

VOICE by Maddyness: Meet Chloe Macintosh, founder of Kama

Our fifth guest on the VOICE by Maddyness podcast is Chloe, founder of Kama. Founded on the principle that pleasure is health, Kama helps people work towards mindful (and more gratifying) sex and intimacy.

The VOICE podcast delves into the minds of UK tech trailblazers – narrowing in on one industry per series. The theme for our inaugural series is sextech. In the fifth episode, host Graham Hussey speaks to Chloe Macintosh about [Kama](#).

We had a few more questions, so spoke to Chloe about her previous experience as the cofounder of Made.com; how tech companies make it almost impossible for sexual wellness startups to thrive; and why pressure to orgasm from penetrative sex alone goes back to Freud.

How has your experience at Made.com and Soho House helped you in founding Kama? Have there been any big differences in how you run things?

It's the first time that I am actually running the business solo, as before I was either in partnership with my cofounders at Made.com or I was an employee at

Soho House. When I stepped down from Made.com, I really wanted to be reminded of what it feels like to be an employee. I often hear entrepreneurs saying that they will never be able to work for someone, but I think it's much harder to learn that way.

The startup experience can give founders some pretty bad habits when it comes to running a business as you do not follow protocol. This can be great in some ways but also can bring challenges when it comes to scaling and managing a team. So it was important for me to go back to working for someone else, and for a larger company as an employee, as I was preparing myself for going back into the entrepreneurial journey.

But overall, I think that when I look at my career, from being an architect to cofounding Made.com, to becoming a venture partner in a VC fund, and then becoming a consultant for different brands, and joining Soho House as Chief Creative Office, and now doing this, there isn't really a linear path. However, the logic is that I enjoy learning new things. And when you want to disrupt an industry, there is a lot of value in not knowing your topic. It allows you to remain objective.

In the case of Made.com, I didn't really know that much - and actually, not being limited by how much I knew allowed me to be creative. I wasn't limited by the way things had been done up until that point.

It is almost impossible for experts to disrupt their own industry.

Doing different things in different types of business, at different stages of growth, has made me a generalist. I really, really believe that it's very important to be a generalist in this world, rather than a specialist. You become much more agile and flexible. There are so many tools out there now to solve every aspect of the business that we don't need to be technical in each area.

Things are changing so fast, in a way that we cannot predict, so the advantage of having many hats is that you can fall back on your feet and be more intuitive with solutions.

It's the advice I give to my two teenage boys: the most important skill is the hustle. If you know how to hustle cleverly, then you will be able to always

manage a way in or out of situations.

The main thing that I enjoy about running Kama, my new business, is that the creative process is very lean. I've never had the opportunity before to build something that is so close to my heart and that can have such an important impact on the world.

You've been researching the principles behind Kama for many years now. Who/what are the most inspiring thinkers/theories you've come across?

Well, first of all, there aren't a lot of thinkers and a lot of theories when it comes to sexuality. Sadly, for some weird reason, it doesn't seem to be attracting a lot of academic interest.

Sexual pleasure is the most under-researched area of our health. And female wellbeing and sexuality are not prioritised. So, for that reason, the things that I really get inspired by are people's personal stories. I think sexuality so often is defined by statistics, expectations and performance. But we don't talk about the experiential side. How does it feel for you?

The principle behind wellness is that you know what's right for you based on how it makes you feel.

Because we don't talk about the experience, we don't learn a lot from each other. When you combine this with a lack of sex education, you get a very poor understanding of our sexuality. It has been essential to our growth at Kama to build a community around the platform, so we can hear people's stories first hand.

The kind of expertise that I look for isn't necessarily people who write about it, or people who are fronting the conversation in a public way. What I look for are people whose entire career has been dedicated to working directly with others and adjusting their methods based on real feedback, in real life.

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[We're in the middle of a sex recession](#)

The first thing that came to mind in response to this question was actually nature. Going back to our nature as human beings mean we can start repairing the disconnection we're all craving. At Kama, we focus on learning about the incredible technology that is our body, as it has the potential to deliver infinite pleasure and joy. So instead of intellectualising or using visual stimulus to get us in the mood, we want to invite you to have sex in your body not just in your head.

What kind of qualities do you look for in new hires as you continue to build out the Kama team?

Lockdown created a huge challenge when it came to building a team and a culture, especially with team members who are based all around the world and have never met each other in real life.

I look for attitude before aptitude; the type of people who fit early-stage startups are independent, resourceful, and able to create their own role as the business evolves.

We are currently hiring for a growth marketer, a video producer, a social media manager, and an operational lead. Each hire has the potential to impact the business very significantly so that adds another level of complexity to hiring. We also look for people who are empathetic and interested in talking about sexuality in a way that is constructive, so we can learn from each other and make sure to address diversity in our solutions.

I have learned the key is to hire the right person for the business now, rather than taking a punt on the right person for the business in years to come.

What do you foresee for the future of sextech? What areas will we see more innovation in?

We have often used technology as a way to substitute what our senses can do, and this has had the effect of desensitising us from pleasure and life in general. We are not going to spend less time on our phones, so we need to start thinking about how to use our phones in a way that contributes positively to our wellbeing.

Social media in particular has deceived us, promising us connection, and resulting in more isolation and loneliness and a surge in mental health issues. I would also like to see a level of responsibility from tech companies to create software that focuses on human qualities and can improve our wellbeing both short term and long term.

As opposed to technology that dissociates us from ourselves, I would like to see more technology that helps drive us back into the body and the human experience.

In 2021, we still can't talk about sex openly; we still can't show genitals for educational purposes. So as a brand that is focused on sex education, we are not able to do our job. If we want to remain visible on acquisition platforms, which have taken a hypocritical stance (covering the nipples does not make something less sexual - it does the opposite), we can't use sexual vocabulary. We also have to use pictures of fruit to teach people about their genitals!

There is still a lot of space for change when it comes to how sexuality is portrayed in the media. We are so often told what not to do, and there is just too little in the way of guidance to help us overcome our challenges and reach our full potential.

At Kama we know that the best sextech is our body, and our best sex toys are our hands and voice.

What's the most interesting/shocking fact about sex or sextech that you've come across?

How much time do you have? Really... I could go for a very long time! Pleasure is still never addressed by medical professionals, even though it has been declared a human right by the World Association for Sexual Health. In spite of that:

Pornography constitutes around 30% of the world's traffic today. It's the number one source of information used by children to learn about sexuality. In adults, this lack of education is also causing young men under 30 to suffer from performance anxiety.

We are still basing all our knowledge about sexual behaviour from studies done in the 1980s and our most accurate drawings of female sexual orgasms date from the 1800s.

Freud declared that orgasms that happen during penetration are more 'mature' than clitoral ones, leaving us still today with 2 out of 3 women feeling not normal or good enough because they can't find their g-spot.

Interested in learning more about the story behind Kama? Listen to the fifth episode of the VOICE by Maddyness podcast, available now.