

Diverse Founders Programme: Natural wellness brand creates herbal blends tailored to specific health goals

WeWork has partnered with UK social enterprise Foundervine to launch its Diverse Founders Programme, supporting 100 diverse founders with workspace and support for one year. We spoke to Yemi Awopetu, cofounder of Herby Box.

What is Herby Box?

Herby Box aims to modernise natural wellness solutions by creating herbal blends that are tailored to specific wellness goals – we call it the Herbolution. Our Herby boxes come with tea bags and herbs, and our customers create the end results. We know from speaking to our community that they love the immersive experience and enjoy the herbal benefits.

In terms of how we reach our customer base, we have a website, social media channels and work closely with our retail partners. We have recently launched our products in Selfridges, which has been a bit of a ‘pinch me’ moment! We

continue to look for retail partners who are aligned with our values to help make Herby Box even more accessible.

How did it feel to launch in Selfridges?

Words can't describe the feeling! When it was confirmed that Herby Box was going to be stocked in Selfridges, Paul and I kept reminiscing about all the times we had shopped in the iconic store, not knowing what was on the cards!

Collaborating with Selfridges demonstrates that the 'herbolution' is on the right track, and it's amazing to have a partner that can help us move it to the next level. We are proud of the service, product and customer experience we offer, and we know Herby Box has so much potential – I think Selfridges really sees this too.

What was the catalyst for launching Herby Box?

Before Herby Box, I worked at American Express, where my career spanned across financial analysis and building partnerships with banks across central and eastern Europe. During my time at American Express, I was always passionate about wellbeing – especially financial wellbeing – so in my spare time, I'd help people with learning about money, budgeting and financial planning.

Working hard and long hours, I always looked for natural ways to boost my productivity, energy and wellbeing. After a disastrous attempt to blend my own herbs, I turned to my friend Paul Otote, who is an expert in herbology and helped me reap the benefits I was after.

I knew from online research that many others had experienced the same failed attempts as me with mixing and consuming herbs, so Paul and I saw a gap in the market. We started brainstorming back in December 2019 and launched March 2020, on the cusp of the pandemic. It's been a journey!

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We have grown so much both personally and professionally. Paul and I are great friends, and we are lucky that we have also become great business partners, working well together and utilising our strengths to help grow our

business. We also continue to develop our product, working with our customers and hearing their honest feedback is incredibly useful.

It's been so rewarding to hear how much they love our product, but we are true believers in improvement, so we take any feedback very seriously. Since launching in March 2020, we have added six additional SKUs to our product line, and included a subscription option for those who would like it.

How do you fund the business?

We are currently completely self-funded, but looking for ways to fundraise this year. Starting out as an entrepreneur during the pandemic means it has been a lot harder to network. We also know that businesses all over the UK and globally have been impacted by the pandemic so for the majority, investment in smaller startups will not be a priority – understandably.

We have been lucky enough to be part of the Foundervine x WeWork *Diverse Founders Programme*, which provides mentoring opportunities and workspace, so that's been an incredible help. I cannot wait for a time to connect, collaborate and network with other entrepreneurs and larger companies.

What key challenges have you faced so far?

Two things that have been difficult to deal with have been our supply chain and customer delivery. Because of the pandemic, forward planning, understanding stock levels and ordering components in advance has been crucial. With regards to customer shipping, most delivery services were hit hard so we've had to either hand deliver packages to customers (COVID-friendly) or use more expensive options in order to ensure our customers receive their order in time! Having said this, the positives most certainly outweigh the challenges – we love what we do.

What has been a personal highlight since launching Herby Box?

How can I choose one! I guess launching our first 'Herby Week', which was a week of online events around health, herbs, fitness and food over the summer. It was our way to engage with our community of customers and demonstrate the health benefits of herbs, and Herby Box. Another that springs to mind is when we made our first sale or when we received our first Trustpilot review. Of

course, launching in Selfridges has to be up there too!

Looking ahead, we are focused on innovation, and building momentum within the wellness industry. Whilst looking to work with more retail partners, we are also dedicated to our growing customer base, and we can't wait to watch our community grow this year.

Learn more about the Diverse Founders Programme [here](#).

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