

COVID-19: Interview with Carina Cunha, Founder and CEO of Nosy

As we enter a world where face-masks are the new normal, it is timely that Nosy should be launching their innovative line of wearable tech designed to improve your breathing health. Maddyness spoke with Carina Cunha, Founder and CEO of Nosy to understand how their company is coping during the COVID-19 pandemic and what the future holds.

[Maddyness] What is the biggest professional challenge for you today?

[Carina] Nosy is a device we started creating in the Fall of 2019 to protect against air pollution, it's not designed to help prevent the spread of for COVID-19, which people (understandably) initially assume it is.

The ray of sunshine? Every time that someone makes a pledge to our Kickstarter campaign. Every backer of the project shows me that once we get over people's initial barriers because of the pandemic, Nosy is a product that will benefit the lives of millions to come.

What is the biggest personal challenge today?

Probably how much weight I gained since the beginning of the lockdown? Jokes aside when you create a product to disrupt the entire concept of industry and way of life people think you are kind of crazy. So for me, I just had to embrace wholeheartedly the concept of fundamentally not caring what people are saying. I trust that in the end, it will all be worth it.

Is remote working a new thing for you?

Not at all! Before launching Nosy, I was the Managing Director of Crimson Education in Europe, so when I wasn't on the road meeting with schools or parents, I was having calls at all times of the day with our HQ in New Zealand.

How do you keep your employees happy?

I believe in being fair and transparent above all. When there are struggles, I won't sugarcoat it, but instead, show that I will go above and beyond to make whatever we are creating together a success. One of my main drivers of being in charge of an organisation was my desire to be able to do right by my employees.

As a leader, what do you do to successfully manage your mental resilience amid lockdown?

I am an introvert or for those interested in personality an INTJ. So the lockdown has been in some ways a blessing because I can keep on working all day without feeling guilty that I am not socialising (or putting on make-up). But to answer the question on resilience - for me, it is always about keeping the eye on the prize.

What changes have you made to keep

your business running?

Before COVID-19, we had investors lining up interested in Nosy, but during the pandemic, they went radio silent, so we switched fundraising strategies and decided to run a Kickstarter campaign to raise capital for us to continue with our plans to produce the first batch of Nosys in the summer of 2020.

What have you implemented to stay competitive?

We are really listening to what people are saying and taking the time to understand how groups of individuals react to information that is contrary to their belief. Every time a blog posts about us and people comment (even the haters) it gives us insights to our potential target market.

How is your relationship with your investors?

We have had so much positive feedback on our Kickstarter campaign from those that take the time to listen to our message and understand our product. Check back with me in 2 months about the institutional investors though ☐

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

No, fortunately, we don't have any overheads at the moment and our only major expenditure is our design and engineering team.

What advice would you give startup founders to keep managing costs and cash flow efficiently during a crisis?

Be efficient with your money. Think about what you need to do next to achieve your upcoming milestones and focus only on that. Anything that will not help you move closer to the next stage of growth is not worth your money (or time).

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

Are there any that are worth applying for? With time and money being scarce I have focused on what could bring the most impact for us right now, and the packages offered by the government are not worth the time that they will take to complete in our case.

Do you feel confident in your business post-COVID?

YES!!! (How many exclamation points is appropriate here?)

The entire world has seen what happens when we do not pay attention to our breathing health. Now more than ever, people need to pay attention to what they are putting into their bodies. Nosy is only our MVP, and V2 will bring to breathing what Fitbit has done to counting steps.

Are there any changes in society/economy that you think will help you?

It will be great when people start to listen to other things outside of COVID-19. There is life outside of the virus and soon we will need to start living it.

Nosy is the brain-child of Carina Cunha, a London-based innovator and fashionista. She holds an Economics and Political Science degree from Columbia University in New York City, and a degree in Differential Psychology from the University of Edinburgh. After moving to London, Carina became acutely aware of the quality of the air that she was breathing every day when commuting via the city underground. She then made it her mission to solve the problem of air pollution that commuters face – not just for herself but for the world.

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Article by MADDYNESS & CARINA CUNHA