

COVID-19: Interview with Mandy Powell, Cofounder, The GoodWash Company

Founded in Wales in 2017 by Mandy Powell and Kelly Davies, The GoodWash Company makes luxury vegan hygiene products, supporting those in need and enabling people in their communities to look after their environment. Maddyness spoke to cofounder Mandy Powell to understand how they are coping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Maddyness] What is the biggest professional challenge for you today? What's the ray of sunshine?

[Mandy Powell] Staying calm, taking one day at a time and choosing not to furlong as a business and keep working. Our ray of sunshine would be customers support as it has been overwhelming.

What is the biggest personal challenge today? What's the silver lining?

Living without fear about tomorrow. All our events have been cancelled which has greatly affected our forecasted cash flow position for 2020 which was centred around fast growth. The silver lining? It's a time to be creative, and exploit opportunities in other areas – of which there is always many. Also, we take this opportunity to really showcase why we are different – social impact at the very heart of everything we do. Being in a crisis has shown to people we can really step up when it matters.

Is remote working a new thing for you?

We usually we do a mix of homeworking, meetings, and trade events but never nine weeks of lockdown home working. As co-founders, we took the decision to split and work separately to manage the risk of us bot being taken out of the business. We have also had to ensure that we fill the capacity needs in the operations team.

What changes have you made to keep your business running?

We've made website tweaks and upgrades to ensure a better customer journey and a high-quality experience, in line with our values. We've conducted innovative marketing campaigns (such as the *diolch bars*) and donated to the NHS. We have sent over 7000 NHS wash donations and teamed up with like-minded Welsh brands to create collaborations for good. We are extremely lean and have always done our own advertising marketing in-house. During the lockdown, we have been more creative and entrepreneurial in our focus and approach. We have been able to safeguard all of our full-time staff but have had to reduce our budgetary for consultants and advisers.

How is your relationship with your investors?

Extremely good – we have social investors who are very understanding and supportive of what we do. We have still exceeded targets despite losing 100% B2B and direct sales – but we just have to plan for all the different scenarios

that could happen over the next 3-6 months with them. The main thing is being transparent, and taking them on the journey with us.

Have you had to end or delay your office rent contract?

Not yet, we were due to launch our first retail store at the end of June so we are waiting to see what happens – it is all in the air at the moment. Again planning for all scenarios and managing risk all of the time is something we have to focus a lot of time on.

What do you think of the support packages for startups offered by the government? What have you been able to use?

I think the government is doing everything they can at the moment – to help as many businesses as possible survive COVID-19. As always there are improvements to be made, and opportunities to be created for those that slip through the gaps. As a startup social enterprise – we have found ourselves to be amongst that group. But we see things are being reviewed, learned and amendments made – I'm confident that we will be supported.

Do you feel confident in your business post-COVID?

Yes. We have a strong team. An excellent and credible brand that has always been aligned to a greener more sustainable locally sourced future, with social purpose at its heart. We have also given our investors confidence that we can hold our nerve during a major crisis and step up. However, if COVID-19 has taught us anything it is that you do not know what is around the corner. And you can't plan for everything.

Are there any changes in

society/economy that you think will help you?

More online focus. Customers will be more conscious about the brands they choose to shop with – many larger, well-established brands have shown their true colours in COVID-19 and haven't done things ethically showing themselves to be solely profit-driven.

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