyone could know the history of that property, and then the true value of that property, then that would answer a lot of problems."

It only makes sense, and it provides consumer protection. You've got consumer protection for every other asset except for your own property, which is the most valuable, biggest asset you'll ever buy – there's no consumer protection!

Who is your ideal customer?

A mid-tier property developer or builder doing about 200 to 250 handovers a year of multi-unit complexes.

What's the biggest challenge you have faced so far on your journey?

There have been so many challenges [laughs]. Number one, I'm a female in the tech space. I'm not a tech person, but I knew technology could help.

What are some jobs you've had previous to Inndox?

Lawyer, registered nurse, flight attendant, model.

Who has mentored you on this journey?

I got into an accelerator course back in 2017. It was a smart cities accelerator course, and that was with BlueChilli in Sydney. I found that very helpful in knowing how to plan ahead with regards to validating our product, getting it out to market, and having the right technology. Our mentor came from BlueChilli and his name is Brett. He now works at River City Labs, a few desks away from me – he's awesome.

Have you ever wanted to throw the towel in?

Yes, of course. A few times because there are some very huge decisions and things can go wrong. I have a family as well. Of course, there've been times where I've contemplated giving it all up, but I do feel I need to do this, and I have a purpose, so I want to see it through.

What do you think is the first international market you'd enter?

UK. I've done research into the market and there's a definite need and a greater willingness for customers to use technology. They have home information packs in the UK, which means that at time of sale, the seller has to provide all of the information about the property to the buyer.

That was legislated in 2003, and at the same time the ACT had its legislation. However, it was all paper-based and abolished in 2013 because it wasn't working, because paper kept going missing.

There was an actual call by the UK government last November. It was in the Law Gazette – an urgent need for digital property logbooks. They need us. We can do what they need us to do. We've got the solution. There's a big marketplace.

There's already a competitor that does a bespoke expensive siloed service for the high-end property developers, but they're not about transparency, one owner to the next or due diligence or anything beyond just servicing high-end property developers.

They've got 250 property developers using it and it's not a self-management system. It's like a consulting service. I

already know there's a market for what we're doing. And we're less expensive.

What's been your experience in hiring staff and how have you found that process?

It's very difficult with tech staff, getting the right person, feel, culture. You need that right fit in your team. It's not just about the person with the right ability tech-wise, but they also need to understand what we're about, be on board with our purpose and mission, and be excited by it.

Finding the right person has been a bit of trial and error. We did use an agency to begin with and that was really a big, big mistake. Very expensive and the quality wasn't great either. We now have an internal full stack developer and he is a genius. We love him and if we come to the UK, he said he'd come too. We've found a star!

How does Inndox work? If I'm looking at buying a property would I buy the Inndox record for it?

Hopefully the seller would already have an Inndox with all the records there to help with their sale and then it's online. When you do a search, like on realestate.com, you can see, "Okay, they've got

all the information about the property. Do they have an Inndox I can look at?"

They've got the plans, approvals, the flooding maps, other reports, building and pest reports, all of that is in their Inndox. It's got all the maintenance history, all the trades that have been there, the warranties – because we do residential and commercial. If they're all there, that can help the buyer have confidence to go ahead and buy that property.

How would you go about creating an Inndox for an existing building?

Our market entry is with brand new builds but we do have the ability to provide all the records for existing buildings as well. We're building that right now – it's in development and will be released shortly.

Anyone who owns a building no matter how old can set up their own Inndox and they can put whatever records they wish to in there. Some of it will be able to be pulled from council. We're in partnership with Australia's biggest online digital conveyancer, so you can pull records from other places and have it in your Inndox.

How have you funded your business to date?

Some self-funding, then we got into the accelerated course. With that, we had an MVP [minimal viable product] built. That would have been worth about \$100,000. Then we had a VC come in with some cash. Currently we have one sophisticated angel investor and three VCs on board as investors.

Who put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

No one really put me on a path. I think I've just always been a problem solver and being a lawyer as well has made me very aware of problems and how to solve them. It's given me confidence that, yes, you can actually do something about solving real problems. I think it's just been in my blood.

What is the vision for your business over the next five years?

To set the standard for having all your records in one place in a trusted central location. Every property could be using this. There are 2.5 billion properties in the world so I don't think that'll happen in five years, but I'd like to be known in the industry. I can see that eventually, it'll be a brand known as a standard. "Okay, I'm buying that property. Does it have an Inndox?"

Update

"The London mission changed my mindset and empowered me to think globally about the problems to be solved and the customers to reach," says Trish. "It gave me the confidence to push forward with my personal mission – to help improve the property industry with respect to transparency, safety and sustainability. Some of Inndox's recent wins include receiving a \$100k Queensland Government's Ignite Ideas Grant to commercialise the platform, two ASX-listed companies coming on as clients, and for Trish personally, winning the Housing Industry Association (HIA) Women in Building and Construction Award for Business Development Professional 2019.

T
R
I
B
E
C
A

Tribeca Apartments

Fifteen apartments

Developer:

Bert Farina Constructions



Indi Tansey

CO-FOUNDER OF CODEBOTS



BUSINESS

CODEBOTS



ESTABLISHED

2017 IN BRISBANE



EMPLOYEES

60



CUSTOMERS

40

What is your business all about?

Codebots is a technology platform for building software. Essentially, Codebots are software-writing robots so they can write up to 90% of an application which means that humans get to focus on the fun bits, the creative, and the strategic parts of the solution – and the bots do the heavy lifting.

How did you come up with the idea for your startup?

About three years ago now, I met Eban Escott, who's my co-founder. He had just finished a PhD at University of Queensland, looking at how to make software better. He was looking at some really interesting ideas around automation and model-driven engineering. He talked to me about it – he had a terrible pitch. It was an hour long and it was

very academic and there was no Codebots at that point. I liked his passion and his vision for what he was trying to do.

He was trying to make software more accessible to people. He felt the way we've been doing it since the 1950s, writing lines and lines of code, seemed redundant like it wasn't a good use of human capital. You don't need to be sitting there writing line after line.

I hear this pitch – I have a history of startups and then before that, advertising, marketing, and building communities – and I could see an opportunity. He was looking for someone who would look after the messaging, the people part of the business, then how we were going to get this idea to the world.

We had a vision to build a platform that would be available globally, not just a local service-

based business, but something that would scale.

How did you end up on the entrepreneurial path?

I had a pretty successful advertising career. I was working in Dublin for a big agency. My job had taken me all over the world. I was a copywriter and I just got to work on big brands. I felt like the world was changing. I was like, "We can't just be yelling messages to people in that old-fashioned or traditional way of advertising. I could see the power of communities. If you had a really good idea, you could get people on board and do something exceptional.

For me, I stepped out of my life. I thought I'd go and do a bit of traveling, but it turned into a little business. That's when I came up with my travel blog. That was the start of it.

It was like stepping away from the normal and it was very successful, and people loved it, and they checked in every day, and people sponsored me to do it – it was ridiculous. It gave me the belief that if you had something you believed in really strongly, other people would follow.

I could see this entrepreneurship motto where people had cool ideas about things and they build a community around it, and they tested it, and then it grew from there. As part of my bike trek, I stopped in Argentina. I got quite tired of cycling that many thousands of kilometres and so I lived with three entrepreneurs and I didn't really understand fully what their startup was at that point. They took me under their wing. Codebots is my third startup.

Who is your ideal customer?

As you can imagine, software is a massive market and while you can do anything with bots, basically the bots just look for patterns. Anything that has a pattern, the bot is capable of creating. Right now, we're targeting enterprise customers specifically with legacy systems that they want to modernise. We work with a mix of government and enterprise customers. We've already launched more than 10 million lines of code, production-ready code for these customers.

We've got some runs on the board. Everything from the Department of Defence, New South Wales Police, Transport and Main Roads – they

“We can't just be yelling messages to people in that old-fashioned or traditional way of advertising. I could see the power of communities. If you had a really good idea, you could get people on board and you can do something exceptional.”

have these terribly old-fashioned legacy systems that have hundreds of databases and critical information that is just sitting there untapped that they are unable to access and do collaborative things with their teams, or use the data, or to get insights.

What are your international expansion plans?

We went through the Australian Landing Pad and launched into Singapore in January. We put one of our business developers on the ground there and he's been exploring some opportunities for us. It looks like we've got a channel partner now that we're going to be signing up and they'll be selling Codebots in Singapore.

Then around the same time, we did the same in the UK. We're now about six months into that experiment and we've now got two guys on the ground in London.

The next step for us is to get established in these markets

and to have some very happy customers to get the feedback about the platform.

Has there ever been a time where you wanted to throw in the towel?

Yes, we've had some tough times because we've got a big headcount. There's a lot of pressure that comes with that because you're just trying to make sure that the business is going well enough that you've got enough to pay everyone. It's actually quite a bit of pressure. There's been times when sales have fallen over or investment hasn't come through or there's been a lot of pressure on the team.

I have this incredible founding team, and I think that's part of our secret of success. It's not one person's responsibility to shoulder it all. If someone's having a tough time, they can

step aside and go, "Hey, can you look after this for me?"

All of our founding team have kids, and so that's unusual. I thought of startups as being just young single people that are trying to build a sustainable business. I think, in the tough times, there's always been one of us to be strong and stand up and do what needs to be done.

Who has mentored you on this journey?

My parents are incredible. Now I look back and I think, "Wow". They just always just told me I could do anything and I really believed that. People ask me how I've done what I've done, and they say, "You must be really brave." I'm like, "No, I just think I can do things. I don't put limits on things." [laughs]

My co-founder, Eban, is one of those people who just could see that I had the ability to grow into this role of being the co-founder of a tech startup – and I'm not technical!

There's a bit of a fear as a woman. It's like, "How can you have a tech startup if you're not writing the code?" I'm like, "Hang on. Hopefully, we have Codebots and so you don't have to write code." If I have to be technical then this is how I'll be.

I've also recently received mentorship from an incredible group, Women In Technology. That's been really helpful to me.

What do you think is the biggest challenge Codebots faces?

I think there's two. When you're doing something for the first time, you're trying to change people's behavior. People have always done it one way and whether or not we can interrupt that is the question. It feels like we're at a tipping point where people are accepting that automation is coming, the fourth industrial revolution has arrived. The way we're working is changing. Part of that is about getting our messaging right around what we do and what we can offer. Codebots can do so many things, but trying to really hone that message, that's a challenge for us.

How many people are there at Codebots?

We already have 60 staff! A big part of my job is making sure we have a pipeline of people coming through to support our business. That's a massive challenge. We're trying to partner with the universities and groups that understand exactly what makes a great culture, what makes people want to be with us. That's a big piece of the puzzle.

How have you funded your business to date?

Initially, we spun out a service business where we used Codebots technology to build software. If you want something built, you come to us. You don't have to have any knowledge of software – we'll put a developer, a designer, and a testing engineer on your project, and a project manager. We'll build it for you, using the Codebots technologies. That allowed us to build the platform, funded by our service business.

Now that worked to a certain point. That means that you're always have competing forces because you have to keep these customers happy, and if that's not going well, your attention is pulled to that. Recently, we completed a capital raise and we've got some awesome investors from North Queensland who have come on board.

How big was that capital raise?

\$1.4 million.

Pre-order

What will it allow you to do?

It will allow us to further explore Singapore and UK, really focus on those markets, get people on

the ground there and build out those teams. Now that we've got channel partners in those areas, we now need to support them. We're looking at building a support customer success function to the business.

As we meet the right enterprise customers, we build out the blocks to match what they need, and that's adding to our artillery on the platform of what we can sell. **Required**

Do you have any plans to raise more capital?

Hopefully not, but probably yes! [laughs].

To grow, we talked about that challenge of the timing and taking this to market. I think even if we can hit the sales targets that we have, that's only going to allow us to grow at a certain rate. I think it's going to need to ramp up much quicker than that. What we want to do is hit our targets that were set for this first round, deliver on the road map, and all the milestones that we've set.

Then we'll look to raise again. We didn't want to take a giant round now because there's always that tension between giving up too much of your company when you don't have the solid traction and still just getting a product market fit right. You have to give

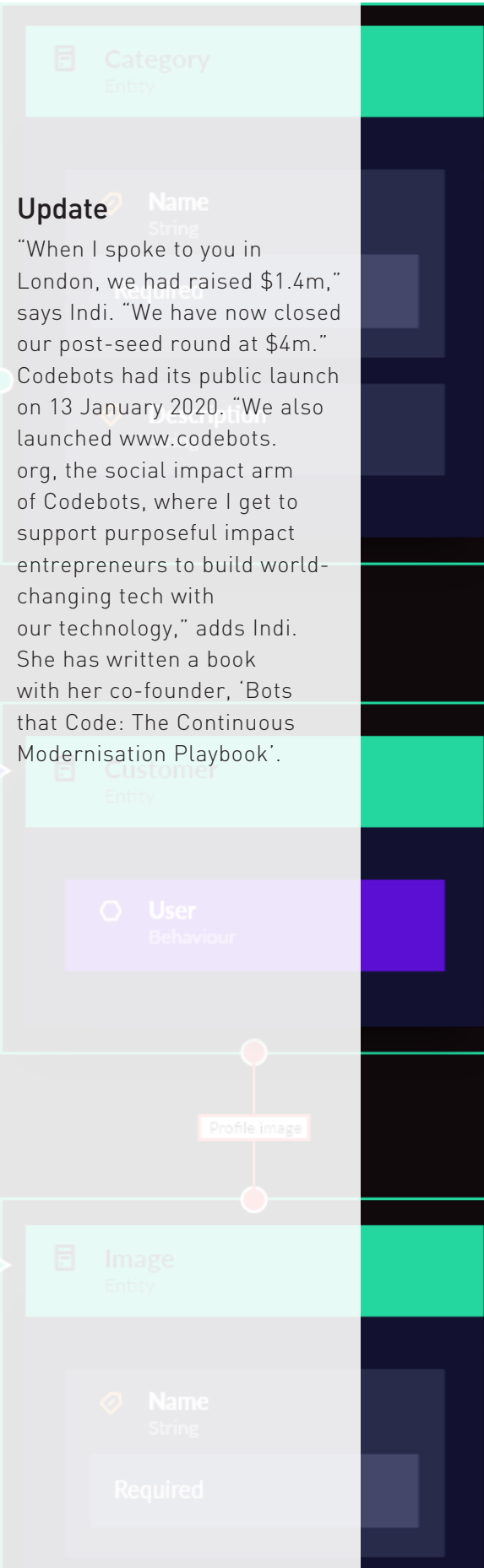
away more. You have to do a discounted rate because they're taking on more risk. We just have done it in increments.

What advice do you have for women considering the startup journey?

I think some advice that I wish I got maybe about 10 years ago would be you don't need to be technical to have a tech startup. You do have to have a discipline and a scientific way of thinking about things and you have to be systematic and you need to run experiments. But you don't have to be able to write code.

Embrace the things that you are really good at and let them shine and be proud of that because I always felt like I was missing something. Other people would look at you and they'd be like, "You're doing great." I'd be thinking, "Yes, but I'm not a developer." I've had that as a chip on my shoulder and I just wish I'd got rid of it earlier.

If you're a female and you're not technical, but you love big ideas, you want to change the world, you feel like you've got skills and talents that can impact the world, be proud of that, stand up, and don't feel like you're missing anything.





Katrina Donaghy

CO-FOUNDER OF CIVIC LEDGER



BUSINESS

CIVIC LEDGER



ESTABLISHED

2016 IN BRISBANE



EMPLOYEES

3



CUSTOMERS

3

What is your business all about?

Civic Ledger works with governments to help them solve complex problems around preparing for a digital future, with citizens at the centre of services. We look at, how do we digitise government-issued rights permits, licenses. How do we secure registries to verify who has what. Then once they're digitised and rules are actually baked into them, we can take them into new marketplaces for citizens to trade with each other without governments having to operate in those marketplaces.

What problem did you see that you wanted to solve?

It went right back to about 2016 which is really early for this technology. I met my co-founder Lucas Cullen in Brisbane in April 2016 and he's been in this business for some time. Before

we actually met, I'd spent 25 years working in government, both in the state government level and local government level, and also water utilities in Queensland. So, I had a fair idea of how government worked and some of the challenges around getting better services out to citizens in an internet era.

I met Lucas and he'd been working on a proof of concept of how to digitise something like a basic fishing permit. How do you then hold that as a digital artifact in a wallet in your phone to verify that you are the rightful owner of that permit, that you've met the conditions the government has put together?

Then, how do you actually utilise that asset without someone challenging you that you're not the rightful owner of that? Or how do you actually not enable that person to

counterfeit it or double spend it by creating another version of that and issuing it without government understanding or seeing that happen?

When he presented that to me, I said, "I think we have something here." He said to me, "Do you know if we can actually get this in front of anyone in Queensland government?" At that time, because of my connections, I did.

We went in there, Lucas and I, and we got someone to download the digital wallet. Then we put their mobile phone into the browser which we had built. We pushed that license to his wallet via the Bitcoin blockchain and demonstrated, once the actual asset had arrived into his wallet, he could actually now see that he'd received the fishing permit. He could double click and verify that that had been transferred by the bitcoin

blockchain to show that it was now an immutable record.

From there, we were contracted by the Queensland government to work on a proof of concept where they wanted to explore that and said, "If we can do that for fishing, what can we actually do with much more complex problems?" They chose community liquor licenses which are really hardcore. We worked with the Queensland government over six weeks to digitise that process and show that we could actually deliver that using blockchain technology.

Now, we're about to do a water pilot in Australia.

What is the vision for your business?

Our vision is to solve some key problems that we're really passionate about and then export the technology globally. When you work with blockchain technology, you're not solving small problems. Blockchain technology solves big, hard problems.

I would like to see that in the future that our technology is agreed to for water trading in Australia, that we have a national consensus around what that protocol will look like and then get that consensus through COAG.

Then, export that technology to the world so other countries can start to democratise water allocations so we can get an

"Every day will be a challenge. Yes, you do wake up some days and go, 'Why am I doing this? This is crazy.' Then again, the freedom that you're given as an entrepreneur...is a gift."

agreement on how we're going to share this very finite asset into the future.

That's one of the biggest visions that I have for my company – to actually solve that problem and to be known that we actually did that. We did that as Australians and did that well and took that to the rest of the world.

How is the Australian market different to others?

Australia is very different because we made a decision to put a price on water. Because Australia has competing interests and we're an arid country, we had to say, "Your water will now cost you this." You find in a lot of countries around the world, you cannot extract water without paying a price for it. If you're going to be a country that's going to say, "We're not going to be putting a price on water," and you've got an entire farming industry that's never paid for water, you can imagine what's going to happen.

This is why blockchain is critically important because it actually sets the governance around how you're going to now engage or manage those markets. It's complex and complicated because you have one regulator – Queensland works differently to New South Wales, it works differently to Victoria, that works differently to South Australia. They've all got different rules, different jurisdictions, and none of the state government registers are interoperable.

If you do a cross border trade between Victoria and New South Wales, you've got different state governments trying to reconcile that data because they're not interoperable. We want to basically say, "Let's build on what we've done, and take it to the next generation, to the next platform." Working with Cairns Innovation Centre in Northern Australian and Cairns is great because they're responsible for building out the new markets in Northern Australia.

Now, there's so much water up there, but there's no markets. They want to work with us to say, if we see what blockchain can do around governance, then let's use this technology to build new water markets in Northern Australia, to support investment from Asia into those new markets.

Have you ever wanted to throw the towel in?

This is the ride of being an entrepreneur. To make this decision that you're going to go and do this thing called a startup— I'm not 20, I'm a 51-year-old woman who's had a career, studied at a good uni, attained a couple of degrees, and had a career.

Every day, you probably know 40% of your day because you've got certain things that you have to go through, but 60% of your day is this crazy land called startup land. It has its highs and has its lows.

Every day will be a challenge. Yes, you do wake up some days and go, "Why am I doing this? This is crazy." Then again, the freedom that you're given as an entrepreneur to be open and learn and unlearn, learn new knowledges and create new connections, whilst also building a product that you're really

proud of, is a gift. This is not for everyone. I think that is something that gets missed when we have this hype around being an entrepreneur or being a startup.

The reality of running from a startup to scale-up, is very lonely. I think that is something that gets missed and not talked about, that this stuff at the top is extremely lonely because when it comes down to it, can you pay wages? Can you keep the lights on? This comes down to you, and what decisions you've made in the past to get to this point.

You've got to have an honest conversation with yourself every day. Will you call it at some point and say, "I gave it a real hot shot, but it's not going to work." You have to have those honest conversations every day and it's hard.

What's one of your greatest learnings on the entrepreneurship journey?

What I know now after two-and-a-half years in this business, in this company – if anyone is reading and contemplating this journey, and they're going to be dealing with things that are not their strength like shareholders appointments, CAP tables, VC funding and equity and all that

stuff which is really daunting. I'm just going to say: get in there. It's going to be uncomfortable but make that your priority. You've got to get your head around all that stuff in the first instance. If you don't know how to do it, go and find somebody who's going to help you, mentor you through that.

If you don't, it will come back and bite you and it'll bite you hard. Then you're going to have to sit there and unravel everything and understand and then wonder why decisions were made when you weren't actually leaning in and putting your hand up and saying, "I don't quite understand, let's backtrack that."

From a female founder perspective, that is the most important thing you must learn. Absolutely, regardless of whether you're not technical, this is not your comfort zone – get comfortable. You need to have this knowledge for when you do your raises.

Do you have any plans to raise capital?

In 2018, we raised \$1 million. That was because we had secured a position with the Australian government on water. We were only six weeks old when we actually got that opportunity. When we secured

intellectual property, that was an open tender on the Digital Transformation Agency website. We beat some large businesses – and we were a startup.

We'd like to do another raise as soon as possible. We're going to need at least \$5 million if we want to scale – and scale fast.

One of the crazy things that happens in blockchain land, as soon as you actually make a claim that you've done something with blockchain technology, the world goes stupid.

What we're anticipating is that once we actually start delivering the pilot, the whole world is going to look at us and go, "Woah, this is freaking amazing." We're going to have to move fast.

One problem is that you get copycats. We are known around the world for what we're doing in blockchain technology and water ledger. Then recently, we found out a company in California was replicating us. That's what happens.

Because we've been in the market longer, we've got our credibility, we've got our reputation, but now we need to deliver and execute and then move as fast as possible.

We also have invested in patents. Our intellectual

property has a patent. Those are the other things that you've got to think about too. Where are you generating your intellectual property and how are you going to protect that?

Who put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

I think the path of entrepreneurship starts with curiosity. Whatever you choose later in life, when you find your niche or your passion or have a craving for curiosity, that's one of the most important elements for being an entrepreneur: curiosity and an openness to learning. If you have those elements in you, that sets you up for this crazy thing called entrepreneurship.

In 2003, I went back to university and did a degree in entrepreneurship and venture development. That was pivotal to everything.

Then I started something that didn't work out, went back to life, had kids, and then in 2015, I woke up.

I was ready.

Update

"Since London, Katrina has appointed an advisory board and secured co-funding to deliver the world's first blockchain-enabled water

markets and trading platform. Preparations are underway to launch Civic Ledger (Europe) and Katrina has enrolled into BDO's School for Startups, a 12-month course for CEOs of early stage, high growth companies. Civic Ledger has its sights set on increasing revenue prior to seeking additional investment."



Vidya Nallamad

CO-FOUNDER OF NETHEALTH



BUSINESS

NETHEALTH



ESTABLISHED

2013 IN BRISBANE



EMPLOYEES

4



CUSTOMERS

250

What is your business all about?

NetHealthData is a software platform from NetHealth. We are into managing people's chronic conditions with the help of their chosen healthcare professionals and remote health monitoring. Our primary aim is to avoid people being hospitalised and take back the control of their health.

What problem does your business solve?

In Australia there are more than 200,000 people who are admitted to hospital every year, primarily due to diabetes, a heart problem or obesity. These are potentially preventable hospitalisations. This is costing the Australian Government a huge amount and we want to avoid those hospitalisations through remote health monitoring and avoid health complications.

How did the idea for your business come about?

It's a personal story concerning my father. He is a diabetic and lives in India. He lost vision in his left eye in 2016. We didn't know the reason so he started using my platform, which was in its very early stages. His GP was able to monitor his blood sugar levels and saw the medication he had prescribed wasn't working. He changed his medication and fortunately my father got his eyesight back. That was my personal experience and that's where I saw there was potential for children like me – who are worried about their parents – to have them monitored and avoid complications with their health management. So, I basically began the platform to help my father.

What is the vision for your business?

To make a difference in people's health. That's my aim. Our roadmap, our vision is to help people have a good quality of life.

Who is your ideal customer?

There are two sectors that could really benefit from NetHealthData, which is where we are placing our primary focus.

One is gestational diabetes for females who are in their 19th, 20th week of pregnancy. These women need to have their blood sugar monitored, as it can affect the health of her baby. It is a crucial time in the pregnancy and our platform can monitor blood sugar levels easily.

The other is people who work in corporates. They are at high risk of developing chronic conditions because of the stress involved in their jobs. These are the two areas we are focusing on.

What has been your biggest challenge to date?

One of my mentors, said, "Vidya, you have two issues that really makes it hard for you to progress. One, you're a female founder. Two, you're in the most conservative thinking field, which is health tech."

That was the main challenge I encountered – trying to educate people in health tech about what we can do, such as the doctors and surgeons, who are so conservative in their thinking.

I spent the first three years of starting the company educating people before I introduced NetHealthData to them.

What jobs have you had in the past?

I've had a few jobs including software engineer tester, and working with a betting company taking bets in the contact centre.

The main job that helped me with this startup was my job at GE and Philips Medical Systems as a hardware specialist.

What do you think will be the first international market you enter?

Africa. Primarily, people think of the US or the first world countries as being good markets, but what we have seen is that in second world and third world countries like Africa, there is a huge appetite for digital health. They have the infrastructure, and they want people from first world

“What I’ve seen, and it’s also my personal experience: Women tend to doubt ourselves a lot and we tend to put off what we want to do. My one single suggestion is... ‘Trust your instincts, let people say whatever they want, stick to your own convictions and the world will be at your feet.’”

countries to recognise there is a problem in that country.

For me, rather than getting lost in the US, I could be the kingmaker in a country like Africa and make a difference in that society. There are so many people with diabetes and heart problems – and they're being neglected.

Where do you think your business will be in five years?

In at least 10 to 12 countries. In five years, I would say, I'd like to have a good number of people telling me that I've saved their toe from being amputated, or helped them avoid being hospitalised.

How have you funded your business?

To date, it has been self-funded. Initially, it was my house savings that went into the business, but now we are generating revenue which is keeping us afloat.

Do you have any plans to raise money?

Yes. Initially, we are going for grants so that we don't give up equity, but with the roadmap that we have, we are increasing our customers by at least 30 to 40 per cent in the next six months. Based on that, we'll go to investors where we can get more money for less equity.

What's been your experience in hiring staff for your business?

That's interesting. I've had co-founders and a few contractors into the project. It's been up and down. I've had positives and negatives with hiring.

The positives are the beautiful fantastic co-founders who balance me out. But I've also had bad experiences where the projects were not up to the standards that I would have expected.

Have you ever felt like throwing the towel in?

Many times! Previously, I had developed appointment booking software. When my last paying customer said, "I'm signing out," that's when I thought, "Okay, I'm giving up now."

At the same time, my dad's episode happened. That's where I saw a light at the end of the tunnel and said, "Okay, this could be the platform that I could pivot from; from medical appointment booking software to remote health monitoring."

That's where I had to regroup and come back up.

What would you say has been your biggest mistake to date?

After I had set up my business, I approached my local newspaper to see if they would be interested in writing about me.

They told me it would cost \$5,000 to have an article written – so I paid it.

Let me be very frank and open with you. This was very early stages. I didn't know anyone in the industry. I was trying to build a name brand so that I could open some doors.

I was thinking along traditional lines where you get published and

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"In Australia there are more than 200,000 people who are admitted to hospital every year... this is costing the Australian Government a huge amount."
.....

people will see you and recognise you. That was the perception with which I went into it. No doubt things have changed since then!

I know that it was a mistake, but at that moment, I thought I was doing the right thing. You learn from it, I guess [laughs]. Damn it [laughs].

With the benefit of hindsight, what do you think are some things you would have done differently?

The main thing is I wouldn't have wasted so much time on market research or education. I wouldn't

say it's a mistake, though, but it was a learning curve. I went a little slow and steady rather than doing a big bang.

If I think back to when I started in 2013, if I had my roadmap clear then, maybe I would have started NetHealthData much earlier, and started educating and marketing both the platform and people together.

Who do you credit with putting you on the path to entrepreneurship?

That's an easy one – my dad. [chuckles] He was running his own business at the same time [pauses]. I get pretty emotional. He is the one, yes.

Who has mentored you on this journey?

I've had a lot of mentors, and some key people are now our people, like Dr. Steve Hamilton. He is the ex-CEO of the Australian Medical Association. He set up some of the key workflows I could tap into as a health tech provider. He saw good things about our platform. He's our main advocate and champion, and has been a key mentor.

Before that, my mentor was John Marshall, founder of GBST. He was my first mentor. He was the one who said, "Believe in yourself, Vidya." That

was a key message. Even to this day, I remember it. He was the first one to encourage me to pursue my adventure.

What advice do you have for women who are looking to be founders of their own business?

What I've seen, and it's also my personal experience: Women tend to doubt ourselves a lot and we tend to put off what we want to do.

My one single suggestion, which comes from one of my mentors, is this: "Trust your instincts, let people say whatever they want, stick to your own convictions and the world will be at your feet."

Update

"What a great six months I've had since returning from London," says Vidya. "One of the biggest highlights for me was to have won an Ignite Ideas Grants for \$100,000 in September. That changed lots of things for us in terms of scaling the business, getting new clients, and building our technical stack." Vidya has since secured a major client, Caloundra Health Services, where NetHealth is being used to manage gestational diabetes in pregnant women. "It's such a rewarding service to provide as we are part of keeping the mum-to-be and the unborn child healthy," Vidya says.





Alicia Buchanan

FOUNDER OF BONDBACK



BUSINESS

BONDBACK



ESTABLISHED

2018 IN CAIRNS



EMPLOYEES

3



CUSTOMERS

13

What is your business all about?

BondBack is a booking platform for end of residential tenancy services with communication between agents, tenants and contractors.

What problem does your business solve?

We're solving the issue that tenants are facing, along with agents, at the end of a tenancy with regards to arranging services, such as cleaning, and the issues that tend to occur between tenants and agents over the condition a property needs to be left in before vacating.

Often there are tenants that would like to clean the property themselves but then face the agent coming in afterwards and meticulously critiquing whether or not it was done to their standard.

Typically, when that actually occurs, the property will remain in that state for several days before the tenant can come back or they can arrange a contractor to complete it.

The turnover of the property is then delayed and landlord's income is halted. It also irritates the tenant as they're trying to move forward into a new property, unpack and start their new life going forward.

This ends up causing a rift in relationship between the agent and tenant, so nobody has a good story at the end of that experience.

How did the idea for your business come about?

Over the last five years I've moved significantly. I have lived overseas and come back multiple times and have moved around my regional area

because I can and it's fun!

I decided to make it an actual business venture when I had my last trip over to Chicago for a different startup and was listening to pitches of cleaning companies which specialise in Airbnb cleans.

There was a lot of traction being gained in that space and a lot of money being injected into those businesses. I was asking myself why they were successful in comparison to lots of other major cleaning companies with an online presence just not getting that much attraction.

I realised it was because they're specialising in an area which is large, has a need, and a good margin to be able to afford that.

While I was in the States, I was thinking about how to find a bond cleaner and other services easily, quickly and for a fixed price. None of that was

available, so when I returned to Australia, I kicked it off.

It spent about six months doing my own R&D, looking at ABS data, surveying, polling, writing a white paper, talking to developers. It wasn't until I was offered a pre-seed investment of services in kind from my white paper alone, there was a discussion which validated my business concept. I didn't accept it, but it still was enough to suggest to me, 'You better get a move on because if I'm not going to do it, these people probably will'.

Who is your ideal customer?

I want to address property agents, but I do feel that we're tenant-centric. My ideal customer is a family that is too time poor to consider cleaning but also has a budget. In the beginning of their tenancy, they can consider the subscription offer that we have where they can pay a weekly amount, say \$10 a week over six or 12 months, and all the exit requirements are paid for and satisfied.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your business?

I'm sole-funded, full equity. The biggest challenge I've had is launching in a remote regional area, Cairns, which is quite cliquey and resistant to change. This is a disruption-type business, and doing that in a place that is resistant to change is probably the biggest challenge

“Don't be afraid to ask for help. This time around, what I've done differently is ask for help from every angle. I was so shocked and surprised with how much time people were willing to give.”

I'm ever going to face! Having said that, BondBack will be launching in Brisbane shortly.

Who has mentored you along your journey?

Matt Malady is one of the founders of Temando, which is one of Australia's massive success stories with startup businesses, and he exited his business at the very final evaluation of \$100 million. We're working on a few things together, and he's just dragged me and put me under his wing!

I get calls and text messages daily just reminding me that to keep charging on, to keep doing better and consider the greater good of where I'm taking my life.

Have you ever wanted to throw the towel in?

Yes, I did, and I have.

I've had many other businesses in the past. This is my first startup in the sense of a

real startup. I've had retail businesses, two of those while running a coaching business as well. I was working over 80 to 100 hours a week with kids, really young children in daycare at 6am, out at 6pm, and not really cooking for them, just throwing something in the oven, and at the same time going through a divorce.

There was a time through there that I did say, "What am I doing? I want time to just be present, enjoy life. Why am I suffering, and no longer enjoying things?" I threw it all in, and I liquidated it. I did that because money was being argued over, and I was burning cash to keep my lawyers happy.

I went through a significant depression cycle following that. This time around, I feel definitely more equipped to observe what's coming and handle it a lot better. Even when I do have the feeling like, "What am I doing? It's time to throw in the towel", that hasn't happened yet,

but I also know that those feelings are fleeting and to just power through.

What would you say is the biggest stuff-up that you've made?

Talking very early without an NDA. I thought I had a global name and concept. Through my experience in the United States, if you ask anybody to sign an NDA, you just won't be able to talk to them. But back here, the non-disclosure even without an actual piece of paper is not a professional observation, apparently.

I spoke to a few people with regard to my concept. Then there was a link with that person and another person who had the same day registered my business name and my domain. I realise a business isn't in the name – it's the concept. So, I quickly engaged my lawyers. It cost me over \$2,500 to make sure that was stopped right there. I then renamed, rebranded and went on.

I had a name, VAC8. I know it's not as good as BondBack as far as Australians name is concerned, but it's a more global term that's used. The UK and the States don't use the term 'bond'.

What is the vision for your business?

The vision is to really pivot and engage with three customers – agents, tenants and contractors – to make that space amazing and available to everybody.

The intention is to assist tenants through their journey with awareness of their requirements, so education is important. I want to help the agents with issues at the end of a tenancy where the time to turn around is delayed and the relationship breaks down.

In hindsight, what's something that you could have done differently on your journey?

I guess listening to that gut feeling a little quicker. I felt very early on – several years ago even – this is an issue nobody is addressing. But I felt that it wasn't significant enough to start putting my attention into.

Then having gone through several journeys in life, we sometimes arrive back at places where we should have taken off. I really think that in hindsight, listening to myself a little earlier and not concerning myself with other people's opinions or thoughts about what I should or shouldn't be doing.

How have you funded

your business to date?

Completely bootstrapped.

Do you have any plans to raise capital?

Yes, I do. Fortunately, this trip [to London] has actually put a rocket up my butt to do that because I know that to expand the way I want to, I'm going to need to put the system on steroids, so to speak, and build the team out.

I've got my plans to relaunch in Brisbane. We'll test the ground a little bit there. Then we'll be looking at, early next year, raising the seed round.

Who put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

This is going to sound awful: myself. The last job that I had where I was privately employed, I was a bank manager with ANZ. I left because I fell pregnant with my daughter. I was in a marriage with a Sicilian husband who was very, very traditional, so he suggested to me that I wasn't going to be able to return to work, so I would be a stay-at-home mom.

Within this framework, trying to keep my family and everything together, I looked at ways to earn income and still remain at home. I had some internet-based businesses that were successful. But unfortunately, with those

restrictions in a marriage, it fell apart. Then the moment that we actually left one another was when I started building larger businesses and enterprises.

My involvement in the startup scene has been driven by my interest in the tech space and science and I want to be involved in that. It fulfils me just being amongst people that are really energised to bring and create and do.

What advice would you give any women looking to enter the startup journey?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. This time around, what I've done differently is ask for help from every angle. I was so shocked and surprised with how much time people were willing to give. If somebody can't help you immediately, they certainly will have you in their mind going forward.

That has been the most amazing thing for me: asking for help when I'm so used to doing it on my own but realising you can actually go a lot further by doing it. I would suggest always, no matter how prideful and how strong we are as women, ask for help amongst ourselves. We're a great network for that.

Update

Soon after returning from London, Alicia applied for large grant to spur development of BondBack. "If successful, we can roll the commercialisation out," Alicia says. "Failing securing the grant, we will take the pace just a little slower."

Alicia has been busy building out the platform and upgrading it to be more tenant centric. "A new management system will allow a tenant to store all important documentation (lease agreement, entry condition report including photos), make maintenance requests and communicate with agents."





Julia Khalyavko

CO-FOUNDER OF SUELO TECH



BUSINESS

SUELO TECH



ESTABLISHED

2019 IN BRISBANE



EMPLOYEES

2



CUSTOMERS

0

What is your business all about?

Suelo Tech is a social enterprise startup – we’re developing technology for small scale ecological farmers to help them better compete with industrial agriculture.

How did the idea for your business come about?

I’m not an ideas person. I’m an executor and you need to give me an idea for me to become skilled in it. My friend from uni had this idea for an agricultural startup about a year ago and approached me about it.

My co-founder had a bit of agricultural experience but I didn’t know anything about the industry. It took five to six months to map the industry out, to understand its sectors, pains, gaps, to work out what we could invent and for whom.

We came to the conclusion that small-scale ecological growers are the most marginalised in the industry because they’re not using any pesticides and herbicides. They’re not damaging the soil by using different damaging farming practices. They don’t play by the rules of the big game which is industrial agriculture.

What problem does your business solve?

Combatting climate change. [laughs] Imagine changing the world!

Industrial agriculture is defined by its heavy use of pesticides which degrades the soil and so the soil is unable to store carbon deep beneath the surface. Soil is the biggest carbon sink in the world after the ocean. The presence of carbon in the atmosphere is the biggest driver of climate

change. Agriculture is not the worst industry contributing to climate change but it’s one of the major ones.

The grand idea is to change the industrial way that food is being produced by using ecologically sustainable farming practices. They’re called regenerative agriculture practices. What they do is regenerate soils.

What the technology does is collect data using IoT sensors. It takes data from the soil and combines it with the information about the macro and micro climate. It looks at temperatures, humidity, moisture, and UV radiation. It combines all those big sets of data, analyses it and tells the farmer what’s going on the soil and how to improve it.

How is organic agriculture different to what you’re doing?

Organic is the absence or very little use of pesticides and chemicals, and low use of damaging practices.

Regenerative agriculture is not only the eradication of all of these but also working with nature and mimicking it. It's using practices such as crop rotation and cover crops.

Let's say you have some land that you decide not to use for farming this particular season.

A cover crop is planted on the soil to prevent carbon being pushed back into the atmosphere. When it comes to soil and agriculture, photosynthesis is the major process that helps carbon get back into the soil and stay there.

What's been the biggest challenge you have faced so far with your business?

There are always a lot of challenges. The first one is technology because we do both hardware and software. Hardware is difficult – you think you can develop something and once you develop it, you test it, and find it doesn't work. So you redesign it, and it still doesn't work. Development and testing takes time, and I'm not a technology person.

This is the second challenge – I'm not a technical co-founder. I have a co-founder who's a tech person. And I'm certainly way techier than I was a year ago when we just started.

“The grand idea is to change the industrial way that food is being produced by using ecologically sustainable farming practices. They're called regenerative agriculture practices. What they do is regenerate soils.”

But it's still not enough – I can't develop the technology. That's the biggest challenge for me because even though I'm learning, it's still not enough. I have a basic understanding of how the technology works and what we have to do to take it to the next level.

I recommend doing your due diligence on the tech front. If you need to learn how to code, go and learn how to code at least for your own general understanding of what it takes. I'm the person who wants things now. In fact, I wanted it yesterday. The development process takes twice as long as what you planned.

That wasn't clear to me when we started and that's why I was very impatient. Once I started diving deeper into technology development, I realised it wasn't that easy.

Given it has been quite complex at times, have you ever wanted to throw the towel in?

Of course. I've lost count how many times!

I keep going because I'm very dedicated to whatever I decide to be dedicated about. To be completely frank, I was never passionate about agriculture before we started it because I didn't understand what it was all about.

Now that I understand how it's interconnected with social processes and how it impacts climate change big time, it makes total sense to me.

What vision do you have for this business?

A very grand vision – we want to change the world. [laughs]

We want to start small for those growers and farmers who already share our ideology to build a customer base and trust, to build the evidence showing the benefits of regenerative agricultural practices, that they work, that they increase production and help with soil health.

Once we are successful, we'd like to take it to the greater agricultural world. We know that there are a lot of industrial farmers who are interested in this. The problem is that if you've been farming for 30 to 40 years using the same principles and the same guidelines and it's been working for you – and you do understand how toxic it is to the environment – at the same time you're afraid of losing your business if you start implementing new practices.

I would also like Suelo Tech to be involved in talking to people who live in big cities about the importance and interconnectedness of agriculture with every single sphere of their life.

Which international markets would you'd like to enter first?

There's quite an extensive agricultural scene in the UK. I hadn't really looked into it before coming to London. My focus was around sustainable food alliances and groups.

Before coming to the UK, I would have said India, as it's an extensive market and my co-founder is Indian. Then China and the whole of Latin America.

Do you have any plans to raise capital?

Of course, we've been solely bootstrapped to date!

But we still have to prove the product works. We are developing something that hasn't been invented before. We need to deliver on our promises.

You can't take someone's money without evidence that it works.

When do you hope to have a minimal viable product (MVP)?

That's probably a year away.

There are three phases of the product development. The first one is one type of sensor, the second one is the second type of the sensor – which is micro climate, nutritional profile – and then the system itself.

In Silicon Valley, there are cases of people getting funding from investors by just selling them the idea or the vision. In Australia, that's not the case. Investors need to see the traction, whatever it may be. They need to see evidence that it's working, that it will deliver what you are claiming it will deliver.

We don't have this yet – this is just the reality that we live in.

What did you do before you were a business founder?

I was doing my Masters in Public Policy and Governance. I did my undergraduate degree in national relations and I thought being on United Nations panels was the way to go. That's how we change the world.

When I studied national relations I realised that the world doesn't work that way and that I should maybe narrow it down to the local level, which is public policy.

But it ruined my faith in politics – not in politics per se, but in it being the tool of bringing about change.

My dad has been an entrepreneur his entire life. Now he has his second major business. I feel like business or entrepreneurship is a much faster way, much more efficient tool, for changing anything that you want to change.

Would you credit your dad with putting you on the path to entrepreneurship?

No. When I was doing my Masters, having completed my first year out of two, I started taking electives. I was given a chance to start taking electives from different schools. For some reason, I was like, "Yes well, business school. Why not?" Then I just went

through the list of the courses that I could take and noticed social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship is about a business that makes money and also does good. I thought, "How is a business supposed to be doing good when a business is supposed to be making money?" It didn't make sense to me. Then two lectures later, it became my favorite subject. I remember thinking, "Well, that's how you bring about change."

After that I just started taking other business-oriented electives from the business school. I realised that was the thing that I'd been looking for my entire life.

What advice would you have to female founders who are on their entrepreneurial journey?

In what I've seen so far when it comes to startups is that the most efficient founders are ones who are trying to solve problems in a sphere they're familiar with.

Coming into the agricultural sphere, as a total stranger, look how much time it took me to understand what it was all about!

If it's in an area you're unfamiliar with, that's going to be much harder.

I also work another job. I'm a commercial analyst for a company that develops planning and scheduling management software for mining sites.

I just calculated recently and I basically have two full-time jobs. I work almost 80 hours a week. I really need to find an investor who wants to pay me a salary while I'm developing Suelo Tech!

Update

Julia parted ways with Suelo Tech shortly after returning from London.



Siobahn Whitehead

CO-FOUNDER OF PASSPORT 360



BUSINESS

PASSPORT 360



ESTABLISHED

2015 IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA



EMPLOYEES

11



CUSTOMERS

2,753

What is your business all about?

Passport 360 is a health and safety compliance system. We are software as a service (SaaS), and we help our mining clients on their journey to zero harm. We onboard contractors and employees onto high risk environments, such as mines, in a user-friendly and transparent experience.

What problem does Passport 360 solve?

Contractors were moving between mines, and they were taking up to between six and eight weeks just to get onboarded onto a mining site. During that time, the mining client was paying their wage while they were onboarding. We really saw that there was a need in the industry to improve this process.

How did the company begin?

We approached Anglo American, a big mining house. At the time, we were doing induction training for them, and that's where we identified this issue. We said to them, "Work with us, and we'll develop the solution in conjunction with you to help solve this problem."

At the time, we were using another system to save contractor training records to, which we had started talking to clients about. This was really before cloud was a big thing in South Africa. Cloud hadn't arrived yet, but we basically had a cloud solution. We had servers in a data centre that our clients could access the learning records of an individual – that's really where the idea for Passport 360 came from.

We began offering free plans

for clients to access an individual's record but later decided to put a business case around this and broke the software business away from the training business.

That's when we approached Anglo American and said, "Look, this is a real issue. Let us show you how we can actually save you time and money here." It did take us a while to get there, but we did. We worked with Anglo in the beta phase for about six months, and then we took it out to the market after that.

We now have case studies that show how we improved onboarding time from six weeks to about two weeks. We use robotic process automation and AI to make the interface a lot more user-friendly for the client, contractors and employees that are onboarding onto a site.

Why the name Passport 360?

It's all about having a passport to work; a record for life if you're working in high-risk environments. It's a passport for your compliance. It contains medicals, training, competencies certificates, trade certificates and all of that.

It stores all of that in one easy to use electronic record that goes with you from client to client.

Who is your ideal customer?

Our ideal customers are large scale, high-risk environment clients. We started in the mining industry, so companies such as Anglo American, BHP Billiton, South32, Rio Tinto, Glencore, are our primary clients. However, we can work in any high-risk environment. Energy, renewable energy, construction, manufacturing.

Anywhere where you have a lot of individuals working in high risk environments, and you need to track compliance issues to ensure people's safety – that's really our market.

What is the biggest challenge you've faced along the way?

I think staff, or people issues, can sometimes be the greatest challenge. It's always really important to have a succinct team and a team that's humming really well. Generally, we have had that, but every now and then you'd

“There are lot of ups and downs emotionally, so it's really good to have a group of people around you who can support you through that. Your confidence can take a lot of hits if you just stand alone, so have that network in place.”

get someone into the team that maybe didn't fit with the culture, and that can generally cause a lot of issues for the team.

We never hire someone straight off the bat. We'd always put someone on a fixed-term contract for three months to understand if they fit in with our culture.

It's all about attitude. It's actually the soft skills of the person versus the technical skills. You can try anyone who's got the right attitude, I think. That's always been our view. It takes time to find the right staff.

At Passport 360, I wouldn't say we've had huge issues. In the training business, we had a couple of hair-raising moments when the mining industry cycle was really down, and our business model was dependent on bums-on-seats training.

What was the training related to?

We were training induction safety training. Basically, it's all

around being safe on a mine. It's a requirement under the Occupational Health and Safety Act that employers have to train anyone coming onto their site in health and safety, so that they can be safe and the people around them can be safe.

In Africa, it's quite different because we train in 11 languages there, and a lot of the people we've trained have never sat in a classroom before.

Some of them are illiterate. So, you'd have to go through and explain what various signage means. That's quite a process when they can't read and write. We develop training programs with our clients to do that.

Passport 360 though is a bit of a different business model because it's software as a service. We set a subscription amount every month, so our revenue is constant, whereas in a training business it goes up and down.

Have you ever wanted to throw the towel in?

No, not really. Not when I'm deep in the business. I love the business, and even through the tough times when we have had the mining cycles being down and that kind of thing, we've had challenges along the way. I don't think I've wanted to throw the towel in.

What has been very challenging for me is moving to Brisbane without my team, which is based in Johannesburg. We are now pitching to the Australian market, so we hope to have a client in Australia soon, and we'll be developing a team in Brisbane as well.

As your business has grown, do you think in hindsight, there's anything you would have done differently along the way?

Yes, I probably would have assessed the business structure and put more planning into it up front. I think for us, we were really just focused on solving the need of the clients. We were very focused on our local market, and not really looking at it from a global perspective. In hindsight, we probably should have done a bit more of research in terms of where the best place was to set up.

As a result, our holding company and our intellectual property is currently sitting in South Africa, which for me isn't necessarily the right setup. To try and unbundle that, it's difficult in hindsight. That's probably something I would have done differently based on what I know now.

What is the vision for your business?

The vision is to scale the business globally. We do see that there's a need globally for training people in high-risk environments. The first market we're aiming to conquer is Australia. From there, we would like to look at Chile. We'd like to look at Eastern Europe, and possibly Canada as well.

But for now, the focus is really just getting a foothold in the Australian market and getting some large-scale miners on board in Australia.

How have you funded your business to date?

It's been self-funded the whole way. We haven't raised any investment. We're looking to raise in the future, specifically, around the Australian market. I'd like to set up resources in Australia and we'd like to add to the product offering as well. The Australian market is slightly different. It's slightly

more mature in terms of technology and systems in the space. There's still a need, but it's slightly different to the South African need. I'd like to put an investment into that to building the product slightly differently for the Australian market.

Where would you invest the money from a capital raise?

I'd like to set up a team of developers in Brisbane. That's really the goal. I'd like to get a data scientist and a full stack developer. My CTO and co-founder is in Johannesburg. He is quite keen to come to Brisbane as well. That could be exciting. We've got a senior developer in Johannesburg, so he would run South Africa. He would be across the two countries as CTO.

The idea would be to establish an office and capability in Brisbane but most of the funds would go into product development.

Have you always been entrepreneurial, or did someone put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

I think I've always been entrepreneurial. Even when I was small, I can remember selling plums from our garden, on the pavement [laughs]. I've always

done things like that. It's quite funny, in hindsight, but I think it's always been in my blood. I've always enjoyed the challenge of business and problem-solving around business.

Who has mentored you along this journey?

My business partner in the training business, Graham Emmett, was a great mentor to me. He's had a great career and was a great inspiration to me. He was an industrial psychologist, so he was really good on the people side, and I'm very analytical as I come from an accounting background. So, it was really good to have that mix. He taught me a lot about people and managing teams and leadership along the way. I'm very grateful for that.

What advice do you have for women looking to establish their own business?

Get yourself a mentor, and get yourself into a community that can support you. There are a lot of ups and downs emotionally, so it's really good to have a group of people around you who can support you through that. Your confidence can take a lot of hits if you just stand alone, so have that network in place.





Suzy George

CO-FOUNDER OF SPORTECH INDUSTRIES



BUSINESS

SPORTECH INDUSTRIES



ESTABLISHED

2015 IN ADELAIDE



EMPLOYEES

2



CUSTOMERS

PRE-REVENUE

What is your business all about?

MyCall by Sportech Industries is the next generation of umpiring assistance tech in cricket.

There's lots of tech in cricket but none at the bowler's end. MyCall will call 'no balls' automatically. At the moment, that decision is missed 90% of the time.

Essentially, it will help the umpire to make better decisions. It'll also make the game faster, smoother and create a better fan experience.

How did the name of your business come about?

The name MyCall, as in 'Michael', is used in our tagline, "Who's call should the no ball be? Should it be the umpire's call, or it should be MyCall's?" But it also sounds like a person (Michael) who's not here.

One of the very famous umpires is Michael Wilson

who's also known as Blocker. It's a little bit of a spin off that.

How did the idea for your business come about?

My husband was sitting at the cricket at Adelaide Oval. He's with his mate from the UK and it's one of the games in the Ashes 2013 series. [Cricketer] Ryan Harris went and took the last wicket and he was going to clinch the series for Australia. It was a pretty exciting moment and you've got 45,000 fans at the game, that's usually a sell-out in Adelaide. It's a great atmosphere.

You only have 20 wickets for an entire game that goes for five days. That moment where you take a wicket is cause for celebration – they're rare. So Harris takes the last wicket to clinch the series and the whole crowd goes crazy.

He's won the Ashes for Australia – it's a really exciting moment!

But then the umpire stops the entire game and has to go back because of the rules and review to see if it actually landed in the right spot before he could call the wicket and declare it.

Instead of the crowd celebrating, everyone just stands around for a while and that moment is lost.

Fan engagement is very much a driving force within sport globally at the moment. You've got organisations asking, 'how can we engage with our fans and create a better experience?'

One of the issues that you have is that in a moment like that, you lose the fans' focus and you lose their attention. Within a split second, they pick up their mobile phone and starting scrolling through other sporting tournaments from around the world.

All of a sudden, the fans have disengaged from your game and

possibly your code, and they've gone and engaged with the National Basketball League in America and you've lost them.

What step did you next take?

My husband is Peter George, a professional cricket player transitioning from elite sports into entrepreneurship. He played for 14 years, and has an engineering background. He's combined that to really look at this 'no ball' problem in cricket.

At that game in Adelaide, he was there as a fan but he was also able to look at it from the position of a player. He thought it was a dreadful way to end a game.

You have situations where players take wickets, then they're revoked because they've bowled an illegal delivery.

Potentially they've done that quite a number of times, but the review process is not there until they take a wicket and then that wicket is taken away, so it's also a poor outcome for the players that are involved in the game.

Pete was watching it unfold on the field saying, "I can see the problem, I could use my engineering knowledge and what I know about machinery and robotics to do something about it."

How does the technology actually work?

It's something built into the pitch and there's a sensor clipped onto the back of the

player's shoe which interacts with the sensors on the pitch.

What is the vision for MyCall?

To be the most relied upon technology in world cricket.

Who is your ideal customer?

Our customers are very much the governing bodies of sport within an individual country. Initially, we'd like to have this in Australia. We're working with Cricket Australia at the moment, looking at trials and user testing, and really fleshing out our strategy.

Then you move out into English Cricket Board and Indian Cricket Board. At the global level, you've got the International Cricket Council which governs cricket across the globe.

There's quite a big group of countries that play cricket. You're looking at about three billion fans globally and one million participants.

"I think on the outside success always looks very glamorous, and I've come to believe that the more successful you are on the outside, often the messier things are on the inside, and that you've just got to learn to be comfortable in that space."

What's been the biggest challenge for your business?

As founders, our business is only ever going to be as great or as big or as awesome as we want it to be or we envisage it as being because then you go on a journey to work and how you get there.

I think we're always in the way of our success more than anything else.

That's certainly something that I've pulled out of this trip – just how much is possible in the world.

Is it possible for me and if I don't believe it is, then why not? Because it's probably just me getting in the way.

Have you ever wanted to throw the towel in?

My husband and I work together and we also have two small children, and there are some days where you think, 'is this really worth it?'

I think on the outside success always looks very glamorous,

and I've come to believe that the more successful you are on the outside, often the messier things are on the inside, and that you've just got to learn to be comfortable in that space.

Sometimes throwing the towel in is actually just a sign to go, "Something's not quite right here." It's a good sign if you can learn to listen to it and pay attention to it. It's actually a really healthy thing to say, "For some reasons the balance is not right here, and rather than just give up and throw the towel in let's work out why we got to this point or why we're feeling like this and really what's the actual problem here? What can we do about it?" You can start to have those conversations.

In some ways it can be a really positive thing because it can be alert that something's actually not quite right. You need to revisit the balance.

What's been your biggest mistake to date?

Not believing in myself. I think if you can go on a journey where you believe in yourself, then so much more becomes possible. It's about shifting your mindset to say, "I can do this," and "This is possible and it's also possible for me," and then working out how do I do it!

Were there people along the way who mentored you, that helped to change that mindset?

While mentoring is wonderful you also have to be in the right place to accept that. I think I've done a lot of work to get myself into a position where I'm saying, "Hey, I'm actually open to feedback," and it's because I'm secure enough in myself.

That's a really key part of it – to be comfortable in where you're at, enough to actually open up and say, "I'm ready now for other people to have input and tell me how I can go on that journey to be who I need to be."

Who put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

My mom said to me the other day, "I think I've just realised that you're not really meant to have a normal job." I was a bit sad for myself that I hadn't realised that before.

I worked in a big corporate and they were a wonderful employer and I worked with wonderful people, but I was never truly comfortable there.

I wanted to do something that mattered to me that I believed was actually important.

If I was going to put in a lot of hard work, I didn't want it to be for somebody else.

I just couldn't see the justification there of spending my whole entire life working in a company where I don't really see the end result of that.

I ended up here which is the place that's allowed me a lot of flexibility. I get to structure my time and my life around what's very important to me. No one tells me you have to go and do this. If it's not valuable to me I get to choose that I don't do it.

With the benefit of hindsight, is there anything you would've done differently on your startup journey?

I would have gone a lot faster and realised how much potential there is. We're in the process of raising our first seed funding round, and that's really going to accelerate our growth. But it wasn't until someone sat with us and said, "This is how you do this, this is how you should structure it", that we'd even considered it to be really an option for us.

Again, it's maybe that you know it's possible, but is it possible for us? It's just opened this world of possibilities that we didn't

even realise existed. It's just sometimes someone opening the door just a crack and giving you a view in, and if you're in the right place to see that, you realise that that's an opportunity.

How have you funded your business to date?

Bootstrapped to date.

What will be the first international market you'll enter?

We've got two choices here, it's India and the UK. Australia, India and the UK is certainly our big three focus.

The cricketing nations!

Absolutely. It's just an obvious choice, you just really look where the game is played at a big level and with ease of access.

UK probably has ease of access. India is a bigger market. The IPL there, their sponsorship value is greater than that of the basketball league in America, and it's only an 8-week competition!

That's certainly been one of the outcomes of this trip – really understanding a little bit about that UK market and how easy and accessible it is. We've got organisations who are just there to support that transition into a global market, so it's been really

exciting and sometimes it's hard to find out about these things when you're just sitting in your bubble in Brisbane.

It's been really great to know that there's that support networks for us there as we expand that don't actually have to go out there and do it all by ourselves. There are entire bodies and people and organisations who really are there to just provide those support services.

What advice do you have for women thinking about starting the entrepreneurial journey?

Start.

Update

MyCall has been busy raising funds which have now reached just over \$500,000, including support from the Queensland Government in the form of an Ideas Grant. "My co-founder, Peter, has had some awesome opportunities to speak about MyCall on radio and TV segments," says Suzy, "And we have seen development progress significantly which sees Sportech poised to start its user testing program for MyCall imminently."





Sharine Duran

CO-FOUNDER OF ADZURRA



BUSINESS

ADZURRA



ESTABLISHED

2018 IN GOLD COAST



EMPLOYEES

3



CUSTOMERS

52 BOUTIQUES

What is your business all about?

Adzurra is a fashion e-commerce marketplace that connects local fashion with local users and with local independent boutiques.

What problem does your business solve?

Consumers want to be able to buy both online and offline. Online, there's a stack of places you can shop at, but how do you buy something from a local boutique without physically visiting it?

Boutiques want to be able to attract new shoppers. Paid online advertising is becoming extremely expensive, so boutiques are looking for a new way to sell their products. We charge the boutiques a subscription fee and a revenue share to fully automate their inventory and systems.

How did the idea for the business come about?

I'm 24 years old, and I shop quite regularly online and offline. But there was no marketplace that allowed me to bring those two worlds together. It came to me when I was travelling in Japan. I wanted to find local fashion in the area.

I was like, "Well, why isn't there a marketplace that allows me to figure out if there are clothes I want in a store prior to going into it. When I travel, why can't I find all the different types of independent fashion boutiques in the area so I can support local fashion and local businesses?"

Who is your ideal customer?

Women who want to support local fashion. They don't really discriminate whether it's online or offline – it's all about what

product you want. You don't really care where it comes from at the end of the day.

It's women who want to support local fashion and who aren't really into mass-produced fashion.

What's been your biggest challenge in getting your business up and running?

I'm a founder – not a co-founder – and I don't think a lot of people understand the difference between having co-founders that you can rely on, and being just the sole founder. The problems that you face are very difficult.

With co-founders you've got a support system. As a sole founder, everything relies on you, so you have to learn about tech. You have to learn about marketing. You have to learn

about consumer markets. You have to understand your business model, you have to understand finance, you have to understand everything! I've had to learn about AWS and all the different types of systems that are in place in my business.

I think the biggest difficulty is building a team. You need to understand what your gaps are and build a team that can help you meet the gaps. Hire a tech person, hire a marketing person, and make good hires at the start of your business.

Who has helped you along your entrepreneurship journey?

Having an early stage investor very early in my business empowered me to actually believe in my business from the beginning. I started off quite early – I began the business when I was 22 years old – and having an investor come in and say 'that's a great idea', empowered me to find more mentors in the space. He's since become a mentor for me.

Have you ever thought about throwing in the towel?

Yes. There haven't been that many moments where I wanted to throw in the towel. I think that's partly due to naivety and partly due to believing what I'm building.

When you build a product that's for you, that you would use yourself, that's exciting.

“Have a strong idea of your business plan and what you're trying to accomplish. Speak to lots of people about your business. Don't think about your business being stolen or the idea being stolen...chances are, people are too lazy to even steal your idea.”

I realise it may sound trivial to some, but for me, to be able to connect worlds of fashion from local fashion in Japan, to Korea, and to other countries, that's pivotal in my life.

I would say that I've wanted to throw in the towel when the team starts to lose faith. As a sole founder, it's very important that your team believes in who you are as a person, and that they want to work with you. As a startup, you work with low budgets, extremely high stress, and overly ambitious goals. The team you work with needs to believe in not just your goal but you as a person.

The team also keeps me going when they tell me that if we can't raise capital, they would work for free – that makes me cry. I'm very driven by my team. When they say, "Look, if we can't raise any kind of money, we'll continue working for free until we can get to that point," that makes me feel like I can achieve the world.

With the benefit of hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently along your journey?

Absolutely, yes. [laughs] Of course. I would have built my team earlier. When I first started my business I was a sole founder with no technical experience, and because I came across capital quite early on, I hired an agency to actually build my product overseas in the Philippines. That was probably the biggest mistake I've ever made.

I had no control over my product, and because I'm non-technical, I couldn't really dictate the best system for the specific functionality I wanted. I had no control. I would have just spent a bit of time looking for a team before spending any money.

I would have looked for a software developer and asked, "Okay, do you want to be part of my team?" then looked for a marketing person and asked,

“Do you want to be part of my team?” Baking that culture from the get-go before spending a dollar on development fees and things like that.

It also cost me my six months of time to fix what the Philippines agency couldn't deliver. In startup world, six months is a long time to lose.

I had to start over and develop the product from scratch – that was one of the times I wanted to just throw in the towel. I was like, “I'm going to have to start again, and I've already spent \$90,000, and there was nothing achieved within that time.”

That was very difficult to get over, and then having to rebuild my company and my company culture, and then do proper hires six months later.

How has your business been funded to date?

We have an angel investor through family and friends. We received \$285,000. Now we're currently going for a seed round for early-stage investors, VCs or angels in the e-commerce marketplace space.

How did your angel investor come about?

That's quite a unique story. I had graduated from law school at a

Gold Coast university and within three months of graduation, I had this idea to connect local independent boutiques online.

I was going through this moment when you graduate from uni, you're like, “I don't know what to do with my life. Should I go into corporate world? Should I go into government? Should I become a lawyer? Should I work in other areas? Should I work in the startup area?”

So, I had this idea, and I was babysitting for my uncle, and I was speaking with him and I was like, “Hey, I have an idea. Do you guys know anyone that might help me as a business mentor?”

My uncle says, “Actually, I have a really good friend. He's quite a high net worth individual. He's had a few businesses that are very well off and making quite a substantial amount of money. He would love to speak to you because he's always looking for younger people to impart that wisdom on.”

He calls him and says, “Hey, my niece, has this idea. She wants to get into tech. She doesn't really know where to go from here. She needs a business mentor. Do you know if you could impart any wisdom?”

Richard, who's now our investor, was like, “Sure. Please put her on the phone.” I get on the phone, and he's like, “Hey, what are you thinking of doing? What your interests are. What industry is it in?” I said, “I want to do e-commerce marketplaces. This is how much money we're trying to raise as well.”

Then he was just like, “I like that idea. I like you. You sound like you're smart. You just graduated. You've got the whole world at your feet. You're young. I'll invest.”

I said, “Okay.”

Obviously, he didn't invest there then, but it was over two-month period of emailing and understanding the business, where we want to go and the mission of the business. Then within two months, we received our first initial injection. Then three months later, after a bit of market research, he injected another round of financing.

You mentioned you're looking at another capital raise.

We're currently seeking \$1 million in seed funding. We're looking for early-stage investors and seed funding in e-commerce marketplaces at this time because we've done an angel round. We are also looking for other angels, but angels with experience in

e-commerce marketplaces, and to grow marketplaces specifically because everyone knows marketplaces are very difficult to scale. We've got two to scale. We've got the boutiques to scale, and we've got users to scale. That's all about customer acquisition and conversion rates. We want someone in that space.

What is the vision for your business?

I would love to see all the local independent fashion boutiques, online and offline, all connected onto one marketplace so that when people shop, they don't just think online or offline, they think online to offline. We don't think about going online or offline. It's like the two worlds are together now. Our vision is to connect all these local fashion boutiques, no matter where they are in the world, to come to one marketplace.

What do you think will be the first international market you have a presence in?

Outside of Australia, we will go UK, then US.

Who do you think put you on the path to entrepreneurship?

Not my parents! My dad's actually a business man, but he never really wanted me to go

into business. He's like, "Don't become part of business, become a lawyer, get your security, get your money. You go up and down in business, I don't want you to have that stressful life." To this day, he asks when am I ever going to become a lawyer!

My mum ran a business with my dad quite successfully back when I was young. She also said, "Don't do it. Long hours, low returns".

The person who inspired me to get into entrepreneurship was an ex-partner of mine. When I was 21, I dated a man who was into entrepreneurship and inspired me to become part of that world.

Once I was in my last year of university and I was asking what I was going to do with my life, he was running his own startup. I'd see him work so many hours, but I loved the fact that he was working for himself.

We're not together anymore, but we're still good friends. He empowered me to become part of entrepreneurship. That's when I realised, "Actually, I can do this, too."

What advice would you have to any other females out there who are seeking to follow an

entrepreneurial path?

Have a strong idea of your business plan and what you're trying to accomplish. Speak to lots of people about your business. Don't think about your business being stolen or the idea being stolen. No one's going to steal your idea. Chances are, people are too lazy to even steal your idea. It takes a lot of hard work!

So, speak to people about your business. They might connect you with someone. Don't think of anything as a waste of time. Just do it and speak to anyone and you never know where that's going to lead.

What is the vision for your business?

Sharine continues to raise capital for Adzurra, but has also had a few other wins. In November, Sharine won the AWS Rising Star Award by Women in Digital. "I love to take moments like these and soak them in, thank the team and remember why we started Adzurra in the first place," Sharine says. Shoppers, meanwhile, have flocked to Adzurra in droves. "There are thousands of users now using the Adzurra app," Sharine says. "In January we ranked in the top #100 Shopping Apps on Google Play."



Morgahna Godwin

FOUNDER OF MANAGE ENDO



BUSINESS

MANAGE ENDO



ESTABLISHED

2018 IN BUNDABERG



EMPLOYEES

1



CUSTOMERS

185

What is your business all about?

Manage Endo is an app, a data-driven tool to manage endometriosis. Endometriosis is a disease that affects one in 10 women. More broadly, it affects 176 million women worldwide. My idea came out of my own experience – I have Stage 4 endometriosis. There are four stages: one being mild, four being severe endometriosis. I live with severe endometriosis. My management strategy was morphine, Tramadol, anti-inflammatories, stomach lining drugs, and anti-nausea meds. I was able to come off that using a data-driven approach, and I thought if that can help me, that can help the other 176 million women who have endometriosis.

What is endometriosis?

Endometriosis is clinically defined as tissue similar to tissue that

lines the uterus, growing in places outside the uterus. At a level of living with the disease, the realities are much more piercing. That means that you deal with life-altering symptoms like chronic pain, infertility, irritable bowel syndrome, painful periods, anxiety, and depression. Endometriosis is just as prevalent as asthma and diabetes but we don't have the financial framework and the medical framework to deal with it.

How does the app work?

We look at how your lifestyle inputs – be it diet, exercise, mindfulness – are impacting your day to day symptom-based. What became very evident was that if you followed your data and what was actually affecting your pain symptoms, you could have a really big impact on your pain levels. We look at minimising those symptoms.

How does it guide women through their endometriosis journey?

A lot of it is about onboarding your journey to this point. What historical events have happened to you in terms of endometriosis symptoms? What doctors have you seen? What medication are you taking? That is a cool picture not necessarily for the Manage Endo team but for you when you go into these meetings. People have files of endometriosis documents. That's the legacy system. You need all of your documents, and you need to be on top of what's happening to you to get this treatment. Part of that is onboarding your journey and then we go through a three-month program of managing diet, exercise, mindfulness.

Are you doing okay now?

I don't take medication, I live a healthy life. Before I

had my endo under control, I couldn't even walk up a flight of stairs without having abdominal problems.

This is all just being done with diet and exercise?

The majority of it. I would say, 80% of it. I still have my bad pain days. I still have anti-inflammatory drugs if it gets really bad.

It sounds very simplified when you say it's diet, exercise, mindfulness. You've got to let your data tell you what to do. This disease affects everybody in different ways. Everybody wants to tell you the right things to eat and the right things to exercise and the right things to mindfulness but if my endometriosis is on my bladder and your endometriosis is on your sciatic nerve, there are two different approaches. You've got to figure out what's triggering them and 80% of that is in how you're living your life and that's different from how I might live my life.

Are there any parts of the world where endometriosis is not as pronounced?

No. It's a global woman healthcare crisis.

Do we know what causes endometriosis?

We don't. There's no known cause, no known cure.

Can you fall pregnant

“Endometriosis is a disease that affects one in 10 women. More broadly, it affects 176 million women worldwide. My idea came out of my own experience – I have Stage 4 endometriosis. There are four stages: one being mild, four being severe endometriosis.”

when you have endometriosis?

You can, but it's often difficult. It depends where the endometriosis is growing. For me, it was on my bowel, my bladder, and my reproductive organs. Some people, it's been found in the lungs. It's even been found in the brain. It's like a growing weed inside of your body.

There's no way to kill it?

There is if you manage it.

Is it free for women to download this app?

Yes.

Where do you make your money?

It will be free but there will be a subscription for those who want more. You get a week of trial and then you can choose to continue, much like the Headspace model which is an app for meditation. If you want to continue with the program, you can but there's

enough value in that chunk, so if you can't afford it or there's an access issue, you've got some solid information that will help you.

Who is your ideal customer?

Women who are post-surgery. What's your management strategy? Can we get you on a management pathway? Because you don't want women and girls being cut open 22 times. You see a lot of it in the industry. They are so ready to put a scalpel to you. Ideally, you only want one to two surgeries in your lifetime. What Manage Endo proposes is that you get on that management pathway so that likelihood of you having multiple surgeries decreases. Every time you have a surgery, that's trauma on your body.

What's the biggest challenge you faced in setting up your business?

Probably a lot around the regulatory framework of what

constitutes medical advice in creating something like this. There's a lot of regulation around whether can you say certain things within an app. I'm just navigating that space at the moment. I coded the app myself after teaching myself to code. That was a challenge but still not as challenging as trying to get medical approval.

Who do you think put you on your journey to entrepreneurship?

I struggle with this because I think I've lived and breathed entrepreneurship since I was a kid. I can remember selling pine cones at the age of six, walking around with a sack on my back and going up into the bush to pull these pine cones off these trees. It's been like a fabric of who I am.

Have you ever wanted to throw the towel in along this journey?

Yes, all of this time. I'm becoming better. Look, you get those moments. Everybody's human where you go, why am I doing this? I have those small moments but in the larger scheme of things, when you zoom out and you take a look at the bigger picture, it's of course not, there's no way. Like I just said, it's a fabric of who I am. I'm not quitting.

What vision do you have for your business?

I hope that it is the pathway for post-surgery endometriosis management worldwide. Currently, there is none.

Where would you like to see your business in five years?

Ideally, I'd like to see my business backed by all of the endometriosis bodies around the globe. Globally supporting it in terms of pushing the constituents towards it so that we have that validity. That's what I'm working on at the moment. I'd like to see it growing as a pathway diversifying into different areas of endometriosis management. Right now, it's a very simplified version of management. It works really well, but there's definitely scope to branch off into specific types of management, to specific types around mindfulness.

Mental health is huge when you've dealt with chronic pain on average for 16 years. These diagnosis timelines are instilling these different neural pathways that need to be addressed.

Who has funded your business to-date?

I haven't taken on funding at this point. I've turned down funding once. For me, people have got to align with the vision of what this is, and they've got to believe in it. I don't want money that isn't smart money.

Bootstrapping?

Bootstrapping. I've got the components. I can code, I'm a graphic designer. I know how to market. For now, that's enough. It will need it at some point, but I'm not going to sell out for someone who doesn't have the intelligence to help me with where I need to go.

Do you have any plans in the short term to raise capital?

Not in the short term, no.

With the benefit of hindsight, what would you have done differently?

I would have outsourced a lot of the coding. I think it's great to know what they're doing, how they're doing it – but I don't need to do every task.

What would that have freed you up to do?

To focus on the building of the company. To focus on the different layers that I need to get

in place. It would have been a lot quicker if I'd given someone else the coding plans.

What advice would you have for female founders looking at getting into startup world?

Don't take shit. Particularly from men. A lot of the conversations I've had at different investment tables, different tables with startup ecosystem, everybody wears the same shirt, has the same colour of skin, speaks the same way, is of the same age demographic. Don't take shit.

What other roles have you held over the years?

At 20 years old I left New Zealand, that's where I'm originally from, and I moved to New York City.

All the people that I could see who were leaders in their field that I wanted to be in, which was the creative industries, were situated in New York. I went to New York on a hope that I could break in, ended up at Google headquarters and there was the photo director of Elle Magazine US. She had a fashion tech startup and she said, "Come and work for me." I did. That's what I did for about a year and a bit.

Doing what?

Everything from social media to coding. I also got insights into the fashion publishing industry while working at Elle. Then, I came back to Melbourne, Australia and I started my own creative agency, The Benson Press. I've been running that now for about six years, providing branding solutions from business cards to websites across the spectrum, mainly working with clients in the Middle East and China.

I acquired those clients because I had a few projects that went viral so I knew how to execute. That reached a broader audience and then I was able to acquire clients in really high-value countries.

Does that mean when you worked in New York that was the only time you ever worked for someone?

No. All through university I worked as a cleaner. The reason I worked as a cleaner is because I knew the cleaning company that cleaned art galleries and specific offices with specific artworks hanging in them.

I hunted them down and I said, "I will do anything to work for you," and I got two hours every morning at 5am alone with my favorite artworks.

Update

Morgahna sold Manage Endo to Qendo, an Australian charity advocating for those with endometriosis for more than 30 years. "When I got back from London, I started looking for the appropriate organisation to acquire Manage Endo," she says. "This feels like the right outcome." Morgahna has gone to give a TEDx Talk on endometriosis, launch a podcast series interviewing startup founders about mental health called The Gratitude Project, and join equity crowdfunding platform PledgeMe as 'Design Leader and Doer'.



Yasmin Grigaliunas

CO-FOUNDER OF WORLD'S BIGGEST GARAGE SALE



BUSINESS

WORLD'S BIGGEST GARAGE SALE



ESTABLISHED

2018 IN BRISBANE



EMPLOYEES

4



CUSTOMERS

30+ PARTNERS AND HOST LOCATIONS

What is your business all about?

The World's Biggest Garage Sale is a profit-for-purpose business that activates dormant goods in the community to have positive impact for the people, planet, and profit for purpose in the circular economy.

How did you come up with the idea?

Actually, we are an accidental startup!

In 2013 I wanted to solve donor fatigue and we weren't a company. I just decided to have a garage sale and tell all my friends that I was going to donate all my dormant goods, all the good stuff I wasn't giving to anybody or selling, to a garage sale I created and we did \$15,000 in a single day.

I thought, "Oh, that's pretty impressive. Maybe if we did

it properly and I put a plan in place, next year we could raise more money."

My husband and I actually did that for three years in a row, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars at each of our events, collectively generating not just money but positive impact for the planet.

It was probably in year four of running this as a hobby once a year that I thought, "I actually probably need to go and create a business." We didn't know the business model.

We didn't understand how we were going to make money. We'd given all of our money away! We did some research and found this opportunity was valued at many billions and trillions of dollars globally.

How does it work?

People donate goods to a charity.

Then with our system, we bring together basically a pop-up shop. We're like a Westfield for a day. We create department stores, we provide all the pricing methodology, we provide the system and back-end, so that all the stuff that comes in with a volunteer community, we build over somewhere between 10 to 12 days once a year.

We build an entire shopping precinct and volunteers staff each of the departments, the community comes to shop, and our revenue model is that we take a percentage of the sales – that's why we're vested the entire time.

For our business, it's quite a big commitment to support the community. Because we've got such an operational system now, we've been able to develop almost like a system of execution that takes all the thinking out of it for the charity.

They don't need to strategise. They don't need to plan, they don't need to do any modelling. We do all of that for them so that they just have to go, "Okay, we're holding a garage sale."

When 20,000 shoppers come to a warehouse, which is what has happened for us in the past, millions of kilograms of product is donated.

It's irresponsible of us to not scale this. If we can do that in one city, imagine the impact if we could do it in 10 cities, 20 cities, a hundred cities, a thousand cities.

What happens to all the leftover goods?

Because everything's been curated and put into a department store, priced, and ready to sell, it's all really good quality stuff so we donate that to op shops, charities, school fetes, anybody looking for inventory that's saleable.

Most of the time charities are looking to come in, hold an event, close the event, leave, make the money, put the money into the community, and make their impact.

Pre-event, we've already arranged for Lifeline, Vinnies, Salvos, RSPCA stores, or anyone who wants to have stock – high-quality goods that is not junk – put into their ecosystem.

We donate all of those products back into the system.

“Women can be ballsy and brave and bold and all the freaking things that a man can be. We can be whatever we want to be. We've just got to stop telling ourselves we can't.”

Who is your ideal customer?

Our ideal customers are local communities or charities who are struggling to raise money, or are looking for a new fundraising model, or event.

Instead of having a charity dinner, and putting all the energy and time into a dinner, getting people to come in and participate in the dinner, and then raise a bit of money from it, we're really looking for charities to have a more positive effect on the circular economy by working with us so that we can help them activate all the dormant resources in their local communities and bring them together.

We bring the platform, the system, the marketing, the brand. Basically, the entire dashboard and toolkit.

They bring their people. We then help get more people. Together, we create this beautiful partnership. We raise a lot of money and that's awesome but it's actually not what our passion is.

Our passion as a business is to

actually capture the invisible data that's in the circular economy. We can actually utilise our resources more than what we're currently utilising.

We have multiple customers but ultimately, we're looking for charities who want to raise a lot of money and work with us collectively to do so. We want lifetime customers. We don't want to chop and change. We come into a community, we are there and vested in that community to not just hold it for one year or two years, but we're looking for 10-year customers.

What's been the biggest challenge you've faced along this journey so far?

That we are a freaking business model like no other and that people keep trying to fit us into a box that we don't fit into. We're not like anything else. We're not a software-as-a-service, monthly recurring revenue, blah, blah, blah. We're puzzling.

We are a business model of the future. We're innovating around impact.

Have you ever wanted to throw in the towel?

Yes. My God, yes. Do you know how hard it is to do this? It's a lot of hard work, there's been tears along the way. I don't love – in some ways – that we don't fit into a business model that makes sense to people, and that we have to spend so much time and energy convincing people that this is really a freaking great business.

I wish I didn't have to do that. I got offered a shitload of money recently to be a sales director of a company and it was very tempting – hundreds of thousands of dollars of income a year, superannuation and all the perks and wonderful things. And probably less hours and less time and all the things on paper that people typically aspire to.

Yes, I want to have this great position, great title. Have cars and houses and all the fancy things that people think that they work for all their lives.

I've never had less in my life in terms of possessions, but I've never felt richer in terms of my love for what I do. Because it's actually not just about – and I'm going to cry. [Pause.]

I'm not going to cry. It's not actually about what I can make out of this. It's actually about the

difference that I can make in other people's lives.

Every time I think of the impact, the stories, the well-being, the staff, I can't walk away. I can't walk away until I've literally run out of our very last dollar and pretty much living on the streets. That's when I'll know when I've hit rock bottom.

What is the vision for your business?

We want to activate 1,000 events globally in the next five years and really have an impact around the circular economy at a significantly epic execution level.

I want to create a fun culture and I feel like we do. I want to run a business that doesn't count hours and doesn't measure how much annual leave you have.

It doesn't matter if you stay at home with your kids one day or go and work at the top of the mountain. I've always worked like that and I want to ensure my team can work like that.

For me, I want to get that energy out there. I want to change people's lives and uplift their communities and have more positivity. That's my passion.

How have you funded your business to date?

Bootstrapped. We don't own cars, I don't own a house anymore and pretty much live off very little.

We were really fortunate to get into the River City Labs Accelerator program, which gave us \$100,000 investment, and we now have investors which is a brilliant thing. We've met some of the most amazing investors, some who are really passionate about sustainability.

For me, the money was awesome, but the actual value beyond that hundred grand was better. Then, I was really fortunate to be named as one of the five ventures in Australia under the SheEO program, which is incredible. It was a loan, so it's non-equity, but it's an interest-free loan payable back over five years.

And that's effectively given us enough funding to be able to employ a couple of people in our company, to give us more runway so that we can get to our seed round.

How much are you seeking to raise?

We want to raise \$1.6 million to execute the next 18 months. We're going to use that money to employ staff. We have to create jobs. We've relied a lot of volunteers for a long, long, time.

We've got a pipeline full of customers ready to go and we actually cannot execute on that pipeline. A cool problem to have!

Selling is not our problem [laughs]. We've just got to get some money in so we can get out there and deliver.

With the benefit of hindsight, what do you think you might have done differently along this startup journey?

I actually wish I'd quit my full-time job sooner. [Former Chief Entrepreneur of Queensland] Mark Sowerby is the reason that I quit my job. I have a lot of love for him as a human, as a founder, as a mentor.

He challenged me. He said, "Yasmin, you've built a business, why are you doing your job?" I'm like, "Man, I don't make any money from this business." He's like, "Well, there's a challenge. Quit your job and go work out how to make money."

He said, "Can you survive? And have you got enough buffer in your life to not earn an income for the first 12 to 18 months of your startup?"

Who asks that sort of question? That's a freaking hard question.

Part of me wishes I did it sooner, but I don't know. I don't have

any regrets. I'm not one of those people. I'm like, "It happened at exactly the right time that it was meant to happen for us."

What advice do you have for female founders looking to embark on the startup journey?

Watch [Chief Entrepreneur of Queensland] Leanne Kemp pitch and other strong, confident women – and believe that you are exactly as good as they are and stop telling yourself that you're small. Don't play small.

And it's funny because I always have an out of body experience. I have imposter syndrome like everyone, but I put that little imposter somewhere in my head in a little room and I shut the door and I don't let them come out.

Because every time I do, it slows down the velocity of my business and execution, it makes me start to question who I am and am I really doing the right thing? Every single second of time I spend thinking about that, it is actually minimising my capacity to deliver.

Women can be ballsy and brave and bold and all the freaking things that a man can be. We can be whatever we want to be. We've just got to stop telling ourselves we can't.

Update

World's Biggest Garage Sale is mid capital raise, says Yasmin, who has focused on expanding her team and product offering since returning from London. "We diversified our product offering to include resource recovery with retailers, ensuring their ordinarily discarded 'returns' and imperfect products are renewed and recaptured, then resold or redistributed – basically not going into landfill," Yasmin says. She highlights a recent 'resource recovery' pilot project in Brisbane where the business successfully diverted 10 tonnes of product and given new life, as well as a circular economy pop-up diverting 2,000 pairs of shoes from a failed retailer (returned stock) as recent achievements.



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STARTUP  CATALYST