

STARTUPS

ISSUE #31

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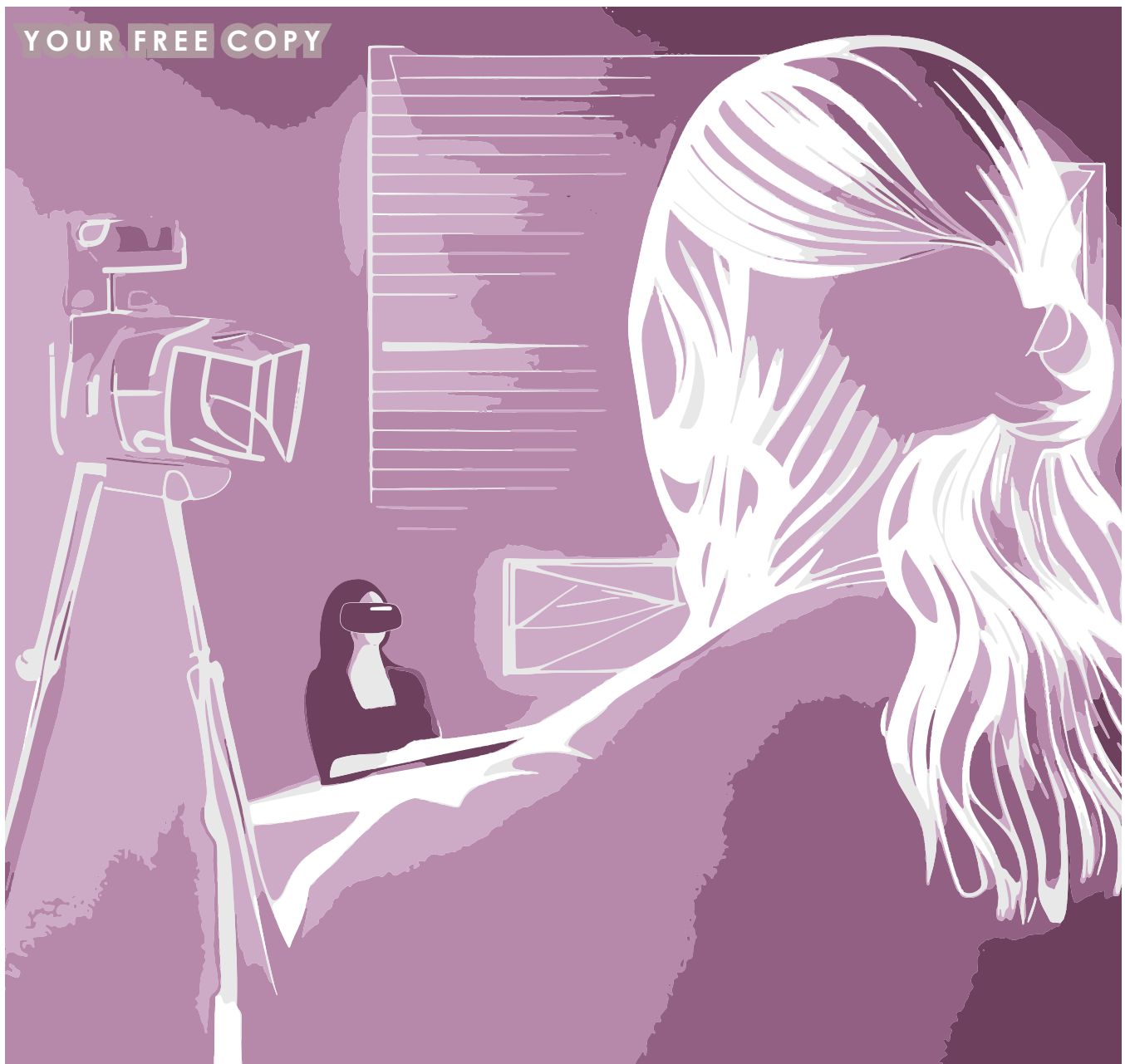
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NOTE FROM THE TEAM



Anton Brisinger

Dear friends of Startups Magazine,

This will be my last editorial note and I want to thank the readers, and the team at Startups, and every person I've met along the way for a magnificent ride. I can honestly say I've learned more from my time at this magazine than in any other role.

I am truly grateful for the experience and the places I've been able to visit during my auspicious time at this wonderful publication, and I can't thank everyone enough for being so kind and welcoming at every event I've been to.

To all the entrepreneurs I've had the fortune of interviewing – especially the early ones when I was a bit nervous – thank you for talking to me and sharing your knowledge with our audiences. To everyone who has invited me to drinks, lunch, dinner, or some event in London, thank you.

Good luck to everyone who submitted to The Hustle Awards!

Regards, Anton

The Startups Magazine team

We're thrilled that we get to speak to so many amazing startups, investors, entrepreneurs, and workspaces. But if we haven't spoken to you yet and you want to get involved, then please drop one of the team a line – we're more than happy to chat!



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Startup hotspot

Los Angeles: Making a name for yourself in this sun-soaked city

Since the days of silent movies, Los Angeles has been synonymous with Hollywood and creating great cinema. But red carpets and dazzling spotlights are no longer the only art form claiming authority over Tinseltown. Since the name Silicon Valley was penned in the 1970s, the tech world has also been making a name for itself in this sun-soaked city.

Tinder. Snapchat. Hulu. MySpace. HeadSpace. These are just a few of the tech giants that have caused the Venice Beach area of LA to be nicknamed Silicon Beach. And emerging startups, eager to add their name into the mix, are flocking to the coast, looking for a piece of the action.

HERE ARE SOME KEY FACTS ABOUT LA'S GROWING STARTUP COMMUNITY:

Los Angeles has some of the most celebrated universities in the world, and when it comes to tech, the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) is often considered to be the best of them all.

LA is the third largest startup ecosystem in the US, after San Francisco and New York City.

It is home to several global startup incubators and accelerators, such as StartEngine and Amplify Partners, which provide resources and funding to early-stage companies.

It is in close proximity to Silicon Valley, and despite the perils of the COVID-19 pandemic, the LA startup ecosystem remained resilient, with many local companies continuing to raise funds and make an impact in the industry.

ASIDE FROM THE SUNSHINE, WHAT MAKES LA DIFFERENT?

"There's a reason why Silicon Beach is booming. Los Angeles is a city of dreamers and doers, and the tech industry here is a reflection of that," says Brian Lee, Co-Founder of The Honest Company, ShoeDazzle, and LegalZoom.

Initially from Seoul, Korea, Lee's LegalZoom is based in Glendale, a suburb of Los Angeles, and is an American online legal tech company that helps customers create legal documents without necessarily having to hire a lawyer. Adding to the perks of being in LA, Lee has managed to get celebrities to endorse his companies, professing that Los Angeles is all about hustling and building relationships – and if you can do that, you'll be on the track to success.

"Los Angeles is one of the most dynamic and diverse cities in the world, and that's reflected in the tech scene here. There's a real sense of community among entrepreneurs, and a willingness to collaborate and help each other succeed," says Samantha Skey, CEO of SheKnows Media,

a media company providing content and community to 75 million women worldwide.

On top of that, Skey launched #ThePitch, the company's programme supporting female entrepreneurs, and has since generated marketing programmes for hundreds of entrepreneurs and business leaders.

HOW DOES THE STARTUP SCENE STAND OUT FROM THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY?

"Los Angeles is a city of reinvention. It's a place where people come to pursue their dreams and make a name for themselves. That same spirit of innovation and drive is what makes it a great place for startups," says Ajay Yadav, Founder and CEO of Roomi.

Yadav founded Roomi with the mission of making it easier for people to find safe and affordable housing in urban areas. The platform uses a proprietary algorithm to match users with potential roommates based on their lifestyles, personalities, and preferences. Ajay, a first-generation immigrant, entrepreneur, and investor, has been recognised by Forbes, TechCrunch, and more, and he is currently based right in the middle of LA's bustling tech scene.

THE FUTURE

Los Angeles is home to several prominent startup events and conferences, including the 'Startup Grind Global Conference', the 'TechDay LA Expo', and the 'Silicon Beach Fest', all of which provide opportunities for startups to showcase their products and connect with investors.

It's reassuring to know that the LA tech scene is strong and growing stronger, and that you don't have to become a Hollywood movie star to make it in LA. And, if you're grinding away in an office all day, then taking a well-earned stroll by the beach after work doesn't sound like such a bad time.

"Los Angeles is a melting pot of cultures, ideas, and industries. The diversity creates a rich ecosystem for startups to thrive in and find success," Elvina Beck, Founder and CEO of PodShare.

"There's a reason why Silicon Beach is booming. Los Angeles is a city of dreamers and doers, and the tech industry here is a reflection of that."

Brian Lee, Co-Founder of The Honest Company, ShoeDazzle, and LegalZoom.

Microsoft is helping startups to build, grow, and scale



Microsoft UK supports startup scaleups, software companies, digital native businesses – you name it! – across each stage of their life cycle and makes sure that startups, in particular, have the right pathways to learn and leverage the best that the company has to offer.

Microsoft runs several programmes and initiatives to help customers and partners build, grow, and scale their business using Microsoft technology.

MICROSOFT FOR STARTUPS FOUNDERS HUB

In 2022, the company launched the Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub. This is a fully digital-lead platform that allows any founder to access a range of benefits as they progress through different stages – from idea to product validation to market fit and then to the growth stage.

“We spent a lot of time understanding what the startup needed to be successful, especially when they’re just getting started,” said Lene Van

der Borgh, Startup Business Lead, Microsoft UK. “Based on a bunch of feedback from thousands of entrepreneurs across the world, across a wide range of backgrounds, we created Founders Hub as a programme to address the most common challenges that startups face.”

The benefits this programme brings are centred around three key areas:

1. Unlocking innovation for everyone

The platform was designed to eliminate the traditional barriers that founders face when they are getting started, such as venture capital requirements and third-party validation. Microsoft’s ambition is to make the global startup ecosystem more representative of the world at large, regardless of their background, location, progress, or passion.

“We want to provide flexibility for startups to work with Microsoft as they shape their business with the platform.”

Van der Borgh

“We also know that having access to a diverse network to help validate ideas, get advice and coaching is instrumental to a startup’s success,” notes Van der Borgh. “This is something we aim to provide every founder through the hub.”

2. Technology benefits and those that grow with the startup

Founders consistently have shared that the startup journey is unpredictable and is filled with uncertainty.

“We want to provide flexibility for startups to work with Microsoft as they shape their business with the platform,” said Van der Borgh.

Startups can build their business at their own pace with up to \$150,000 of Microsoft Azure credits. As their usage of the credits increases, they can unlock additional credits overtime.

For example, if you’re a founder that’s at the very early stage and you’re developing a prototype, Microsoft could provide you with \$1,000 a year. If you use those credits in a few months, you can request more from within the platform and Microsoft will move you up to the next development stage at \$5,500 for another year.

Besides Azure, Microsoft also provide free access to over \$100,000 in very powerful development and productivity tools. So, things like GitHub Enterprise, Visual Studio, and Microsoft 365, which includes Office and Teams. The company recently launched a benefit for LinkedIn as well around talent, strategies, recruitment, and networking with investors and customers.

Startups in the programme can also access OpenAI APIs, and the launch of Azure OpenAI Service presents even more opportunities for startups to take advantage of the OpenAI offerings under the Microsoft umbrella and build using the next generation of AI services.

3. Access to expert guidance and skilling resources

Many successful entrepreneurs have shared that access to coaching and advice is a critical factor in hitting their next milestone. So, the Founders Hub connects founders with industry veterans and subject matter experts. This includes startup friendly training, both business and technical guidance and it integrates products like Microsoft Learn, which is a learning and skilling platform, and they get access to 1:1 technical advisory as well.

ISV SUCCESS PROGRAMME

If you’re slightly later stage and starting to think about how you can scale your solution quickly, how you can access and acquire new customers, and ultimately how you can secure future growth, then Van der Borgh really recommends checking out the ISV Success Programme.

This programme is designed to help software vendors take the next step with building or integrating their application, publishing it to Marketplaces, and growing sales through Go To Market strategies.

Similar to Founders Hub, the programme offers a generous benefits

package from credits, subscriptions, skilling tools, technical advisory hours, and business enablement services.

“We typically see this resonate with Series C startups and above, and a lot of the software companies we work with have come out of Founders Hub and are now looking for ways to get their solution out in the market at scale,” said Van der Borgh.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The good news is the application process is simple. All you have to do is go to startups.microsoft.com, click sign up, and then you go through a 10-minute application form.

The programme is open to all founders and startups that are engaged in the development of a software-based product or service. You can’t have gone through a Series D or later funding round. If that’s the case, the ISV success programme is probably a better fit. Your startup also needs to be privately-held and not have been previously enrolled in one of Microsoft’s programmes.

From you submitting your application, the typical turnaround time is usually five to seven business days to find out if you’ve been accepted or not.

ALL ROUND SUCCESS

“We have just over 2,000 UK startups on the programme and there are a few companies that have had a fantastic journey that we’ve been super privileged to have been a part of,” said Van der Borgh. “The companies range across a wide variety of fields, including fintech, climate tech, accessibility solutions, sustainability, and health. You name it – we’ve got everything.”

Live Tech Games, for example, is pioneering a new wave in mobile entertainment. They take familiar games like Rock, Paper, Scissors, and they put them into an app that provides a live gaming experience. Microsoft’s programmes and Azure helped provide them a platform for their app that could scale up and down flexibly in line with their business needs.

meVitae is another example. Riham, the Founder, created the startup to use AI to help organisations eliminate bias in the recruitment process. It helps companies build a more inclusive and diverse workforce. They’ve extended the reach of their solution to over 4,000,000 shoppers by being on the Microsoft Commercial Marketplace. They were also the first ever winner of the Microsoft Partner Pledge Impact Award – an accolade that shows their commitment to the programme and creating a solution for good.

Lastly, there’s Treeconomy. They are a climate tech startup that generates financial value from ecosystem services and natural capital. They joined the Founders Hub around two years ago. They then joined Microsoft’s AI for Sustainability programme last year to help accelerate the builder of their solutions. So, they really took advantage of the programme’s benefits, like the technical support that was given.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGING TIMES, TOGETHER

“To say it's been a tough climate for [startups] would be an understatement,” said Van der Borgh.

In 2022, many startups expected to be focused squarely on post-pandemic growth and most are now eyeing the threat of recession, managing the impact of persistent inflation, as well as dealing with political unrest, crises in supply chain, energy sourcing, funding challenges, digital skills, and more.

“These challenges are hitting early-stage businesses from lots of different directions,” notes Van der Borgh. “They're having to make really hard decisions, some almost treading the line between growth and survival of their business.

“Although it's been tough, I am optimistic because technology works horizontally across every aspect of the economy. So, whilst the recession's ongoing, I think the underlying sentiment of innovation continues to be dominant.

“However, technological advancements are accelerating so much faster than our ability to adapt, creating this skills gap, which is a long-standing problem for all UK businesses.”

Microsoft is committed to help address this challenge. It recently pledged to help 1.5 million people build tech careers and its Digital Skills Hub offers free information and assets for business leaders and employees on how to close the UK skills gap.

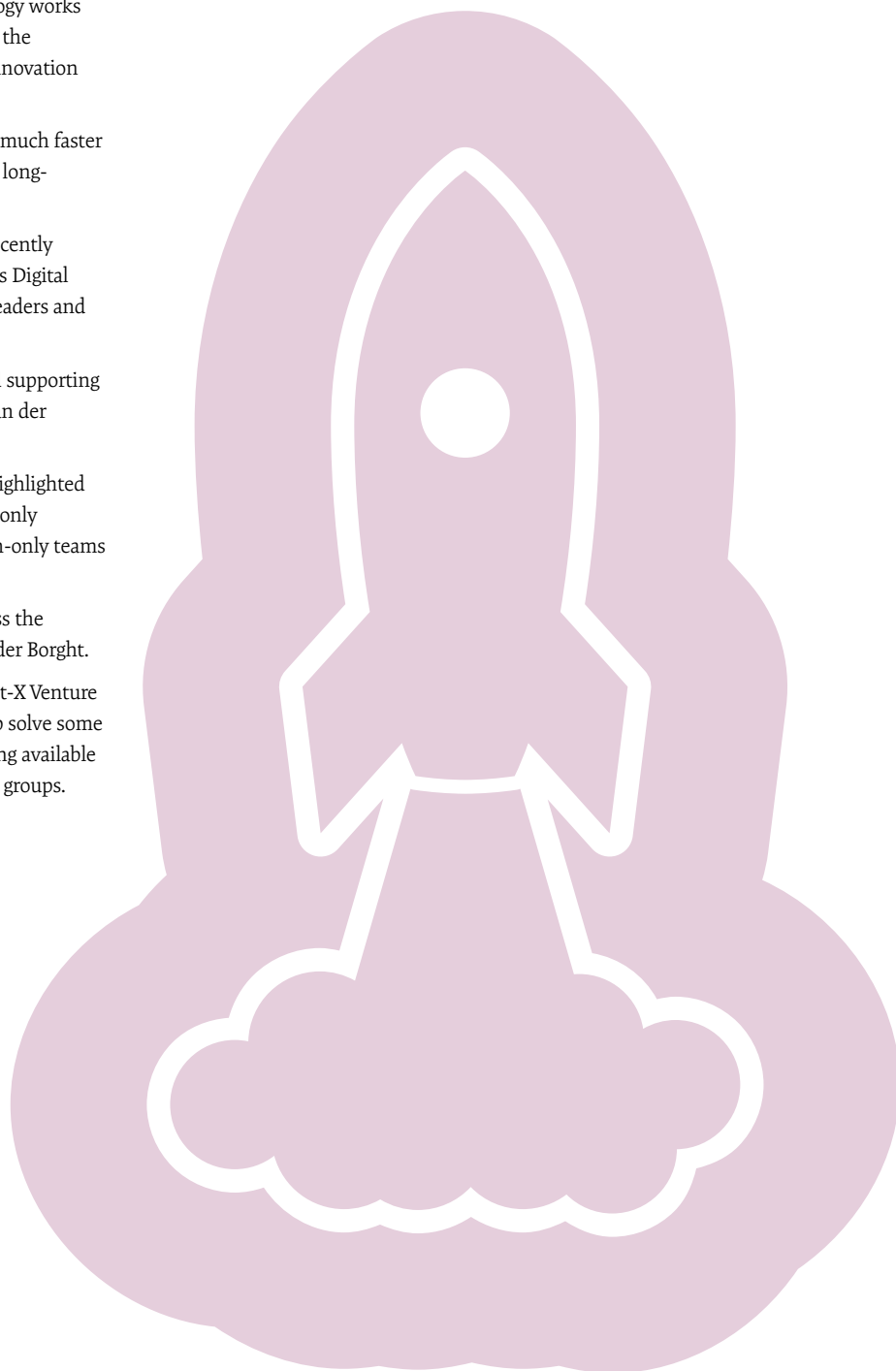
“There's also a huge problem when it comes to funding and supporting diverse and underrepresented minority founders,” notes Van der Borgh.

The State of European Tech report by Atomico in January highlighted that 87% of all VC funding in Europe is still raised by men-only funding teams. The proportion of funding raised by women-only teams has dropped from 3% to 1% since 2018.

“To help this, we want everyone to have the ability to access the resources and the support they need to succeed,” said Van der Borgh.

Microsoft recently announced its collaboration with Impact-X Venture Studio to accelerate underrepresented tech startups to help solve some of these problems. The initiative will make tools and funding available and aim to rebalance the investment for underrepresented groups.

“Although it's been tough, I am optimistic because technology works horizontally across every aspect of the economy.”



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Anglia Unicorn – your partner in success



John Bowman, Marketing Director of Anglia

As the world becomes more interconnected, entrepreneurs and inventors face unique challenges in bringing their products to market. From ideation to manufacturing to marketing and beyond, the process can be daunting and complex. Anglia Unicorn has been set up to assist you in overcoming these challenges by offering end-to-end technical support to help turn your vision into a reality. Whether you need support for the whole journey to market, or just with specific challenges, we are here for you.

Anglia Unicorn was born out of Anglia's 50-year track record of working with start-up businesses, which has given us a huge amount of respect for the entrepreneurs and teams who have the courage to back their ideas and bring them to market. John Bowman, Marketing Director of Anglia, points out that many of the businesses that Anglia partnered with in their early days are now our largest customers. "Each and every one is different," he points out. "Getting to know you is the key to success in any relationship. By listening to your ideas and needs, we ensure that we continuously improve our value to you. Effective translation of ideas and knowledge helps to speed up the success of your tech design in every aspect."

Start-ups have a distinct set of needs. Anglia Unicorn is a division of Anglia geared to helping you access the resources and technologies needed to take a great idea from the drawing board to a finished, marketable product. We offer a comprehensive suite of services that cover every step of the product development cycle. Whether you need guidance on the most suitable technologies to deploy, prototyping partners, or advice on how to get your finished product to market fast and effectively, we have got you covered.

One of the standout services that Anglia Unicorn offers is the ability to discuss your product brief in complete confidence under a non-

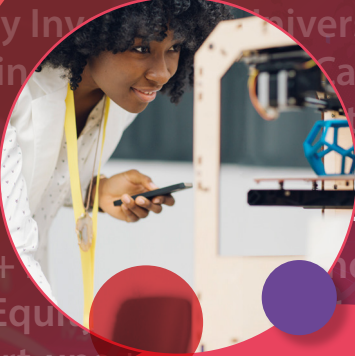
disclosure agreement. This level of confidentiality is essential for startups, entrepreneurs, and inventors who want to protect their ideas before they are brought to market. Additionally, using our vast industry experience Anglia Unicorn can offer advice and suggestions on how to enhance product functionality, ensuring that your vision is incubated in the best possible way.

Once you have a proof of concept and a prototype, Anglia Unicorn can help with design for production, ensuring that your final product design meets all required standards while being easy to manufacture, saving valuable time and money. We can also introduce you to carefully selected local and global manufacturing partners who can support you during the initial production phase as you scale up to full production. With full access to Anglia's comprehensive component supply chain expertise, you can be confident that your product is in good hands.

When it comes to product deployment and marketing, Anglia Unicorn has valuable advice to offer. We can help you get your finished design produced in volume and out to market fast and effectively, ensuring that you reach your target audience and generate the buzz you need to succeed. Once your product is in the market, Anglia Unicorn can provide ongoing support with product lifecycle management, helping you stay up to date on any obsolescence or product changes affecting products used in your design. This support is provided to give assistance with revisions to your product throughout its entire life cycle.

In short, Anglia is a one-stop-shop for startups, university spinouts, technology investors, entrepreneurs and inventors looking to bring their products to market effectively, speedily and within budget. With our design chain to supply chain end-to-end support, you can be confident that you have the resources you need to succeed. So, if you're ready to turn your vision into a reality, consider partnering with Anglia Unicorn today. We look forward to meeting you – and walking together down the path that can lead to you becoming one of Anglia's larger customers of tomorrow.





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Supporting technology innovators

How building your personal brand can change your life



Sophie Miller

So many founders and startups don't get the recognition they deserve, but it's not because they aren't good enough. It's because the world doesn't know about them. Yet.

The solution? Build a personal brand that sets you apart from competition. That positions you as THE expert in your niche. That makes you seen and heard.

But what is personal branding? A quick Google search tells us that personal branding is the practice of creating a brand around a person rather than a business entity.

Personal branding is something worth investing in. And there's no better success story than Sophie Miller to discuss how building her personal brand has quite literally changed her life.

Sophie Miller, Founder and Director of Pretty Little Marketer (PLM), an online community for people in and on social media, is the go-to for making social media simple.

So, let's dissect what might seem like a mystifying subject, and hear from Sophie for her top practical steps to getting started with building your personal brand on LinkedIn.

LET'S GET BACK TO BASICS

Like most of us, when Sophie first came across 'personal branding' she was baffled.

"I didn't even know that me posting as Sophie was building a personal brand, I thought I was just posting content," said Sophie.

And it really is that simple.

To Sophie, personal branding is the process of creating a reputation for yourself. It's what you're known for.

Fellow founder and friend, Shoaib Ahmed, once described personal branding as taking your offline self, online, which inspired Sophie as she believes the more yourself you can be, the better.

That's personal branding. Being unapologetically, authentically yourself.

A WORLD OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES

An idea born from feeling alone has resulted in a community of over 350,000 followers across her platforms, to whom she shares inspiring, educational content every day. Sophie's goal with PLM is to create a community that makes social media simple, bringing people together by instilling confidence. And it turns out Sophie isn't so lonely after all.

It all began from an Instagram post three years ago. Born out of the panic of feeling alone in the world, in June 2020 Sophie shared her first post to the @prettylittlemarketer Instagram, which, six months later, had reached 8,000 followers.

In January 2021 Sophie took to LinkedIn, posting as herself for the first time. And that's when the real magic happened.

Within a month of posting as herself, Sophie signed her first freelance client, was presented with opportunities to speak as a guest lecturer, and worked with a dream client helping them to run their own LinkedIn page.

Fast forward to now, and she's hosted her own in-person event, featured on countless panels, and is a role model for thousands of aspiring marketers.

"The switch between hiding behind a brand to posting as myself has put



me as the expert in the right places, and in front of the right people,” explained Sophie.

“I don’t think PLM would be what it is if we never went on LinkedIn and used my voice to amplify what PLM was doing,” she continued.

The simple switch from posting content from her business account on one platform, to posting as herself on a different platform allowed her to reach a whole new scope of people. Not only did it change her life, but it accelerated PLM beyond all expectations.

GETTING STARTED

LinkedIn is no longer a platform for experts making six figures, and you don’t just have to share your career milestones or befriend your colleagues. Content has become personal.

Sophie explains that LinkedIn doesn’t have to be a scary place, and there’s room for everyone on the platform.

“A lot of people do what you do, but nobody can do what you do the way you did it. That’s what makes a person really special.”

What sets you apart from others in your niche is your own story, and sharing your unique experiences the way you would talk to a friend.

Sophie’s biggest advice is to not overthink it. Consider what content you enjoy consuming and give it a go with your own spin on it. Whether that’s content with an engaging image, five snappy bullet points, or telling a story, chances are, if you enjoy a type of content, someone else will too.

In the words of Sophie: “Don’t focus on the fluff. Don’t make excuses. Just post.”

To get started, you can follow Sophie’s mini strategy.

Everything you do will come back to these two questions:

What do you want to be known for?

Who do you want to be known to?

Adjust your profile and content to reflect these answers and you’ve got yourself a winning strategy.

By setting your end goal you can begin breaking it down. What are you already known for? What do you want to be introduced as? What do you want conversation to be based around?

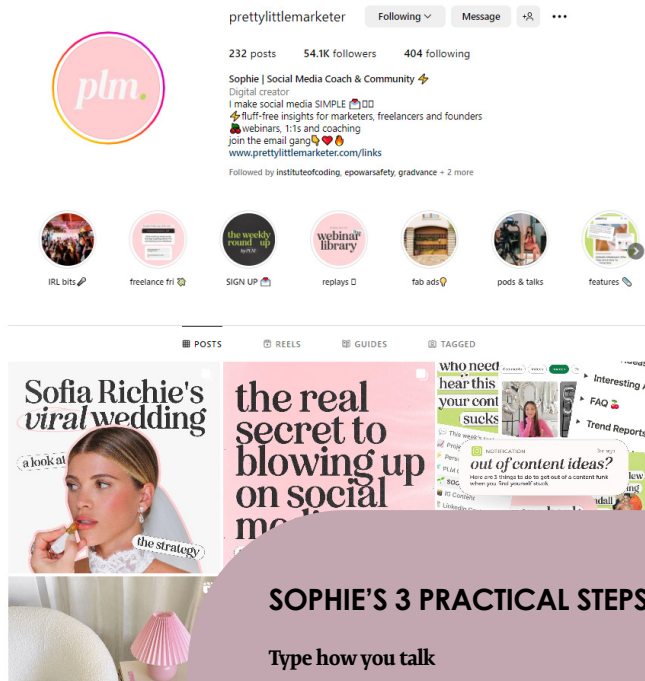
Use these two questions to pinpoint your end goal and suddenly you’ve got something to work towards, and your content and profile should clearly communicate those things.

CREATE REAL LIFE MAGIC

It’s easy to overthink personal branding and your first post might be rubbish, but your next will be better and so on. Like the saying goes, Rome wasn’t built in a day. And neither is your personal brand.

Take Sophie’s success as your sign to step away from the shadows, stop hiding behind a brand or logo, and share what you have with the world. Share your uniqueness because it might just change your life.

Sophie has plenty more wisdom where that came from, and I couldn’t recommend her accounts more for building your knowledge and confidence in all aspects of social media marketing.



SOPHIE'S 3 PRACTICAL STEPS TO PERSONAL BRANDING

Type how you talk

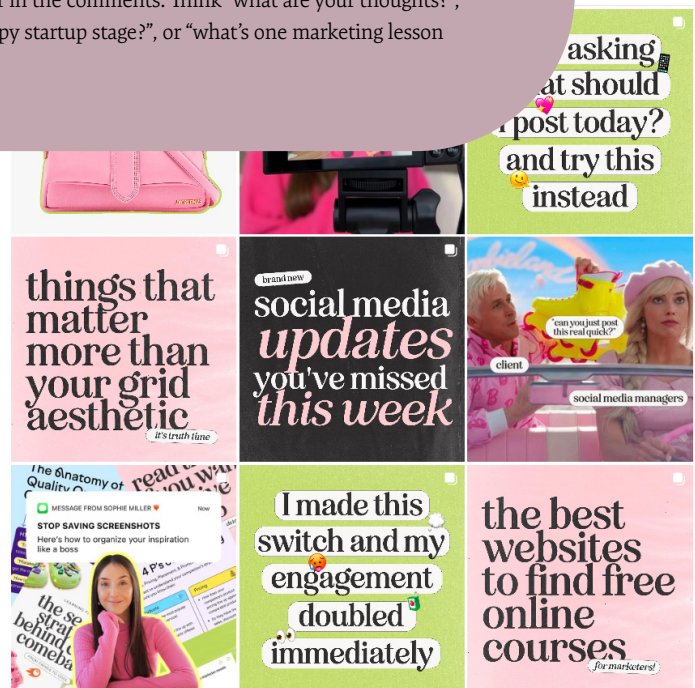
If you're struggling to write a bit of content, something that's always stuck with me is what Amelia Sordell once said. Type how you talk. For me, it's transformed my approach to writing my posts.

Sit down to answer a question rather than to write a post

Something I recommend is to sit down with the aim of answering a question. It's easier to give three practical pieces of advice on how to write good content because you're answering a direct question. But if I had to sit down and write a LinkedIn post from scratch, my mind would go blank, and I'd struggle. It takes the pressure off to brain dump an answer and then transform it into something magical.

Talk TO your audience, not AT your audience

A really simple way to encourage audience participation is to make sure each post contains a 'we' and a 'you,' so they're directly addressed and included, and a hand-off to them at the end of your post with a question for them to answer in the comments. Think "what are your thoughts?", "what do you love most about the scrappy startup stage?", or "what's one marketing lesson you've learned recently?"



Startups Magazine Survey Results

Startups Magazine surveyed 125 of our subscribers to learn more about their habits and how they use and are affected by marketing.

Channels used during a normal weekday to find information relevant to your business

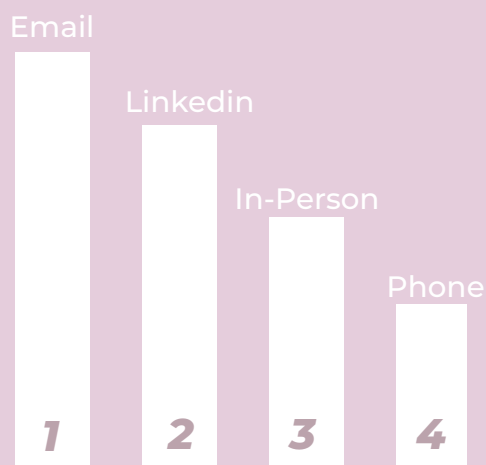


84% said they do their marketing internally



with 90% of respondents saying marketing is a priority

Favourite way of communicating in business interactions:



Most impactful form of online-marketing for your business:

Social media: 28%

Lead generation: 20%

Content marketing: 18%

Email marketing: 18%

SEO: 13%

Other: Networking, Events, Word-of-Mouth, and Partnerships

READER'S LESSONS

"Consistency is key, especially when it comes to brand building. Keeping a regular cadence of posting on social channels really makes a difference in the long run." - Iris Highliner Technology

"Always keeping up to date with the new trends is a must, being consistent with uploading posts to socials and finding the time to research what people care about – in this day and age that can take seconds. It helps having 2 minds from different generations to match articles and blogs with TikToks and Instagrams to create a harmonised brand presence online." - Ujalaa Chattersignh, influent Media

"Don't be afraid to fail as long as you learn." - Mario Tilney-Bassett Founder and Chief Consultant NuCollective

How to make marketing work during the cost-of-living crisis

Mohsin Rashid



A retailer is nothing without a great product. And a great product is nothing without the right people knowing about it. Perception matters.

Responsible for public awareness, brand association, and business-to-target-market communications, advertising and marketing more generally are essential to any business hoping to sell its products – they are the departments of perception.

It's therefore no wonder that retailers and brands spend so much money on advertising. Of course, given the technical revolution of the past twenty years, so much of this is now spent on digital marketing; in the UK alone, Big Tech rakes in approximately £26 billion every year from companies choosing to advertise on the likes of Google and Facebook.

But what is the fundamental purpose of this enormous expenditure? Like almost every expense in business, it is designed to be self-fulfilling, delivering a significant and measurable return on investment. With marketing, the purpose is usually to activate a pool of consumer spending, redistributing it away from competitors, or releasing an untapped market segment. Yet, over the past year, the size of that pool has contracted considerably, placing a diminishing return on advertising investment and threatening the security and viability of many businesses across the country.

Indeed, you need only glance at the front page of any newspaper, buy a loaf of bread, or ask anyone 'how they're doing?' to feel the inescapable squeeze of the cost-of-living crisis. Rising inflation, global supply chain issues, and a lacklustre UK economy are destroying living standards. So great is the damage that the UK's independent Office for Budget Responsibility has estimated the biggest fall in real household incomes since records began over half a century ago.

Retailers and brands must become wiser, recognising that their greatest challenge is also their customers lack of disposable income. They must change tactics from just selling to selling, incentivising, and rewarding. Perpetrating this perception will be key to effectively reaching their target markets. Integral to this is the application of far-reaching product-level shopping data.

EVENING THE ODDS: PRODUCT-LEVEL DATA

Before being able to market a product, the product must be right. With retail revenues under significant strain, the consequences of poor product development and bad performers pose existential threats to business security.

Therefore, retailers, brands, and product developers everywhere must understand the needs of their customers to a much greater extent than ever before.

Fortunately, consumer data provides a powerful tool to navigate the wider market, providing a quantifiable analysis of otherwise qualitative theories on the movements, spending patterns, and shopping habits encapsulating the target customer.

Such data can explore various trends, such as when and how consumers like to shop, or the types of products they buy, and even how much they spend across various sectors. While these fascinating observations enable an understanding of macro market trends, the most powerful consumer data is that which is magnified up to the product level.

Product-level data reveals an item-by-item account of the total expenditure in a customer's shopping basket. This means that brands can conduct a detailed analysis of product appeal against competitors and emerging markets, allowing them to identify the trends activating their target customers. Moreover, it allows a business to filter its advertising by factors relating to shopping behaviour and history, consequently, it can reach its target customers directly, potentially with exclusive offers to convert them from their go-to brands.

DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER MARKETING PLATFORMS

With demand for such data expected to boom amid the urgency for business security, the need to obtain this precious resource is fast emerging. Yet, its rare and elusive nature presents challenges both for retailers and the data brokers who compile and package it (second-party data). Fortunately, direct-to-consumer (D2C) marketing platforms provide an untapped gold mine.

D2C marketing platforms bridge the knowledge and advertorial gap between retailers and target customers by providing a direct communication channel through the application of product-level data. With access to consumer shopping bags across the world's biggest physical retailers, e-commerce, and digital stores – Amazon, Asos, Google Play – such platforms' pools of itemised data are unmatched. Application of this data toward advertising offers a direct connection to target customers and a powerful way to compete at a time when it is increasingly difficult to activate consumer spending.

For example, suppose Marks and Spencer's have identified sales across cold food have remained consistently strong but ready meals are unforeseeably suffering. Itemised consumer data would enable them to

peek into the shopping bags of their customers, as well as those from other stores, revealing that the same M&S cold food customers are now buying ready meals from Waitrose. Subsequently, they can use this information to contrast their products against Waitrose and inform their product development. Equally, they can directly target consumers who buy ready meals from Waitrose with exclusive offers to bolster their market share.

BOOSTING CONSUMER SPENDING POWER

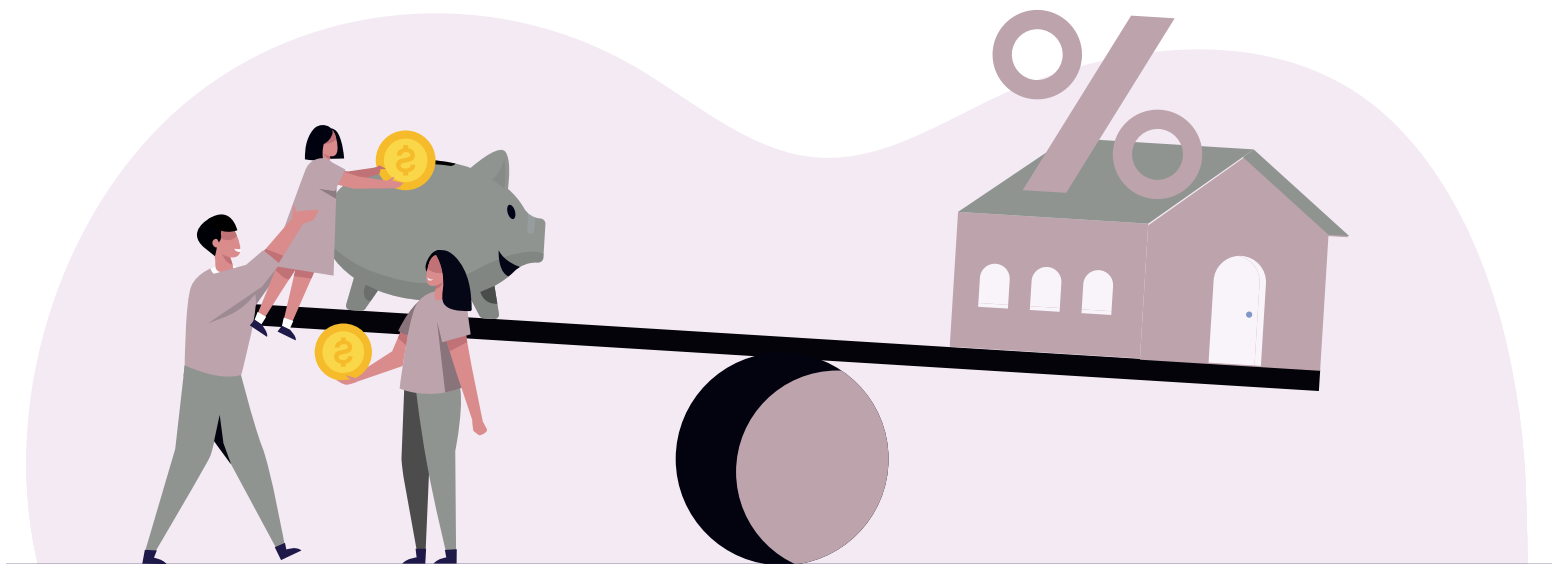
But these platforms are also going much further and helping to combat both the nation and retail's greatest challenge – declining disposable incomes.

Their consumer proposition is based on providing users with cash rewards in exchange for their shopping data. Such moves are changing the data ecosystem, reasserting rights over individual shopping data back into the hands of its creators, the consumers.

Having for so long been forced to accept invasive cookies and tracking measures – enabling Big Tech to sell digital adverts and take in huge profits, consumers rightly ask the pertinent question of why – as the creators of such data – should they be the only group excluded from its monetisation? With an intrinsic commission and exchange mechanism built into the platforms, D2C platforms have been prolific in challenging the status quo and reimbursing consumers for their data.

As consumers face the biggest drop in living standards in the modern British era, businesses are naturally concerned about declining revenues; mismanagement of funding could result in extinction. Nowhere is this fear more pervasive than in the retail, e-commerce, and digital sectors.

Fortunately, D2C marketing platforms provide businesses with an analytical tool which strengthens product development and enables them to directly reach relevant target markets, in turn raising the likelihood of activating new pools of consumer spending. This is further enhanced by the platforms' offers to consumers: cash rewards from their everyday spending which not only creates a fairer data ecosystem but completely new revenue streams. With businesses threatened by the squeeze on consumer finances, it is both logical and important that solutions provide benefits across the entire economy – consumers should not be left behind.



Leveraging account-based marketing to grow your business

Amy Kelly



In my previous role as Director of EMEA Marketing for a silicon-valley B2B SaaS company, one of my favourite parts of our marketing was involving customers in our thought leadership. The power of having the voice of our customers not only positively impacted our reputation and lead generation, but also the growth of that existing customer base who joined in on our marketing.

Account-based marketing (ABM) is a strategy that has become pretty popular in demand generation teams, as it's viewed as a super-targeted approach to growing revenue. This approach entails targeting specific customer accounts, companies, and industries with personalised content and messaging to maximise the potential of the engagement with your customer, ultimately to drive more revenue within those accounts.

In this article, I'll cover what account-based marketing actually is and how you can adopt this approach in your business to drive growth across your existing customer base.

WHAT IS ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING?

Account-based marketing is a B2B marketing approach that focuses on targeting specific accounts or companies that are seen as high value, serving them with personalised content and targeted campaigns. Instead of targeting a broader audience, ABM narrows down to the individual accounts that are more likely to buy from the business.

There are three main types of ABM strategies: one-to-one, one-to-few, and one-to-many. The first type is called a 'strategic' or 'one-to-one' ABM approach. This approach delivers unique content and campaigns

"Depending on your growth strategy, startup organisations can benefit from implementing an ABM programme through doubling down on their happiest customers."

directly to tier one target accounts. The 'one-to-few' approach focuses on second-tier named accounts, with the sales and marketing teams choosing five to ten target accounts with similar challenges, goals, and needs. The marketing activities then include creating and grouping ideal customer personas, profiles, and segments to create specific campaigns to engage this identified target.

The last type of ABM is named 'programmatic' or 'one-to-many'. Programmatic ABM is a combination of the first two that allows for marketers to run personalised campaigns to a wider, but still specific, segment of an audience with clear commonalities.

Programmatic ABM is usually done in response to the question 'how do we scale ABM?' and so in reality, this type of marketing approach is actually just personalisation, and not true ABM due to the wider target audience.

Think of these three strategies as a hierarchy with 'strategic' ABM at the very top, followed by one-to-few, and then programmatic. The top of the hierarchy will demand more investment, but hopefully result in stronger ROI. Depending on your goals with employing an account-based marketing strategy, you can either focus on one or use a mix of all three.

It's important to note that in order to run effective ABM programmes, you must have a deeper understanding of the target accounts, including understanding all decision-makers, influencers, and what is involved in the buying process. It's really knowing who your buying committee is and how to reach them in a meaningful way. A deep knowledge of your target audience will ensure you're creating the best content possible that will address their key problems and provide them with valuable resources, making them feel more positive about your brand and increasing trust.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN ABM PROGRAM

1. **Align your sales and marketing** team to identify and select key accounts for growth
2. **Create account plans** (you can find templates for this online) to ensure you know absolutely everything about your customer; research as much as possible to ensure a high level of detail
3. **Assign a budget:** consider ROI; what accounts do you expect the best return on?
4. **Have a dedicated person/team** to drive engagement with those accounts (sales and marketing)
5. **Create bespoke content** to engage this audience
6. **Select the relevant channels** to engage with this key audience
7. **Test, learn and iterate:** based on feedback, you may want to amend the content/campaign channel

EXAMPLES OF ABM TACTICS

There are lots of different campaign types that will engage your key accounts for growth, some include:

1. **Customer specific** newsletters with bespoke content
2. **Private events:** lunch and learns/premium engagement events
3. **Targeted LinkedIn campaigns,** using ABM whitepapers/other personalised content
4. **Webinars** co-hosted with the customers themselves or key partners

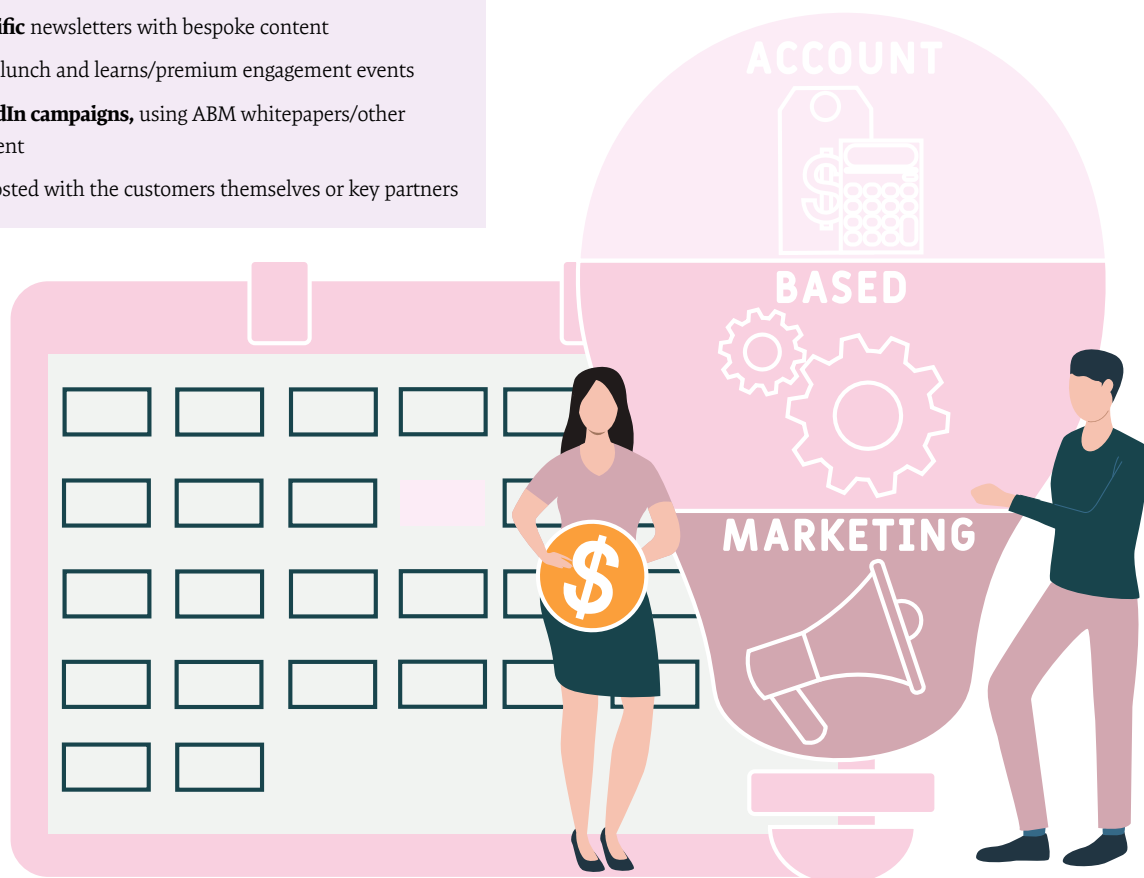
HOW STARTUPS CAN USE ABM TO GROW THEIR BUSINESS

Depending on your growth strategy, startup organisations can benefit from implementing an ABM program through doubling down on their happiest customers. If you are currently working with a type of customer that is absolutely delighted with your product or service, then it's beneficial to seek out similar companies or even see if growth within that customer account is possible.

There are of course considerations to take into account, such as size of company, growth opportunity based on your customer's needs and budget availability. However, if you already have your foot in the door in a larger organisation, it may be worth examining which other teams in that account may benefit from your product and if you're able to cross-sell into new areas within that customer.

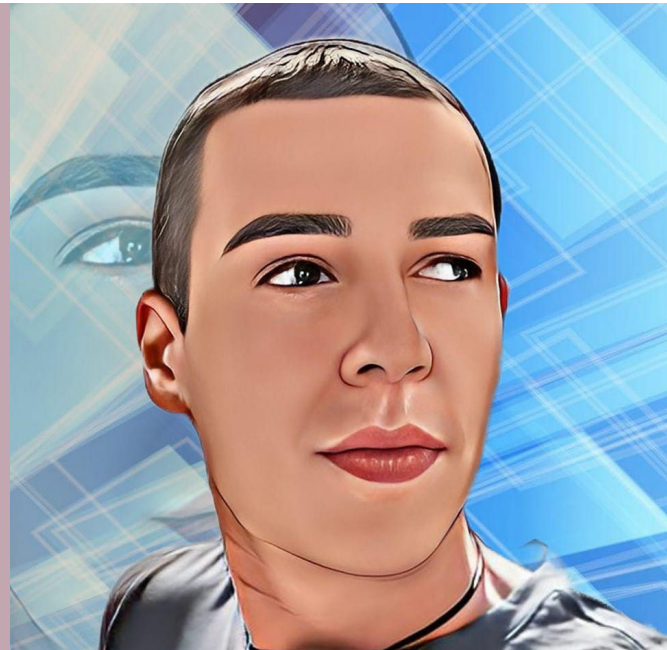
Implementing an ABM strategy also allows your team to focus on specific areas, as we know one of the challenges of small marketing teams in startups can be trying to do too much with a lack of a consistent direction.

In conclusion, account-based marketing can be a powerful and effective marketing strategy when done right, helping to increase the value of one customer account, sell to more areas in that customer account and develop a stickier relationship with that customer, hopefully benefiting retention and overall business growth.



Metaverse marketing success for startups and small businesses

Martin Petkov



Startups and small businesses usually thrive on innovation. But what if they could apply novelty to their marketing efforts? The Metaverse is a growing marketing tool for companies worldwide. While it may seem like a domain reserved for large corporations, startups can also capitalise on it to enhance their marketing strategies, offer immersive audience engagement, and extend their brand in virtual reality (VR).

So, let's explore how startups and small businesses can effectively employ the Metaverse for marketing. We'll examine budget considerations, alignment with strategy, measuring ROI, partnering with seasoned experts, and selecting suitable VR platforms. Furthermore, we'll highlight AI's role in virtual marketing and provide relevant examples of small businesses and startups that have successfully utilised the Metaverse.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Resource allocation is critical for startups and small businesses exploring marketing initiatives, including the Metaverse. In addition, companies should thoroughly research costs associated with platform fees, virtual real estate, and development expenses to ensure that the potential ROI justifies the investment.

ALIGNING WITH STRATEGY

To optimise the Metaverse, startups must align their virtual initiatives with their overarching brand strategy. Identifying the target audience, crafting a clear message, and designing immersive experiences that reflect the brand identity are essential. Moreover, startups should consider how their virtual presence complements existing marketing channels to create a cohesive customer experience.

MEASURING ROI

Startups investing in the Metaverse should establish clear success metrics. Key performance indicators (KPIs) can include engagement metrics (dwell time, interaction rate, user satisfaction), conversion metrics (sales, leads, sign-ups), and brand awareness metrics (social media mentions, press coverage). Monitoring these KPIs enables businesses to evaluate the efficacy of their virtual campaigns and make informed decisions about future investments. However, at this stage, the focus should be mostly on engagement and brand awareness and gradually shift toward conversion as the Metaverse matures.

PARTNERING WITH EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS

Navigating the Metaverse can prove challenging for businesses lacking prior experience. Collaborating with a company with a proven track record in VR marketing can save time, reduce risk, and ensure a seamless launch. Experienced partners offer valuable insights, technical expertise, and creative direction to help startups maximise their virtual presence. Additionally, leading Metaverse experience builders provide the tech to measure, optimise, and monetise VR activations.

SELECTING THE RIGHT VR PLATFORMS

The Metaverse comprises a variety of VR platforms, each with unique features, audience demographics, and engagement opportunities. When choosing a platform, startups should consider factors like user base, compatibility with their target audience, data ownership, and platform capabilities. Whereas Web2 platforms like Roblox and Fortnite can offer more reach, Web3 worlds such as The Sandbox and Decentraland may be appealing thanks to their underlying principles of decentralisation and

user empowerment. Beyond this, more recently, some companies have chosen to build standalone activations using Unreal Engine or Unity, host them on public clouds, and integrate them with websites.

AI'S ROLE IN THE METAVERSE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is crucial in enhancing the Metaverse experience for both businesses and users. AI-driven algorithms can analyse user behaviour and preferences, enabling businesses to deliver tailored content and promotions. Additionally, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can facilitate seamless customer interactions, providing support and answering queries within the virtual environment.

Examples of successful Metaverse marketing initiatives by small businesses and startups include:

- **Toigo's Door** is a multi-phase music NFT experience from Canadian-based music visionary Toigo. To enrich the experience for NFT holders, the small firm offered holders early access to a visually-stunning custom-built Minecraft experience. This made the NFT minting and sale more engaging and successful and provided an additional channel for fan engagement.
- **Seedify**, the blockchain gaming launchpad, also developed and plans to launch a metaverse experience in The Sandbox. Featuring fishing, jungle deathmatch, and hoverboard racing games, the Metaverse activation aligns with the company's essence and provides immersive experiences for the community.
- **Lush**, the British cosmetics retailer, also entered the Metaverse recently. With the Decentraland activation, the company aims to capture internal and external audiences. The gamified Metaverse experience rewards visitors with an exclusive limited edition 'All Are Welcome Always' Digital fashion T-Shirt or Hat, provided they collect five hidden bath bombs.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

As the Metaverse gains prominence, startups and small businesses have a unique opportunity to capitalise on this innovative marketing channel to reach their target audience in ground-breaking ways. By considering factors such as budget, alignment with company strategy, measuring ROI, partnering with experienced professionals, selecting suitable VR platforms, and harnessing AI, businesses can successfully navigate the Metaverse and unlock new growth avenues.

In today's increasingly digital landscape, the Metaverse presents an opportunity for startups to differentiate themselves from competitors, craft memorable customer experiences, and cultivate brand loyalty. As the momentum surrounding the Metaverse accelerates, we can expect more businesses to incorporate VR as a core component of their marketing strategies. Consequently, now is the time for startups and small businesses to explore the potential of the Metaverse and position themselves as pioneers in this rapidly evolving domain.

CONCLUSION

By learning from the successes of others and adapting to the unique challenges and opportunities of the Metaverse, startups can harness the power of VR to drive growth, reach new audiences, and establish lasting connections with their customers. Embracing the Metaverse is not merely an opportunity for innovation but also a strategic move that can help businesses flourish in the ever-changing world of digital marketing. Through a professional, knowledgeable, and critical approach, startups can make the most of the Metaverse and its potential to redefine marketing success.





Tech driven marketing campaigns are changing the game

Kiera Sowery

Marketers are increasingly experimenting with technology to drive marketing campaigns, and some of the world's biggest brands are involved. The likes of Samsung, Nike, Louis Vuitton, and Tiffany & Co. are standing out in increasingly crowded markets, paving the way for the future of marketing.

From immersive billboards and entering the Metaverse, to augmented reality and Snapchat filters, consumer trends are driving marketers to be bolder and more innovative in their approach.

Let's deep dive into some of the coolest tech savvy campaigns and highlight the lessons startups can take from them.

IMMERSIVE BILLBOARDS

First up, immersive billboards, a high-profile marketing trend, are being implemented from Nike to huge names in tech including Meta, and many brands are jumping on the hype.

Take Meta's campaign for its Meta Quest 2 VR headset. The campaign urged viewers to 'wish for the ordinary,' and displayed an image of the headset which transformed as an American footballer, a lightsaber, and an astronaut jumped out. The aim of the campaign was to highlight you can play and interact with people from all over the world and transport to anywhere in the universe.

Tiffany & Co. have also jumped on the immersive billboard hype to go hand-in-hand with its virtual try-on Snapchat filter for the Tiffany Lock.

Hyper realistic 3D billboards are proven to exhibit higher levels of attention, higher unaided recall, and increased brand recognition. Why? Because they're far more attention grabbing compared to their 2D counterparts, creating a more memorable experience.

The Snapchat filter uses AR technology to allow users to try on bracelets before purchase, directly from their mobile device. It creates far more realistic renderings and better product visualisation for customers,

enhancing their e-commerce experience.

This allows the brand to reach a wider audience by using multiple different digital touch points.

Other big names have also invested in virtual try on technology, including Cartier, Nike, and Adidas.

SAMSUNG 'SHARE THE EPIC' CAMPAIGN

Samsung's 'Share the Epic' campaign took over Piccadilly Square to broaden the appeal of Samsung's flagship Galaxy S23 smartphone. Passers-by were encouraged to take pictures in Samsung's photobooth which were shown on a billboard in the iconic square.

Samsung created a specially designed photobooth at the landmark location and installed a 200MP mobile image sensor in the camera so people could see for themselves how powerful ISOCELL sensors can be and how detailed photos taken with these sensors can be.

The photobooth gave those who took pictures a printout that said, 'look up'. When they were leaving the photobooth, they saw the high-resolution photo of themselves displayed on a 45x18 metre epic billboard.

Some of the UK's biggest influencers were involved, invited to have their pictures taken and share the results with their following, giving Samsung extra coverage, credibility, and taking over their social media.

AUGMENTED REALITY

Dove nailed their recent campaign which focused on educating customers on the benefits of their product line. Dove used AR and 3D content to drive informed decision making, bringing three products to life. The interactive buttons educated the user on how the product can be used, desired outcomes, how the product differentiates, and how it smells/looks.

"From immersive billboards and entering the Metaverse, to augmented reality and Snapchat filters, consumer trends are driving marketers to be bolder and more innovative in their approach."

This educational experience that was simultaneously fun and memorable enabled customers to deep dive during the product discovery phase, significantly improving customer product knowledge.

This comes at a time when, according to a survey by NielsenIQ, 61% of consumers say the ability to easily share branded AR experiences is important to them.

Similarly, one of the world's most renowned music festival adopted AR as Coachella 2023 ticket holders received an AR-activated welcome ahead of the festival this summer.

This created heightened brand awareness, engagement, and differentiation from competitors. By developing a unique way of creating hype around an already extremely hyped event, fans are more likely to spread the word with others. This unique interactive and immersive experience will encourage brand engagement, while also creating a more memorable and personal connection.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

Although as a startup you're unlikely to have the budget to plaster your brand across Piccadilly Square or design and develop a Snapchat filter, there are lessons to be learnt from these campaigns.

What do they all have in common? They offer something new. Something different.

All the mentioned campaigns and brands have invested in technology to give their marketing campaigns an edge that many haven't yet dipped their toes in. In turn, creating memorable experiences for audiences.

Creating a lasting impression by shocking people with creative ideas to generate buzz and excitement could be the way forward IF it aligns with your brand. Instead of always fitting in with the crowd, dare to be different. Do something that will challenge the conventional norm. The result? An unforgettable brand.

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Tips from an expert

*Chief Marketing Officer at EDITED
Shellie Vornhagen.*

Based in Nashville, Tennessee, Shellie's career spans over 25 years as a marketing expert, having built and scaled lean, effective campaigns with multiple B2B technology organisations. With a passion not just for marketing itself, but how customers and people are treated within a company, we caught up with Shellie to ask about some of her top tips for those looking to kickstart their marketing journey.



HERE ARE HER TOP TIPS FOR THOSE LOOKING TO KICKSTART THEIR MARKETING JOURNEY.

Strategy: If you're building from scratch, or in the midst of rebuilding something, this is one of the top three most important fundamentals of any marketer, and throughout my career this is the first thing people are missing. You have people with a lot of energy, people who are ready to go - and there's a million different avenues you can take in marketing - but if you don't have that structure, and you don't have strategy then you end up just blindly throwing darts at a dartboard, hoping for the best.



Structure: This is the second most important. If you're in a team then it's very important to assign clear goals, understand what the vision is, where you want to go, and how you're going to get there. Throughout any campaign, people are going to be eager to try different things, but if you don't have the structure of your campaign laid out, or if you don't know how you're going to establish your SEO strategy, then you're going to have a very hard time putting it all together.

Try new things: You're not going to execute anything perfectly. So, you have to give yourself room to see if certain things work or if they don't. Marketing is like fashion - it's never finished - there are so many different ways to go about something, and it's very important to keep an open mind, especially when working within a team. Make sure it's an open space where ideas can flow without judgement and if you do, your end results will always be much more innovative.



Measure everything: You have to know whether you're winning or losing, and when to stop and invest more. You should put together a good set of KPIs (key performance indicators) and keep yourself honest with tracking and trending and making sure that you're seeing what's working, or where you can put in extra effort to get back on track if you've momentarily derailed. Marketing is so broad, so you can't just focus solely on driving traffic or getting media mentions, you must have a full picture.



Teamwork makes the dream work: This sounds cheesy and obvious, but it couldn't be more true, and it's something so many people fail to realise. When you're working on a campaign, there can be a lot of egos onboard, people determined to bring their vision to life, but if you're not all working together, then you're only making it harder for everyone, and the end result is always less than what it could have been.

Authenticity: This is arguably the most important of all, and people always underestimate the importance of having an authentic brand story. Whatever your brand is, it's up to you, but if you can feel that your story is not quite connected to what you're trying to do or who you are as a company, the customer will smell it a mile away. People need to feel connected with the brands they like, whether it's sustainability, human rights, or women in tech, etc., it is so important to be honest and bridge that gap between brand and customer. Always. Be. Authentic.



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WORKSPACE OF THE ISSUE

Techspace

Looking for a place where your tech obsessed brain can flourish? Enter: Techspace.

Providing a launchpad for tech-savvy innovators who are determined to make a change, the community and creative spaces will undoubtedly assist you on your journey to wherever you're headed. With over a decade of experience in the tech sector, these guys know what it takes to make a business soar. We caught up with their Co-Founder and Marketing Director, Phil Ellis, to find out more about what makes Techspace such a great place to work.

WHAT MAKES TECHSPACE DIFFERENT?

Techspace is a growing community of change-maker businesses with tech at the heart of what they do. With

locations in London and Berlin, Techspace has spent more than 10 years curating a unique community of like-minded businesses, now hosting 3,500 members and more than 75 tech businesses across Europe. By focusing purely on tech, the Techspace membership benefits from services, content, and events programmes that are tailored to the needs of a forward-thinking business. More than just a space, some of Techspace's other core services include best-in-class IT infrastructure, workplace design services, and leadership programmes to prepare tomorrow's leaders for the next step in their career.

WHEN/WHY DID IT START, AND BY WHO?

Before Silicon Roundabout was named so, before

Google Campus landed in East London, and before WeWork made coworking mainstream, three budding entrepreneurs grew frustrated by the lack of startup friendly workspace available in East London. Forming a close-knit community of entrepreneurs and founders near Hoxton, Techspace was born. The intention? Building a community for the droves of VC-backed startups that were flooding into East London. Today, Alex Rabarts and Phil Ellis are two of four founders that are still driving the business forward more than 10 years on!

HOW MANY LOCATIONS?

Techspace currently has six locations, with its seventh launching in London this June. The new London location, Worship Street, is a stone's throw from Old Street roundabout, often considered the birthplace of London's tech startup ecosystem. The capital's tech scene has scaled and matured over the past decade, but a new guard of operators in East London are breathing life back into the community. The new space has a view of the original Google Campus which spent years hosting startups and tech enthusiasts. Bringing this community together again is at the heart of Techspace Worship Street. As with all its new openings, Techspace will offer its members priority on taking space before opening up to new customers. In turn, accommodating the expansion needs of its community before accepting new membership applications. In this instance, French born, and now global cash-flow management startup, Agicap, is one of the first Techspace members to sign up as they continue their push into European markets.

"We're looking for something with a wow factor and this space has it in spades," said Timothee Clement, Country Opener at Agicap.

PRICE?

Techspace offers a range of pricing options for hot desks through to private offices as well as meeting rooms and events.

Visit the website www.techspace.co/ to learn more about membership, or email events@techspace.co and quote 'Startups Magazine' to claim 20% off your next meeting room or event space hire (terms and conditions apply).

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Alongside its new location opening this summer, Techspace have also announced the signing of a third location in Berlin, Dieffenbachstr. 33, a historic industrial piano factory which will be converted into a buzzing community of new Techspace members by 2025. Further expansion can also be expected across London as the team begins to grow its footprint into more tech hubs within the capital.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW? BRAINBOX AI

Startups Magazine caught up with BrainBox AI, a company using predictive and self-adapting AI to optimise buildings and make them smarter, greener, and more efficient, to hear about the company's progress over the last 12 months.

Since we last spoke to BrainBox AI, the company has achieved some incredible milestones. The team remains dedicated to its mission to save the planet with AI and in the wake of the recent climate crisis, BrainBox AI has sharpened its focus even further on autonomous decarbonisation within the built environment.

"We continue to lend our voice to this crucial discussion highlighted by our attendance to COP27 last year in Egypt," the company stated. "Our CEO took part in a series of panel discussions, emphasising the key role that scaling up climate tech can have on emissions reduction."

BrainBox AI's work on decarbonisation has led to a critical evolution in its product offering that answered the need of the retail sector. This has been resonating strongly with multi-site retailers because of the innovativeness of the offering along with the speed, scale, and impact with which it can be delivered. The company's tech has been successfully deployed in Sleep Country/Dormez-Vous locations nationwide as well as within the sites of the well-known Quebec brand SAIL - all of which culminated into an official product launch in January 2023 that is specifically for multi-site retailers.

Furthermore, BrainBox AI has received investments from the Canadian government, both federal and provincial, as well as from the private sector, from its global partner ABB.

Last, but not least, the company made its first acquisition. In April, it announced the purchase of ABB's multi-site retail energy management system integrator business.

"As we continue to innovate and build an offering of decarbonisation tools for the built environment, this acquisition will help us to speed up the deployment of our decarbonisation technology in a way that meets client sustainability ambitions and their operational needs," said the company.



NO CHALLENGE TOO BIG

The team recently overcame a major challenge when they sought to incorporate a fourth method of connectivity into its product's design. The team created and designed new algorithms that became the foundation of its MSR offering. This opening created the avenue for the company to confidently approach multi-site retailers with a decarbonisation solution that unearths tremendous potential for their operations to run more efficiently across their locations.

SCALING UP

Last time we spoke to BrainBox AI, the company was looking to scale up operations in North America, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East. This expansion plan continues.

The company has gained traction in France and continues to see opportunity in Austria, Germany, Italy, and in the United Kingdom. Its Middle East deployments have maintained a steady pace. There have been major strides in North America as well.

"Our Sleep Country Canada announcement marking the official landing of our tech into its 214 stores was a huge turning point for us because it cemented our imprint on the multi-site retail real estate sector demonstrated by the sheer scale of the deployment itself."

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

"Our future is bright here at BrainBox AI. Ambition and innovation, within the scope of the developing solutions that can stand up to climate change, will always remain as the key drivers to our success.

"With the past year being as eventful as it has, we are excited to see what is next for us as we continue to expand, grow, and lead the way in autonomous AI-technology for the built environment."

IN THE STUDIO



HOW MARKETERS CAN UNLEASH THEIR CREATIVITY AND BANISH BLANK PAGE SYNDROME WITH AI

Kirsty Fraser, Senior Director, International Marketing at Movable Ink

Are you a marketer feeling apprehensive about the rise of artificial intelligence? I was in the same boat just six months ago. As my LinkedIn feed became inundated with AI-related articles and updates, I couldn't help but worry about its implications for my role. Would AI render me obsolete? Would it create a massive skills gap if I failed to embrace it, much like the digital and social revolution of the noughties?

Driven by curiosity and a desire to future-proof my career, I decided to dive headfirst into the world of AI. What I discovered was not only reassuring but also transformative. Rather than replacing us, AI has the potential to supercharge our strategic abilities as marketers and redefine how we approach campaigns.

It's crucial to understand that AI is not a standalone entity

that replaces human marketers. It is a powerful tool at our disposal – a partnership between the Marketer and the Machine. While AI excels at performing specific tasks with efficiency, it lacks the key ingredients that drive marketing success: creativity, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking, all of which are uniquely human attributes.

In this article, I'll explore practical ways to leverage AI as a marketer to give you the tools to discover how you can unlock your creative power, banish the dreaded blank page syndrome, and let AI become your greatest ally in generating innovative ideas and enhancing campaign performance.

To start with, I'll outline the five main ways in which AI can be used in marketing:

1. Natural language processing (NLP): To understand your customers better

NLP, a subset of AI, focuses on comprehending and processing human language. In marketing, NLP is a valuable tool for analysing customer feedback and sentiment. By harnessing NLP, businesses can gain deeper insights into customer preferences, enhance customer service, and make data-driven decisions.



2. Machine learning: To unlock predictive analytics and personalisation

Machine learning allows systems to learn and improve from data without explicit programming. Marketers can utilise machine learning for predictive analytics, enabling them to forecast customer behaviour and identify growth opportunities. Additionally, machine learning powers recommendation engines and customer segmentation, enabling personalised marketing campaigns that resonate with individual customers.



3. Chatbots: To enhance customer engagement and support

Chatbots are computer programs designed to simulate human conversation. They have proven to be invaluable in marketing for lead generation, customer service, as well as personalised recommendations. By incorporating chatbots into your marketing strategy, you can provide real-time assistance, automate customer interactions, and deliver personalised experiences at scale.



4. Image and video recognition: To unlock visual insights

AI's image and video recognition capabilities have revolutionised marketing. Businesses can now analyse images and videos for object recognition, facial recognition, and emotion detection. By harnessing these insights, marketers can better understand customer preferences, target their campaigns effectively, and create visually compelling content.

5. Voice search optimisation: To capture the voice-activated audience

With the rise of voice search, optimising your marketing content for voice queries is crucial. AI can help you adapt by utilising natural language, creating conversational content, and optimising for long-tail keywords. By embracing voice search optimisation, you can tap into the growing audience of voice-activated consumers and establish a competitive edge.



Whatever it's application, AI can help you 'banish the blank'

Starting with a blank page can be an intimidating challenge for marketers. Whether you're crafting social media posts, writing ad copy, or drafting an email newsletter, the struggle to find that initial spark can be real. But what if there was a solution to help you generate ideas, headlines, and complete sentences?

Sometimes, all you need is a burst of inspiration – a one-person brainstorm – to get those creative juices flowing. It doesn't have to be the final product; it's just the boost you need to overcome the blank page syndrome. Personally, I have a fear of blank pages, and that's why I call it "banish the blank."

When I embarked on writing this article, I faced the daunting task of starting from scratch. I pondered on my ideas but decided to enlist the assistance of ChatGPT to help me outline my thoughts. While it provided some useful conversation starters, I realised that it lacked the personality, humour, and engagement needed to captivate an audience. However, I didn't want the article to be entirely written for me – I just needed that initial push, and ChatGPT delivered, saving me valuable time.

Questions are the new answers - how AI can and will force us to ask better questions

The mark of exceptional marketers lies not only in their ability to provide answers but in their talent for asking the right questions. This skill is set to become even more vital as we navigate the realm of AI.

Traditionally, we have relied on AI to furnish us with answers. We've trained machine learning models to identify patterns, make predictions, and offer recommendations. However, as AI advances, it is becoming increasingly evident that the true value lies in posing the right questions.

Much like learning mathematics with a calculator, the real expertise lies in understanding what to ask rather than simply conjuring up an answer.

Consider asking questions like:

"How can we effectively analyse vast amounts of data?"

"What insights should we test?"

"What kind of imagery will resonate with our audience?"

This principle holds especially true in the field of marketing. In today's data-driven world, we are bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information. Yet, by posing the right questions, AI can help us cut through the noise and concentrate on what truly matters.

Here are a few thought starters that can help banish the blank with ChatGPT:

"Can you summarise the topic of X for me in 100 words?"

"Can you write a manifesto about a new product that offers people X?"

"Can you create a captivating tagline for X product that does Y?"

"How would a challenger brand approach and disrupt X category?"

Give these prompts a try. While they may not provide ground-breaking answers, they will ignite a spark that could lead you down an unexpected path, opening doors to fresh perspectives and new ideas.



AI to enable you to personalise your marketing

In today's digital landscape, leveraging AI to analyse customer data and behaviour has become a game-changer in delivering personalised marketing messages. This encompasses a range of strategies, including customised email subject lines, targeted ads, and product recommendations based on customers' previous purchases.

Email marketing continues to be one of the most effective channels for reaching and engaging customers. Through segmentation techniques based on customer behaviour and preferences, it enables marketers to provide more relevant content and significantly improve engagement.

Another cost-effective solution for providing personalised customer experiences is through chatbots. With the advancements in natural language processing and machine learning, chatbots have become adept at understanding customer queries and tailoring responses based on individual behaviour and preferences. This enables businesses to deliver tailored support and assistance, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

By leveraging AI technology, businesses can unlock the power of personalisation at scale. Analysing customer data and behaviour allows for the delivery of highly relevant marketing messages, improving customer engagement, and driving business growth.

Whether it's through personalised email campaigns or interactive chatbots, AI empowers marketers to create meaningful connections with their customers, ultimately leading to enhanced brand loyalty and success.

Unleashing creativity with AI

At Movable Ink, we know images can move people, but not every small business has the resources to bolster fancy creative campaigns. Fortunately, with the power of AI, small businesses can leverage technology to support and enhance their creativity without needing to dedicate astronomical budgets towards it.

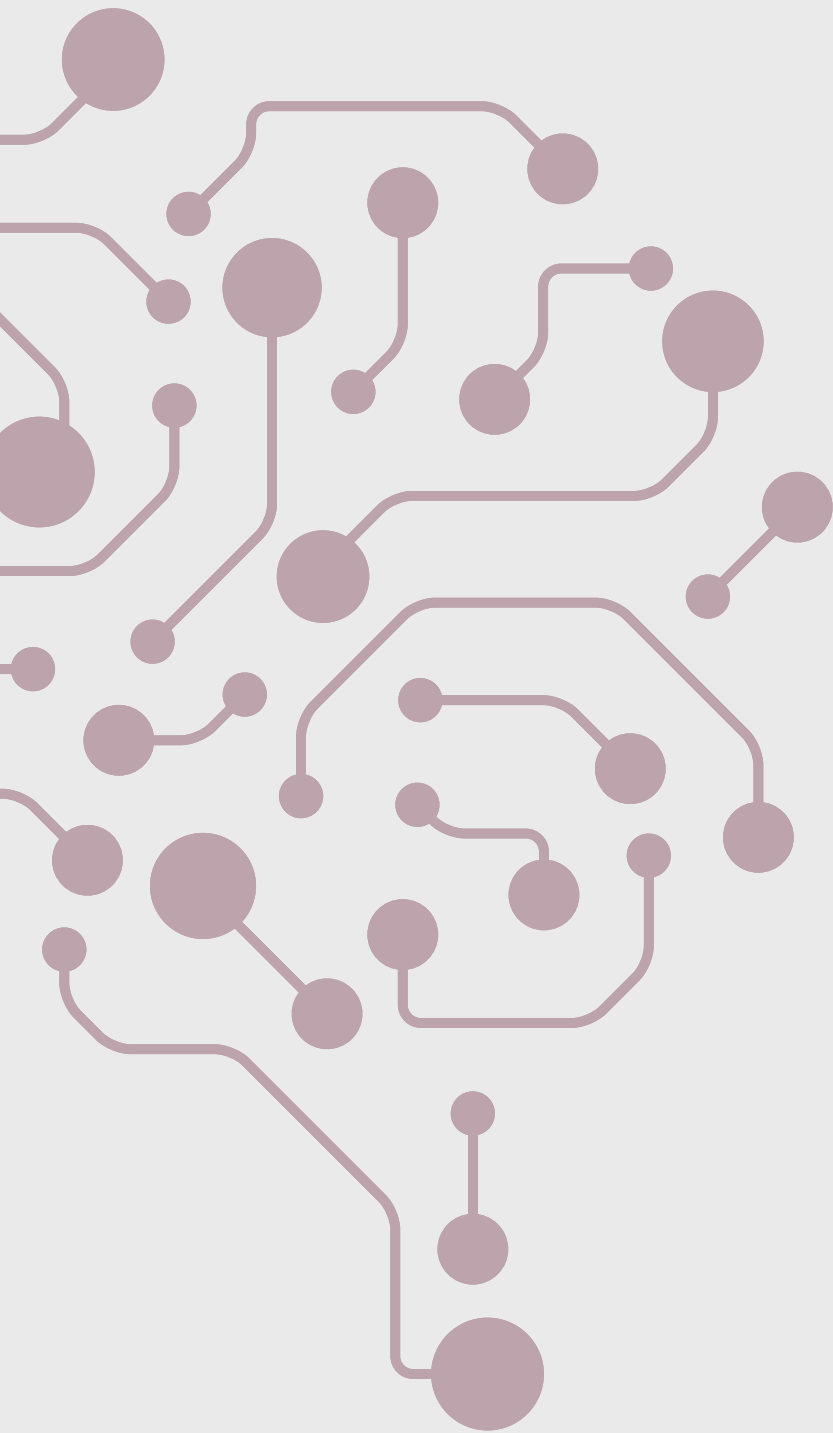
AI-powered analytics tools serve as invaluable assets for small businesses, enabling them to identify new audience segments based on data patterns that may have previously gone unnoticed. By comprehending the unique characteristics of these segments, small companies can craft more targeted campaigns that deeply resonate with their audience. This, in turn, leads to improved engagement, higher conversion rates, and enhanced return on investment (ROI).

Moreover, small businesses can harness the capabilities of AI-powered content creation tools to swiftly and



cost-effectively generate high-quality content. Tools like Articoolo and Wordsmith employ natural language generation to create written content, while Lumen5 and Animoto facilitate the creation of captivating videos. By employing these tools, small businesses can focus on the creative aspects of their campaigns, while AI efficiently handles the laborious and time-consuming content creation process.

Personalisation plays a pivotal role in boosting engagement, conversions, and building stronger customer relationships. Small businesses can capitalise on AI's potential to personalise their campaigns by analysing customer behaviour and preference data. This valuable insight enables small enterprises to tailor their messaging and product recommendations to better match the needs and interests of their audience.



The agility that these AI tools allow small companies means they can experiment with different creative ideas and approaches and make on-the-fly adjustments based on what resonates most effectively with their audience. This continuous iteration and optimisation of their campaigns means that small businesses can create more engaging and impactful marketing initiatives that deliver superior results.

Brilliant briefs: Enhancing campaign briefs with AI

Crafting campaign briefs is a regular part of my role, whether it's for agencies, suppliers, or designers. The key to success lies in providing specific and detailed instructions. In today's ever-evolving marketing landscape, businesses are increasingly turning to AI-powered tools to assist them in creating exceptional campaign briefs.

Personally, I have found tools like Midjourney for mood board creation and ChatGPT for crystallising ideas to be immensely helpful. By embracing AI in the campaign brief process, I've witnessed improved responses and outcomes, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Leveraging AI technology sets the stage for long-term success. As AI continues to evolve, these tools will become even more advanced and accessible, enabling businesses to streamline their marketing efforts and deliver personalised customer experiences.

However, it's crucial to recognise that AI is not a magical solution that solves all marketing problems instantly. The effectiveness of AI tools depends on proper planning, strategy, and execution. Careful analysis of your business needs and goals is necessary to determine which AI tools are the most suitable for your specific marketing campaigns.

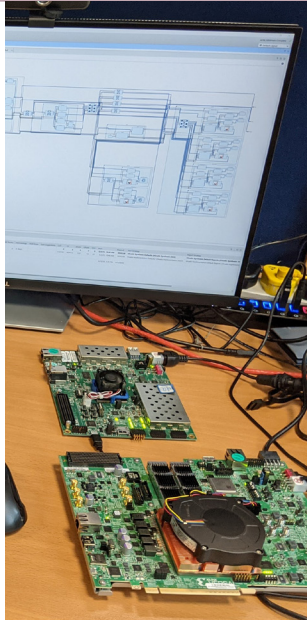
By approaching AI implementation with a thoughtful and strategic mindset, businesses can leverage its power to achieve remarkable results.

STARTUPS



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FOUNDER OF
KLOWT



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**BLUESHIFT
MEMORY**
DEEPTECH



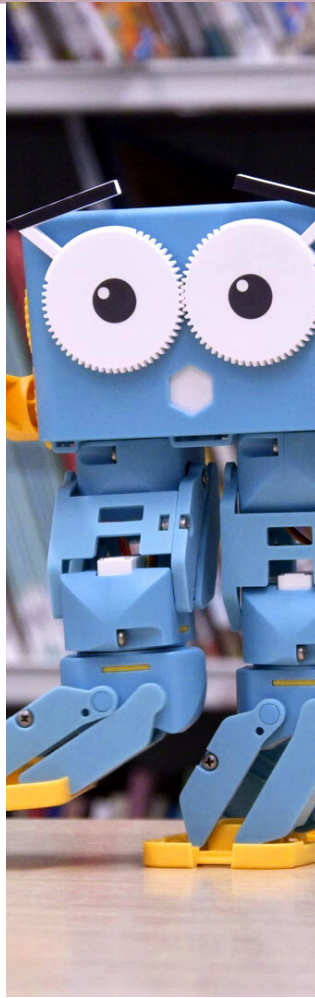
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CONTENTS

LESSONS LEARNT ON THE JOURNEY TO SUCCESS



Amelia Sordell

“I really do believe that [the pandemic] was the best thing that ever happened to me because, like many people, I was faced with a mirror into my life like ‘is this what you want to do for the rest of your life?’ and ‘do you really want to be working for this company for the rest of your life?’

Amelia Sordell, Founder of Klowt, the personal branding agency, and Hustle Awards judge, started her business in a small corner of her bedroom in the middle of a pandemic. Now, the business is getting ready to move into its fourth office in less than three years with a plan to reach £20 million in revenue by year seven.

A PERSONAL TOUCH

Sordell started her career in PR but very quickly decided that it wasn't for her (ironic, considering she now runs a PR agency!), so she decided to start her own business – a fashion business. However, this went bankrupt in year two and, after re-entering the workforce at age 23, she went into recruitment.

“I very quickly learnt that you could generate a lot more leads by putting content out there than by making 100 calls a day,” notes Sordell. “So, I inadvertently started building my personal brand because it was the most effective way to generate business.”

As a result of this, Sordell was promoted to Marketing Manager and was very quickly headhunted to join a private equity company.

But it was during the pandemic that Sordell decided to kickstart her own career.

“I really do believe that [the pandemic] was the best thing that ever happened to me because, like many people, I was faced with a mirror into my life like ‘is this what you want to do for the rest of your life?’ and ‘do you really want to be working for this company for the rest of your life?’

The answer was no.

“As I had already started building my personal brand ... I decided to quit my job and set up Klowt. I had my first two clients within four days of launching the business and since then I've incrementally grown,” said Sordell. “I didn't set out to build a massive business ... I guess because I loved what I was doing, it kind of attracted more opportunities.”

DEFINING AN ENTREPRENEUR

The entrepreneurial world is always something Sordell has been familiar with, but she's got some very important distinctions to make.

"I think a lot of people misinterpret entrepreneurship as business ownership," she notes. "We're different things. You can be an entrepreneur and not own a business. You can be a business owner and not be an entrepreneur."

"Entrepreneurship is like that little bug that sits in your head thinking 'I know how to do that better' or 'wouldn't it be interesting if...?' So, during that period of time I wasn't in the workforce, I still had all of those ideas, I still had all these little side hustles that I wanted to do."

"I just hustled my way through life!"

Sordell feels that the thing that binds almost all entrepreneurs together is that they understand that everything can be done better – they look at that big picture.

"That's just how my brain works. So, the journey itself has been a wild ride, but I think it's pretty standard for most people in a similar position."

LESSONS LEARNT

There were a lot of hard lessons for Sordell to learn early on in life, when her first business collapsed. With no money, she had to move back home with her parents which she described as a "very humbling experience."

But the number one lesson she learnt was that you can't do everything by yourself.

"The quicker you can learn that the better off you're going to be," Sordell notes. "I tried to do everything and control everything, whereas now I'm like if I need help doing something, that's fine."

In fact, Sordell's favourite part of the journey has been hiring a team. "When you've got a team of people that you trust ... it becomes quite a fun process! Even on the bad days, you've got a bunch of people that can actually pick you up and support you through it."

Sordell also notes that having more life experience has been really helpful.

"Losing that business taught me that nothing is that serious – it's not life or death. I really tried to apply that through all aspects of my life. Obviously, sometimes it's not all cupcakes and rainbows but I think we

can take a pinch of salt with everything."

However, Sordell wouldn't change a thing. "Everything I have in my life right now I am absolutely grateful for, but I don't think I would have any of it if I hadn't [made those mistakes] before."

"Sometimes, you can do all the research in the world ... but you still won't learn the lesson until it smacks you around the face."

FLIRTING WITH BURNOUT

The biggest challenge for Sordell so far has been reconciling to the fact that life is imbalanced and that when you strive to equally distribute your time and energy, what you actually end up doing is depleting it completely.

"I flirted with burnout," said Sordell. "And I really wish entrepreneurs are more honest about this. I don't mind admitting that I've burnt out at least three or four times quite significantly whilst running the business – to the point where I've been on the floor crying, not knowing what to do."

"I don't buy into this idea of when you love what you do, you never work a day in your life. I actually think quite the opposite. I think when you love what you do, sometimes you put so much into it that you forget you're a human being. You need to take a break."

Sordell is still trying to reconcile what this looks like for her, as some days she's "on fire" whilst other days she's "a total wreck." But that's fine. It's just part of the journey and the chaos that exists in life.

"I tried to do everything and control everything, whereas now I'm like if I need help doing something, that's fine."



HUSTLE AWARDS 23

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//// SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED

The Hustle Awards are the unrivalled badge of excellence and the benchmark for all startup businesses to aspire to, giving entrepreneurs a global platform and delivering the most rigorous and transparent judging process in the industry.

With a record number of submissions this year, entries were judged by a specially curated panel featuring a cross-section of business specialists. Each panel is rich in both expertise and diversity, ensuring that every entry is assessed accurately and fairly.

Get ready to be inspired, congratulations to the shortlisted entries:



MOST INNOVATIVE TECH

- //SCIENTENT TECH
- //DEXORY
- //SPROUT
- //WEAVR
- //VESTD.COM
- //ESSENTIALISE WORKPLACE WELLBEING
- //BLUESKEYE AI
- //JOYNED
- //SEERGRILLS
- //KALOGON

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Supporting technology innovators

OUTSTANDING STARTUPS SUPPORT

- //PLUS X INNOVATION HUBS
- //SEEDRS
- //OPERATIONS NATION
- //TRADE MARK WIZARDS
- //FUTURE WORLDS
- //ALLIA
- //THE ACADEME: THE POWER ROOM
- //HOMEGROWN
- //I LIKE NETWORKING
- //SOLVING THE BUSINESS OF SCIENCE - ADVANCED RESEARCH CLUSTERS (ARC)

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QME Queen Mary University Enterprise Zone

EARLY-STAGE INNOVATION

- //EARWONK
- //EVWARE
- //OVUM
- //PRSNT
- //IN GOOD COMPANY
- //MK9PLUS DOG TRAINING
- //NODUM
- //KALOGON
- //VENDOIR
- //ELANA

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TOP PERFORMING TEAM

- //YHANGRY
- //PITCHNINJAS
- //THE CAREER COACH
- //TALLY WORKSPACE TEAM

RISING STARTUP AWARD

- //YHANGRY
- //THE ETHOS NETWORK
- //NANOGRIFT

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

- //GRATITUDE GLOBAL
- //SITEHOP LTD
- //GREENMARKET
- //SKOOT ECO GROUP
- //FUTUREPLUS
- //WASTESHARK

FOUNDER OF THE YEAR

- //HANNAH THOMSON - THE JOY CLUB
- //MANN MATHARU - QI DIGITAL LIMITED
- //ABIGAIL FOSTER - ELENT LTD
- //ANDY CHATTERLEY - MUSO
- //GREG GORMLEY - SKOOT
- //TIMOTHY BALZ - KALOGON
- //ALEX MIFSUD - WEAVER
- //DAVID MORGAN - ENTREPRENEURS UNLOCKED
- //LENA HACKELÖER - BRITE PAYMENTS
- //LAUREN O'DONNELL - OATSU

INSPIRATIONAL WOMXN IN THE INDUSTRY

- //ABIGAIL FOSTER - ELENT LTD
- //BRIDGET GREENWOOD - THE 200BN CLUB
- //SONYA WHITTAM - STORY22
- //LIANA WILSON-FRICKER - INSPIRATION SPACE
- //MELISSA CHAMBERS - SITEHOP LTD
- //ALEJANDRA DE BRUNNER - ETHOS
- //AYO ABBAS - ABBAS MARKETING
- //DEARBHAIL ORMOND - FRENDO
- //FLAVIA POPESCU-RICHARDSON - VELOCITY JUICE
- //HEATHER WILLIAMS - CACHE DNA

SOCIAL IMPACT HERO(ES)

- //CONTIC
- //ELEVATERA
- //THE JOY CLUB
- //SPOKE WORLD LTD
- //QOR360 BUTTON CHAIR
- //THE CAREER COACH
- //AGAM INTERNATIONAL
- //ESSENTIALISE WORKPLACE WELLBEING
- //WELLBEES CHALLENGE

MOST SUCCESSFUL SCALEUP

- //CONTE.AI
- //EXCEL TM GROUP LTD
- //BRITE PAYMENTS
- //CHAPTER 2
- //SEON
- //JOYNED
- //WEEKENDER HOTELS
- //THE CAREER COACH
- //KEYNEST

WORKSPACE OF THE YEAR

- //PLUS X INNOVATION HUBS
- //ANTENNA
- //THE TRAMPERY
- //MINDSPACE HAMMERSMITH
- //CLOCKWISE
- //COLONY COWORK
- //THE DRYDEN ENTERPRISE CENTRE (DEC)

READER'S CHOICE AWARD

Congratulations to our shortlist.

They will all automatically be entered into the Reader's Choice Award where our subscribers will choose our winner:

VOTE NOW



Thank you to our expert panel of judges who dedicated their time to decide our shortlist and winners.

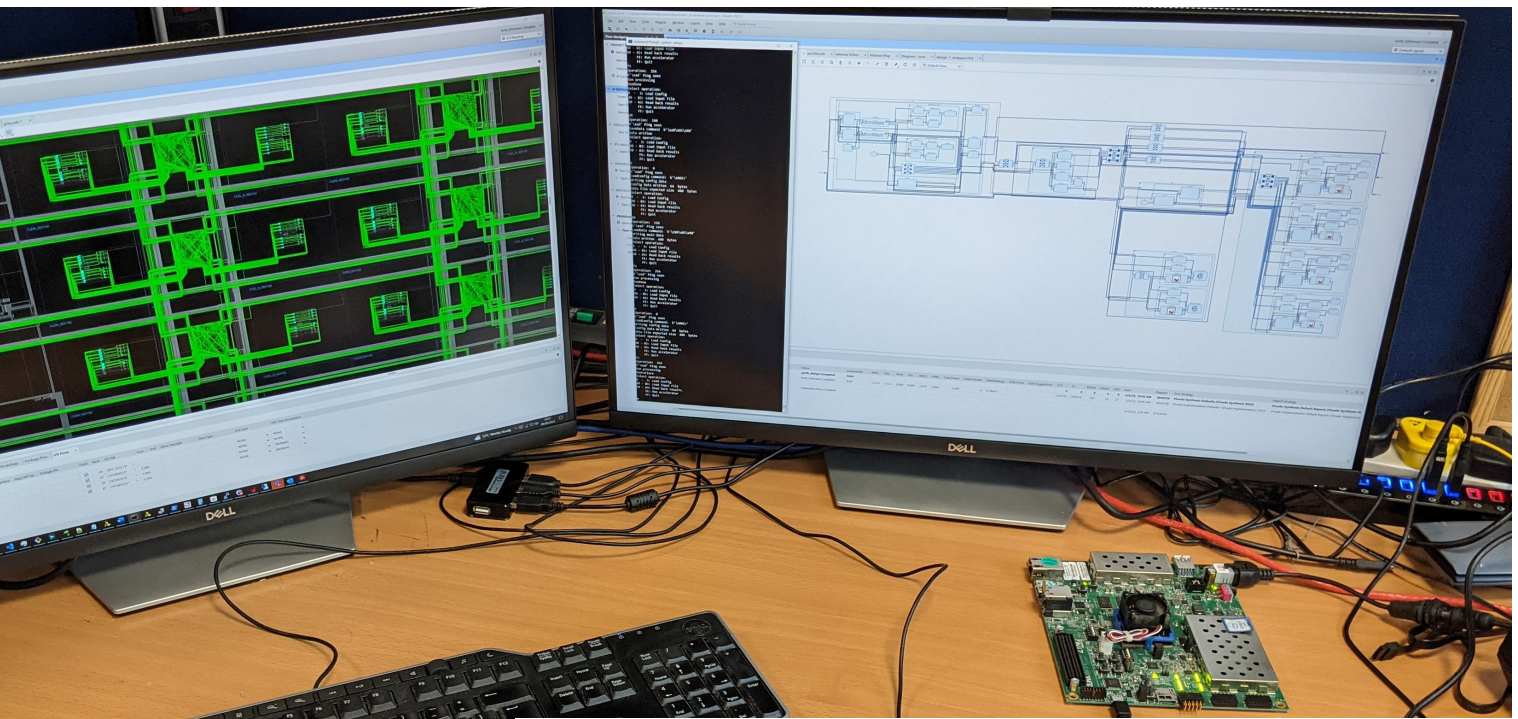
Judge's day was held at MYO, in Victoria, London on 11th May.

FULL SHORTLIST GUIDE



SUPPORTING SPONSORS:





Blueshift Memory: accelerating memory access

Blueshift Memory is a proprietary new architecture design enabling up to 1,000 times faster memory access.

Its proprietary chip design optimises the memory architecture for more efficient handling of large data sets and time-critical data, enabling up to 1,000 times faster memory access for specific data-focused applications. These include high performance computing, artificial intelligence (AI), machine vision for augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), 5G Edge connectivity, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

THE PROBLEM

“The challenge that I set out to solve at Blueshift Memory is one that has been well-documented over the years – the ‘Von Neumann Bottleneck,’” said Peter Marosan, CTO and Founder, Blueshift Memory.

This is the phenomenon that data transfer between the core and the memory has become the limiting factor in computational speed. Not only has this effect never been mitigated effectively, but as computing tasks grow more data-hungry it becomes increasingly more of an obstacle to efficiency.

The root of the problem is that communication between the processor core and the main memory (usually DRAM) is ineffective and is holding

back progress. Earlier attempts to improve this include augmenting the central processor (CPU) with a graphics processor (GPU) or using a hardware accelerator in the form of an FPGA card or an ASIC.

New memory types such as MRAM and FeRAM have also sought to make the stored data more readily available. However, the growth in data-intensive calculations like big data, AI, and in-memory databases is increasing the effect of the bottleneck more quickly than these remedies can keep up with. Using a larger number of cores to cope with the calculations turns out to be counter-productive, as the extra data demands just make the bottleneck worse.

Marosan began to realise the extent of this problem when a project he was working on required him to speed up a big data calculation at a software level.

“It quickly became obvious that our CPU cores were unable to run at their maximum speed, as there was not enough data available to them at the optimum time. Caches simply cease to be effective when data volumes become too large, and the processor stays idle while waiting for new data. When I strengthened the machines by adding extra cores,



Peter Marosan

the waiting time did not change. Increasing the number of cores doesn't solve the problem – it just results in more wasted CPU capacity," he notes.

LIGHTBULB MOMENT

Having learnt that he had encountered a known hardware limitation, he accepted it and moved on.

"But the creative process is strange, and it sometimes needs an external influence to generate a lightbulb moment," Marosan said. "One evening when I was helping my teenage son to change the memory chips in his computer, I started describing to him how it worked, and suddenly – with the physical picture in front of me – I began to understand how we could solve this problem."

Over the following few weeks, Marosan investigated the new idea from many angles, applying his knowledge of computer science and maths, and he had some very inspiring conversations with his friends.

"It was the start of a fantastic journey. Having checked my calculations over and over again, I shared them with two very good friends who are experienced in supercomputing and semiconductors, and they confirmed my assumptions and assured me it was an interesting solution that could work," he said.

The focus of Blueshift Memory's technology is the Cambridge Architecture, the next-generation technology for stored-program machines, designed to replace the currently-used modified Harvard architecture and to overcome the traditional constraints of the von Neumann bottleneck.

"It quickly became obvious that our CPU cores were unable to run at their maximum speed, as there was not enough data available to them at the optimum time."

The company's solution offers significant performance benefits:

- Zero Latency Memory
- Reduces energy consumption by 30-50%
- Performance Improvements 2x-1000x
- Linear performance can become logarithmic, and logarithmic performance can become constant 10x-100x
- Can extend product life cycle of older DDR generations at lower cost

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF A DEEPTECH STARTUP

"[Establishing the company] was probably the scariest part, and it was almost certainly harder work than creating the idea itself," Marosan notes. "I had run an R&D startup before, but each one is unique. By definition, you are working on a problem that no-one has previously addressed, and you have to communicate your proposition to investors and potential customers. You also have to protect your IP, since at this stage that is where the entire value of the company lies.

"We are still a young company, but we are making exciting progress!"

In 2021, Blueshift Memory was named by StartUs Insights as one of the Top 5 RAM solutions startups worldwide.

In 2022, the company was awarded an Innovate UK Smart Grant, against fierce competition – this project is one of only 71 out of a total of 1,072 applications that were successful in securing funding in that round. The 13-month project allowed the team to configure a full-size FPGA demonstrator with the new architecture, optimising it for faster performance and better power efficiency in a computer vision AI application.

More recently, Blueshift Memory announced that it is using Cudasip Studio tools to integrate RISC-V processor IP into an FPGA-based design for memory architecture, modifying the Cudasip core to maximise memory bandwidth.

"Our ultimate goal is simple but ambitious: we would like to see the Cambridge Architecture adopted as an industry standard in servers, computers, mobile, and the IoT," concludes Marosan.





Aspia Space: peering through the clouds

“A physics professor spoke to a farmer” – this is all it took for the groundworks of Aspia Space to come into being.

Since that first Cornish pub discussion, Aspia has pioneered a new way of providing Earth observational clarity to its clients – ClearSky. To explore this further, we spoke to Chris Roberts, CEO of Aspia Space.

AN ORIGIN ROOTED IN THE STARS AND THE FIELDS!

“The idea originally came from one of my Co-Founders, Professor Jim Geach, a Cornish boy, who is an astrophysicist who spent plenty of years looking up at the sky, looking for anomalies in space and looking into the ether for the moment of the Big Bang,” says Roberts.

“One day when he was back in Cornwall, he was speaking to a farmer friend and they were discussing novel ways to look at large tracts of land, of course, satellites came up, but there was always the biggest problem of cloud cover,” continued Roberts.

From here, using his knowledge as a Professor in Physics, Geach first came up with the idea of inventing a technology that would be able to remove cloud cover from satellite imagery. This is the point where Roberts came in, who “met Jim at an event in Cornwall, and saw that there could be a real commercial application for the technology.” They then spent the next two years negotiating with the university to finalise the technology and turn it into a commercial vehicle, which was Aspia.

“We bought the IP from the university and Jim is now a part of the founding team here.

“We’ve now managed to industrialise that, with a bit of our own money and a grant from Space Cornwall, and now its commercially available and used in the agricultural sector,” says Roberts.

WHAT ASPIA IS OFFERING ITS CLIENTS

“So, we take satellite data and then we reflectively augment it using AI, and then we interpret it for people to use in real-life applications,” explains Roberts. By accepting a plethora of readily available satellite data, from sources such as the European Space Agency, Aspia is able to train its in-house developed AI algorithm. Doing so enables its AI to “predict what the world would look like without the cloud cover present, which can be applied to all sorts of applications,” adds Roberts. These applications include looking at crop density, biomass, efficiency factors, scouting, and overall “allowing people to make good decisions.”

“This AI technology and algorithm was the one developed by Jim back in his university days as an academic project,” adds Roberts. Since then, it has been fine tuned and expanded upon within the Aspia Space company.

Aspia’s client base lies primarily within the agricultural sector and

related fields, however, Roberts also describes some other areas their service has seen growing popularity.

“At the moment the primary market is crop protection companies and those in agronomy, but interestingly we’ve seen the data we offer being used by insurers within the industry. We’ve also worked with government agencies regarding land management and use optimisation.”

THE TEAM MAKING THE MAGIC HAPPEN

Aspia is still very much in its infancy as a startup, but with two feet planted firmly on the ground and eyes in the sky, the company is looking forward to what’s next.

“We’re still pretty small, there are the four founders, which is all it was in the very beginning. The two inventors, and the two on the commercial side.

“Since then, over the last two years, we’ve gone from no employees to six of us now on the payroll,” says Roberts.

Now that Aspia has established itself and is commercialised, it has the basis to grow into a flourishing team, and this is exactly what Roberts is looking ahead to: “100% we’re planning on growing the team. If you think from a startups point-of-view, the first part is all about survival. Then it’s onto commercial growth from both a revenue perspective and the people side of the business.”

THE UPS AND DOWNS ALONG THE WAY

It’s not always been an easy ride for Aspia. For Roberts: “The biggest challenge is always the first paying customer. For us especially, the thing that stood out the most was trust in the very beginning. We’re producing a synthetic dataset, so it was incredibly important to validate the product first.”

To achieve this the team at Aspia set out on a year long journey, “using data from 6,500 images, across 250 fields, and 12 farms, constantly working alongside agronomists and farmers to validate our findings,”

explained Roberts. This was crucial for the team at Aspia to make sure that the product they were offering had a basis to build a trustful partnership with their clients. This process was by far the biggest struggle to date for the company, but one that has resulted in a great foundation moving forward.

On the flip side, Aspia’s biggest highlight has been receiving the recognition that they worked so hard to achieve. “It was the recognition after everything, to work so hard to get it proven and launched was great,” remarks Roberts. “We’ve now got clients with a million hectares worth of agricultural land that are using our services to help make the right sustainable decisions at the right times based on trustable data.”

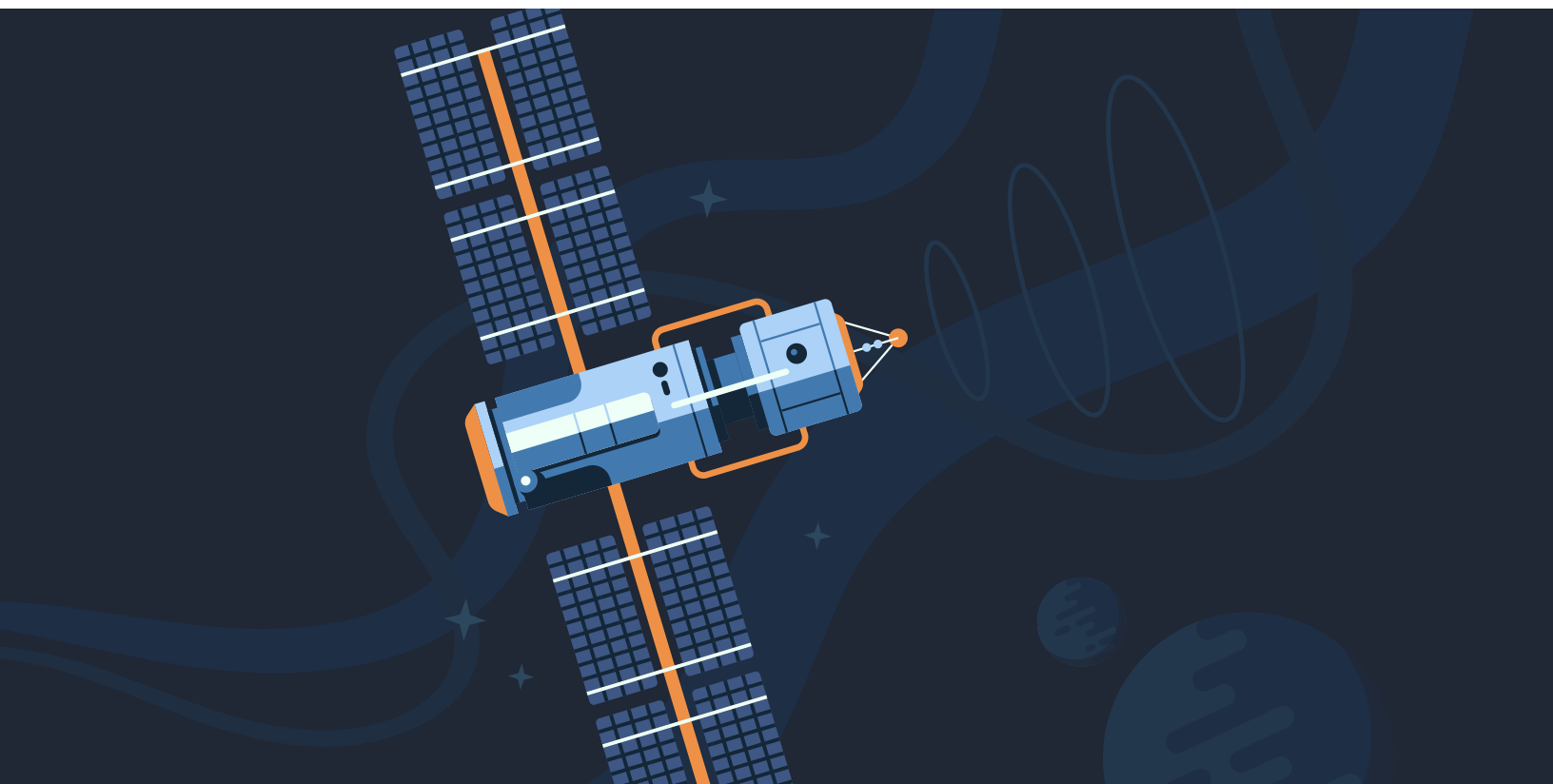
“It was the recognition after everything, to work so hard to get it proven and launched was great.”

WHAT’S NEXT FOR ASPIA?

With the foundations in place, the future is an exciting prospect for the team at Aspia Space, who are looking to continue to innovate moving forward.

“I can’t talk specifically about what’s going on, but very shortly you’ll be seeing some great stuff which is all about developing the real-world applications of our AI and expanding upon it to make it more democratising and applicable,” says Roberts enthusiastically.

From there, it’s all about profitable, incremental growth for Aspia, expanding the team and moving into new locations. “We are also seeing that our data has multiple applications in different markets, especially those with ties to agriculture. We’ll definitely be targeting the insurance and public sectors in the future.”





EasyA your way to learn about Web3

As a startup, you might already know the value of knowledge and learning new things. Yet, if I were to ask you what Web3 is, only the shrewdest might be able to answer.

A study released in early 2023 showed only 18% of male and 7% of female respondents have heard the term. But, if we were to ask the same question about NFTs, that number jumps substantially. Yet things like NFTs, that have already generated millions of dollars, work closely with and promise to be a big part of this 'next iteration of the Internet'.

Serial 'hackathon' winners and brothers Phil Kwok and Dom Kwok saw this gap in knowledge in an industry they were passionate about and decided they wanted to play a part in Web3's adoption. Besides his passion for Blockchain, Phil had experience in creating a number of startups before beginning his job at a law firm. This, combined with Dom's experience at several investment banks, meant they were both halves of a whole lot of relevant skills, and so, in 2019, EasyA was born.

EASY-AY?

EasyA is Web3 education on an app. In a nutshell, at least. But to save

over-explaining, Phil sums it up best: "You can think of us like Duolingo on steroids for Web3."

Like in Duolingo, the app works by gradually building up your knowledge of the concepts of Web3, and the coding involved in it to begin building, through lessons. It then quizzes you on what you learnt and doles out various Cryptos or NFT certificates for successfully completing it. This is part of the trend of 'gamified' learning apps. Phil believes this combination of a gamified, app-only experience is part of EasyA's success.

"The problem we saw is that pretty much all these courses like Coursera or Udemy have very low completion rates. Only like 10% of all people who take up the course complete it. And for our mission to bring more people into the space, this wasn't going to cut it." Phil goes on to explain that their way of doing the courses has resulted in a 40% higher completion rate in comparison. This probably comes as a reassurance for the brothers, seeing as their app is the only one of its kind in the space.



Phil Kwok and Dom Kwok

“Our mission is to make learning about Blockchain and all this cool technology totally accessible to everybody.”

Although it helps to have some knowledge of coding, the company’s goal is to get more people involved in the Web3 space. “Most of our community has a base level experience. So, they will come in having already understood some coding languages but not maybe a language specific to a Blockchain,” Phil said. “Although, it is open and accessible to all people, regardless of experience.” This ethos is also why EasyA is a free app that doesn’t charge users.

Yet if it doesn’t charge and even pays users to complete its courses, then how are they managing to make money? “We work with foundations of these Blockchains who are non-profits to basically get these courses sponsored. That is how we’re able to make them accessible. That allows us to create the courses and then distribute them to people,” Phil says. This has proved not only successful in terms of funding, but feeds into another facet of the app: competitions and partnerships.

“We also have hackathons that we host, where we work with pretty much all of the top 20 Blockchains, like Solana, Polygon, Polkadot, you name it. They then come to our hackathons where the people who did those courses within our app can hack on their projects for a weekend and then, if they win, get grant funding afterwards,” Phil said. “We’ve given over half a million dollars away.”

This, along with things like a news feed, regular coding competition drops, and Web3 event listings, mean that they have enough to keep users engaged with the app even long after many of them have completed the courses on offer.

APP ADOPTION AND WEB3 TURBULENCE

Yet, Blockchain, Crypto, NFTs, indeed many of the words often used

in the same sentence as Web3, are in a tentative situation right now; Bitcoin has come down as low as 70% off its 2021 high and companies like Meta have pulled the plug on its NFT plans. How is EasyA positioned to withstand potential waning interest in the sphere prompted by a Crypto market downturn?

“The field that we’re in is very different to that. So, there’s tokens or Cryptos or NFTs, which are a small part of this pie, but then the much broader ecosystem is what’s being built on the Blockchains themselves,” Phil says. “The platform itself is slightly separated from the price of these, therefore we are a little bit isolated from fluctuations in that regard.” Phil believes that interest in the underlying technology means that their app is continuing to get interest despite market direction.

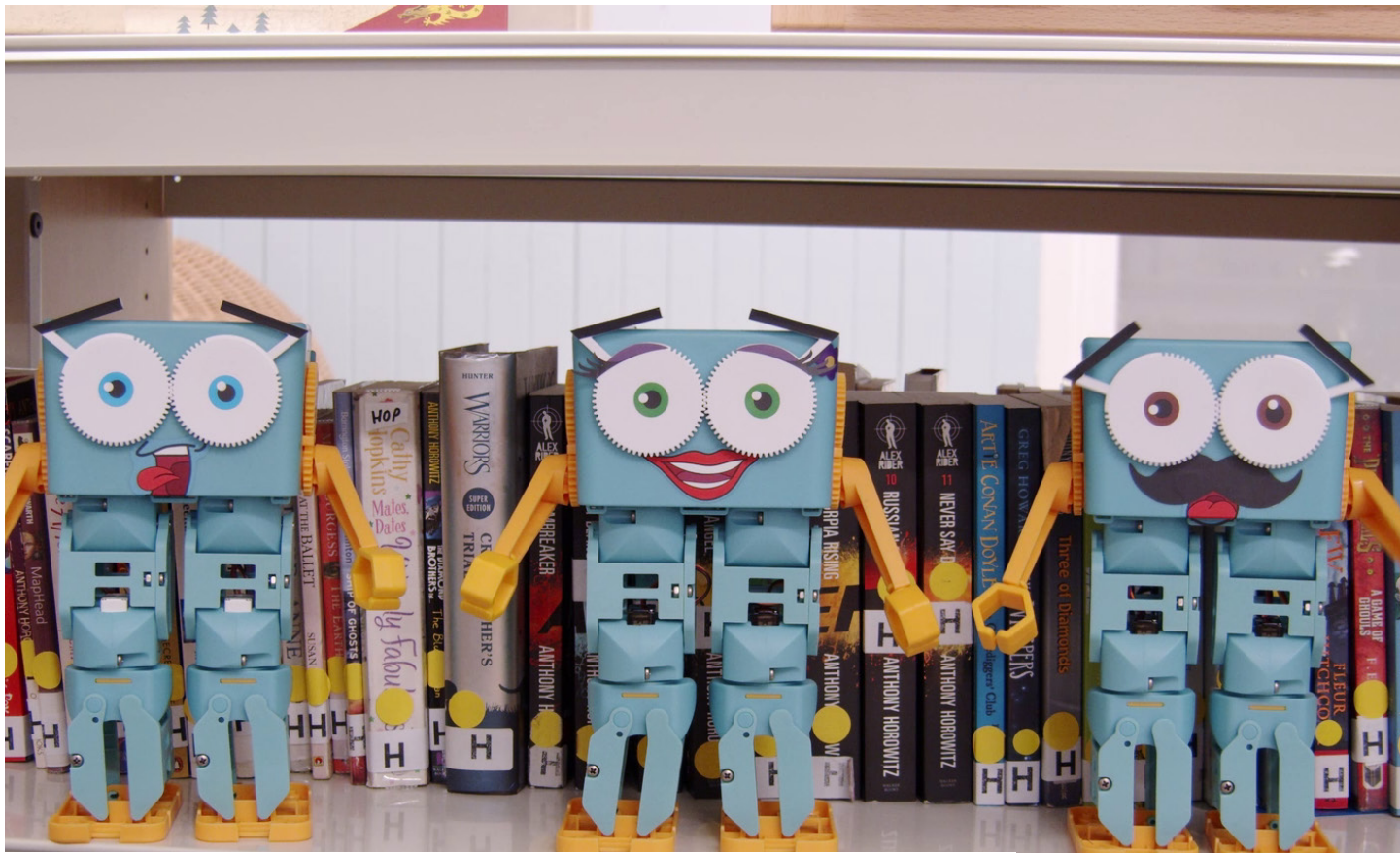
Other challenges are ones other startups could likely relate to: getting people to use your product. “One of our biggest challenges has been to build a community. How do we get people to download the app?” Phil explained. “We learned from our time working on university startups with zero budget, and what we cottoned on to was that we could replicate some of our moves from them and go to different colleges and universities to get people to download the app. Our experience meant we knew exactly how to do the distribution networks and leverage contacts there to get it out into those school newsletters, posters, you name it. As soon as we did that, we just honed the pitch to figure out what people were interested in. After that, the ball began rolling.” Phil’s experience just goes to show that even a startup that never got off the ground can still pay dividends years after it ended.

EASYA HERE TO STAY

Despite unfavourable Crypto market conditions, Phil and Dom’s efforts have grown EasyA rapidly in the four years they’ve been going: they’ve grown their team from two to 10 people in just under four years, had their app featured in a number of publications like The Wall Street Journal, The Independent, and Apple’s App of the Day; partnered with some of the world’s leading Cryptocurrencies and tokens, and dished out a total of \$597,950 in cash to participants at the world’s top universities like Harvard, MIT, and Cambridge.

Yet, these accolades are secondary when asking about their highlights. “I think one of the biggest highlights is seeing the impact the app has had, not only in terms of numbers, but seeing how it’s changed lives. Some of the teams that have come through originally started out inside the app, and then they’ve attended one of our events in person and gone on to raise money from venture capital firms due to their performance there; this has enabled them to completely transform their lives,” Dom says. “All from starting up inside the app, learning about that first Blockchain, then building out that project, and then getting funding. The most recent investment one was from a16z, they raised \$500,000, which values the company they invested in at a couple million dollars.”

Building off the back of these successes, EasyA is implementing a new design feature that they believe will continue to keep the community they have built engaged with the project as they expand. This paired with news that major Cryptocurrency Solana are releasing a phone that has Web3 functionalities leads EasyA to believe their goal of propagating the new iteration of the Internet is closer than ever, and as that day dawns, the company are in a position to capitalise off of it.



Bringing learning to life and igniting passion with Marty the Robot

The UK economy suffers a loss of £1.5 billion every year due to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) skills shortages, and the future of engineering has never been more important. With a shortage of 173,000 workers, 49% of engineering businesses are struggling to recruit skilled workers.

As the technological world evolves, it's vital to prioritise STEM education within primary and secondary schools, and at university level.

That's where Robotical comes in, addressing this challenge, one robot at a time.

Robotical creates educational robots to inspire and engage the next generation of engineers and scientists. Its leading product, a humanoid programmable robot called Marty, is paving the way for the future of education. Its goal? To revolutionise education and inspire a new generation of learners to explore coding, robotics, and STEM concepts.

Marty teaches children to code, beginning with more simple software,

Scratch, then progressing to more advanced languages like Python or JavaScript.

What began as a lightbulb moment is now a leading STEM resource found in over 1,000 schools around the world, increasing academic attainment.

Inspired by his niece, Dr Alexander Enoch, also known as Sandy, set up Robotical in 2016. He wanted to create a humanlike robot that his niece could use to make learning the basics of coding more like child's play and less like hard work. Sandy designed and built Marty V1 from scratch, got the all-important seal of approval from his niece, and secured startup funding via a crowdfund to put the first 1,000 Marty's into production.

“Education is so important, particularly education within STEM subjects. We have a very male dominated industry. It’s getting better through products like Marty that enable that to happen.”



Finlay Page

This was followed by further seed rounds, raising over \$1 million to scale production, grow distribution, build the team, and make Marty V2 a reality.

In classrooms around the globe, Marty quickly became a firm favourite tool for teaching coding and robotics. Students worked together to program Marty to perform tasks and solve challenges, learning valuable skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork along the way.

Marty has been an international phenomenon from the start, with 10,000 robots now sold across 65 countries globally.

What makes Marty different? Marty is a character. “We feel this is very important at an early level to boost your capacity for learning to understand precisely what is happening. That level of engagement is so much higher with Marty than you’d expect from your simple bots.

“There are products like this on the market, but their price points are much higher, or the capacity is lower. So, we feel we really do have a firm grasp of this niche and feel like we’re doing quite well within it,” explains Finlay Page, Director of Product.

Marty is an exceptional walking, dancing, and eyebrow wiggling humanoid learning robot. And Robotical stand by the fact that humanoid robots are THE most exciting tool for making STEM learning engaging for students.

Marty’s unique walking mechanism allows it to walk, turn, dance, and kick a ball. Each limb is controlled by specific motors, so Marty is more stable and robust than other walking robots. His features include a range of expressions, motors with position sensors, acceleration and tilt

sensors, a speaker, and rechargeable battery.

Robotical’s innovation didn’t stop there. As more and more schools adopted Marty as a learning tool, Robotical continued to improve the robot. Marty’s capabilities grew more advanced, with new sensors and features added over time. And thanks to Marty being an open-source platform, users can contribute their own ideas and improvements, making it a collaborative and community-driven project.

“Education is so important, particularly education within STEM subjects. We have a very male dominated industry. It’s getting better through products like Marty that enable that to happen. I think it’s very important, and mathematics and technology are everywhere in the world. It channels through every decision you make in your life,” explains Finlay.

Marty comes equipped with extensive technical support from Robotical’s dedicated team. He also comes with an ever-expanding set of curriculum-linked lessons and activities suitable for all ages, including beginners, intermediate, and advanced coders. Marty has truly been designed to make learning about computer science fun, engaging, and impactful. The flexible learning tool grows with students, capable of introducing screen-free programming to pre-school students, right through to university level.

A UNIFIED LOVE FOR STEM

Currently a team of nine, Robotical is comprised of enthusiastic individuals with two things in common. A love for STEM and a passion for learning.

The team is dedicated to helping teachers bring coding to life, which is why its product and educational experience designers ensure Marty is fit and robust for every classroom and is supported by a wide range of dynamic learning resources.

“We don’t have an immediate plan to expand. We’re at a really good level where we’re able to push whilst still being agile. It’s really important for us to be agile for our customers,” says Finlay.

Having not only operated, but grown through unprecedented times,



Robotical has become resilient to what is thrown its way, including a global pandemic, supply chain issues, and delivering hardware. Finlay states: “We’re proud to still be here considering we were a company that depended on everything that closed during COVID-19. We were very lucky.”

Finlay gives startup founders some key advice considering what he’s learnt from his last six years at Robotical: “You don’t need to find someone who has done your specific product. Anyone who has done hardware can give you a lot of advice and help you begin the process. Find the right advisors and latch onto them. And if you have someone who wants to latch onto you then even better. It’s invaluable to have someone like that.”

TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

The main aspiration with Marty is to make children of all ages realise that engineering is creative and fun, and that anyone can get involved. Encouraging the next generation of STEM leaders through a fun tool like Marty can help make the world a better place and encourage greater diversity in STEM.

The education climate has changed dramatically since COVID-19, including the adoption of more student-led learning. There’s lots of opportunity for Robotical to move to student-led learning and further enhance the value delivery to educators. Highlighting recent ongoing teacher strikes, Finlay says: “Educators are always strained. We want to further improve our value delivery to increase motivation and decrease the load on educators. There’s lots of room for us to do that.”

Marty continues to push the boundaries of possibilities in education, creating a brighter, more innovative future for all.



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CELUS: simplifying the electronics design process

CELUS is a startup aiming to simplify and accelerate the electronics design process for the global engineering community by enabling smart electronics engineering. Utilising its deep tech software, CELUS aims to innovate the electronic design process into the modern era. To learn more, we spoke to Co-Founder and CEO of CELUS, Tobias Pohl.

A SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM

For Pohl, the idea for CELUS spawned “a bit out of personal frustration,” if he is completely honest. Through his prior experiences in mechanical engineering and automotive engineering on both the software and hardware sides, Pohl soon realised that there was a clear need for improvements regarding electrical component design, with “basically all modern products still so basic in engineering design principles.” It was here that he and his fellow Co-Founders, Alexander Pohl and André Alcalde, asked themselves, why? – why is “such a high-end innovative industry so basic in its development processes?”

It was here that the search for a solution to their problem began, and where CELUS originated. The product the team at CELUS created is a service that engineers can use to massively cut down the time it takes to design complex circuit boards with multi-sourced components for specific tasks, by automating the entire process.

In order to achieve this, CELUS “uses algorithms trained on machine learning, supervised learning, and reinforcement learning extensively, alongside huge data models on the input side, to ‘mimic’ the behaviours

of electronics engineers and create an output automatically,” explains Pohl.

This dual system of deterministic algorithms and machine learning are constantly utilised throughout different parts of the design process to create a product that effectively meets customer needs. The process, Pohl continues, completes its tasks “in a similar way to that of human engineers, only that our service can do thousands of operations at a time.” This can save hundreds of hours in design time, and free up engineers to perform more critical tasks.

THE CELUS TEAM

“Right now, we have 72 people on the team, originally only starting out with just the three of us,” says Pohl. “More or less, year-on-year, we continued to double our team to where we are now,” he continues, jokingly calling it a “Moore’s law type growth.” German in origin, CELUS has expanded its Munich office to accommodate growth, as well as opening an entirely new office and team in Porto, Portugal – aiming to expand across more European locations in the future.



Tobias Pohl

HURDLES AND HIGHLIGHTS

For Pohl, there have been two “big ones” when it comes to challenges facing CELUS on its journey so far.

The first, in essence, was rather unique to CELUS, which was “figuring out the right times to say no,” says Pohl. Due to the nature of the industry and the service CELUS provides, the “list of potential business opportunities or product expansions is almost endless.

“Even if it means killing off business opportunities, it’s about focus and selecting the very best,” he explains. Given the scope of the industry CELUS finds itself in, and the fact that there is very limited competition in what they do, it is crucial to make sure that CELUS is offering the very best and does not oversaturate its product base. This is always going to be a challenge, especially for a startup where it almost seems counter-intuitive, however, Pohl is happy with how they have managed to navigate the space thus far.

Secondly, Pohl notes a problem that plagues the industry on a much wider level, “creating change in a fairly conservative industry. This change process is not very easy.” CELUS has found it hard to get organisations to change to an entirely new process of design, especially given that the processes haven’t seen change in decades. For Pohl, “automation is the next step” in breaking through the bottleneck that is holding electronic design engineers back and this is what CELUS is showing as it gains traction.

On the flip side, Pohl has enjoyed seeing the fruits of his labours, noting highlights from both a company and personal perspective.

At the very start of their journey, Pohl and his fellow Co-Founders “were told by pretty much everyone around them that it [the CELUS product] will never work,” he confesses. So, one of the biggest highlights for him was the very first compiler system they made which worked successfully. Whilst it may seem “super basic in comparison to today,”

Pohl notes that it fundamentally demonstrated a proof of concept that sparked CELUS’ journey to where it is presently.

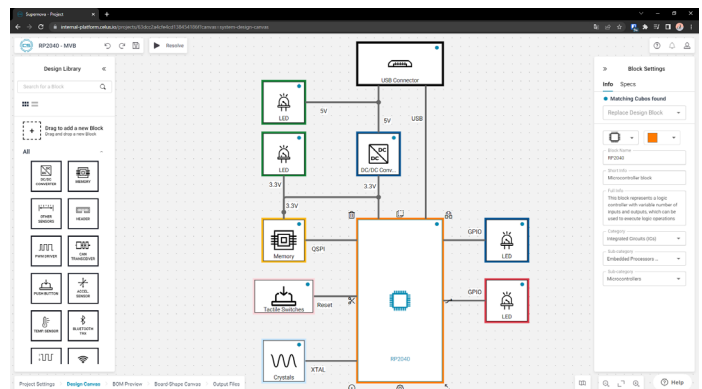
More recently, Pohl says how CELUS’ partnership with electronics distributor Avnet was a great moment in the company’s history, with a ‘miniature’ version of their tool live on the Avnet website. Going from the very first proof of concept back in September 2018, to a partnership with a large distributor like Avnet in early 2022 has been a tremendous achievement for CELUS.

On a more personal note, Pohl has found his biggest highlight lies within his team, getting to work alongside so many different people and great minds. “We have in our team a bit above 70 people that come from over 30 nationalities, and I am regularly in moments where I’m sat thinking: ‘Man, I never would have come up with that idea.’ And it’s that part that I absolutely love,” he says. “It’s amazing to work with so many talented, smart people that can carry your crazy idea into something special!”

WHAT’S NEXT FOR CELUS

On top of building upon what they already have, Pohl was eager to explore his future vision for CELUS, one which can “give an almost magic-like feeling to engineers.” CELUS is constantly asking itself “how can we get ourselves in front of as many engineers as possible?” and “how can we cover as many different projects as possible?” It is this goal which drives the company moving forward. In the longer term, Pohl’s vision for CELUS is to transform the electronics design industry, making it a far more streamlined and effective part of the wider industry as a whole. “How can we really get to the point in which engineers can thrive?” asks Pohl.

At the very start of their journey, Pohl and his fellow Co-Founders “were told by pretty much everyone around them that it [the CELUS product] will never work.”





BrainPatch: The non-invasive brain stimulation device that's set to transform mental wellness

The brain is the most complex part of the human body. It has 86 billion neurons that allow people to feel, taste, smell, and see. It controls thoughts and memories, interprets emotions, and makes sense of the world around us. And, in cases of extreme emotions or pain, it can even disassociate from a situation as a protective mechanism.

However, as brilliant as the brain is, it's not infallible because humans aren't infallible, and over time we can be overwhelmed with feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression. We can burn out.

"The potential for this technology is, essentially, to make people happy. That's what we're working towards; whether it's stress, anxiety, or other mental wellbeing issues, we want to make people and those around them happy," says Nickolai Vysokov, Neuroscientist, Founder, and CEO of BrainPatch – the startup company who are making safe, effective, and non-invasive neuro technology accessible to everyone.

WHEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ACADEMIA COLLIDE

With an extensive career in academia from both Imperial College London and Kings College London, and a PhD in Molecular Neurobiology from Imperial, Nickolai has always had an interest in the brain. But the first sparks of BrainPatch only began to form when Nickolai was speaking to a friend about joining Neuralink.

It was as he was sharing his thoughts and ideas on what he envisioned and how he could help people when his long-term friend, Dauren

Toleukhanov, questioned: 'could you do this yourself?' Pondering on this fact, Nickolai realised that, yes, he could, but he was an academic, not an entrepreneur.

However, Dauren, was a serial entrepreneur and could see an enormous opportunity in brain-computer interfaces.

The pair began talking about the prospect of BrainPatch, and they were quick to realise they had something special, so they joined forces, and on March 22nd, 2018, the company was incorporated.

"Combining the excellence of academia together with the experience of entrepreneurship was a match made here on earth," Nickolai smiles.

"We believe in the mass adoption of non-invasive neuro technologies in the near future ... and we're hoping to break through this market adoption barrier with our technology."

WEARABLE E-MEDITATION ON THE FLY

The e-meditation device looks like a normal set of headphones. However, this patented neuro technology solution delivers a meditative, quickly calming, and stress-relieving state of mind by sending small, non-invasive electrical currents to the brain, via the skin behind the ear.



Nickolai Vysokov and Dauren Toleukhanov

“That area behind the ear gives access to the cranial nerves including the vagus nerve, the vestibular nerve, and other nerves. And because of its position, we’ve turned it into a device that looks like a headset. It’s discreet, it’s wearable, and it’s got the electronic pads under it. When you wear it, it positions the electrodes in the right location and it also gives you some relaxing music to go with it, creating a very instant experience that a lot of people are comparing to meditation, so we’ve termed it ‘e-meditation.’ Since then, we’ve run studies which are showing that it helps create the feeling of relaxation, reduces stress and the risk of burnout.

“Burnout used to be taboo. But since the pandemic, mental health and wellbeing has become a hugely popular topic, so the technology has come at the right time, ready for explosive growth.”

The headset is controlled by a simple, user-friendly app which has a plethora of stimulation options to choose from. The wearer can select anything from meditation to movement manipulation. The stimulation itself is activated by a simple stop or play button, and the strength of the application is controlled by low, medium, or high settings.

CREATING A TAILORED BRAIN

From the initial stages of the company, Nickolai realised that there are a lot of non-invasive stimulation devices out there. These other brain stimulation devices use various tools to achieve a desired outcome, however, they aren’t effective on all people. That’s because our brains are all different.

So BrainPatch built a concept with universal efficacy in mind, and a potential to use artificial intelligent algorithms to better understand how to reach the next level of stimulation. Whereas the other devices on the market tell the brain what to do, BrainPatch is designed to listen and talk to the brain, meaning the stimulation is much more effective than that of its competitors.

“All it is doing is delivering a very small current across those electrodes and this creates an electric field inside the head. With our headset arrangement and electrodes behind the ears, the current doesn’t penetrate the skull, but it does affect the cranial nerves that are running

“The potential for this technology is, essentially, to make people happy. That’s what we’re working towards; whether it’s stress, anxiety, or other mental wellbeing issues, we want to make people and those around them happy.”

between your brain and your body, and depending on the waveform, it can do different things. So essentially the technology is interacting with your cranial nerves through electric fields.”

Because of the waveforms built into the device, its primary target is focused on alleviating stress. However, people have reported that it has also helped them to sleep and reduced depression. The effects of the device, much like the effects of meditation, are temporary and they will eventually wear off, but BrainPatch advises that it should be used no more than twice a day.

Nickolai claims that the device “has saved his life so many times” when, as a founder of a startup, a husband, and a father, he has experienced burnout, which he attests “is not a pleasant experience.”

THE EXPERIENCE

Nickolai joined the team at Startups Magazine to speak about the headset and to demonstrate how it worked before each of us, excitedly, took a turn using it. Digital drunkenness was the first stimulation requested to be tested by the team, and the giggles were forthcoming as we began to experience something akin to being on that drunken rollercoaster after a night out – there were a lot of faux-drunken wobbling heads in the office.

Interestingly, I had a headache and was reluctant to try the device, but BrainPatch have an app for that, and by placing the pads in a different position on my head, the effects of the pain lessened dramatically.

A couple of team members tried the e-meditation, and within two minutes they forgot about their surroundings and just enjoyed a few minutes of peace out of their busy schedules.

The laughter and gasps echoing throughout the office is a testament to the years of work and research that have gone into making BrainPatch an instant, mental wellbeing device that is accessible to everyone.

THE TEAM

BrainPatch has just seven employees, most of whom are technical developers. However, Nickolai points out that now they are taking pre-orders for their e-meditation device, they are looking for funding to help expand their team and push their product further with a sales and marketing department behind them.

THE FUTURE OF BRAIN STIMULATION

It is Nickolai’s belief that in the future this technology can be used in all areas of the brain. From meditation to better sleep and pain relief, but as with all things, it will take time.

“In terms of the application, there’s huge potential ... but it also needs to be tried, tested, and optimised. So, it’s quite a journey towards getting there.”



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