

Social enterprise employs marginalised people to create ocean-friendly cleaning range

Two and a half million British people are expected to be unemployed this year after the fall out of the pandemic. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is more than twice those who are able bodied.

Diane Cheung is launching a new social enterprise called MELIOR – meaning ‘better’ in Latin – after being made redundant last year. The plan is to employ marginalized people, getting them back into the workplace by creating and selling non toxic, ocean friendly cleaning products that are good for people and the planet. *Maddynews UK* spoke to Diane about her plans for the enterprise.

What was your professional background before founding MELIOR?

I worked in marketing for over 15 years, following the traditional path and scaled the ladder in big businesses like Red Bull, J20 and Stella Artois before moving to the third sector at the National Trust. However, I truly found my calling in the social enterprise sector four years ago. Little did I know that I would one day launch my own in the middle of a pandemic. The world works in wonderful ways.

Tell me about social enterprise MELIOR?

MELIOR is a female-founded, closed-loop social enterprise. We employ people with disabilities to create non toxic, biodegradable and zero-waste cleaning products. Powered by bio-actives, enzymes and good bacteria, our kinder cleaning products are used in the Houses of Parliament, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai and Virgin Active. They're better in every way – for you, me and the planet. It's conscious cleaning on a whole new level.

A true labour of love, MELIOR takes a stand against injustices, the 'throw away' mindset, and greenwashing. We step up where others have stepped away, because no one asks to have a disability. In our first two weeks, we created over 60 hours of employment.

We are an all singing and dancing female crew, rocking to the beats as we fill and pack orders that allow us to employ even more people with disabilities and long term health conditions.

What was the catalyst for launching MELIOR?

When I started MELIOR, my goal was simple: to provide employment to people with disabilities at a time they need it the most, stepping up where others had stepped away. I know it's not just a job, but a lifeline and a reason to get up in the morning and take part.

I saw injustice and I was equally overwhelmed by the amount of waste and the amount of greenwashing happening all around us. It makes us choose wrong, when we want to choose right. I believed in the need for change and so I started MELIOR without any external investment, operating off my own steam and determination to do what I think is better for you, me and the planet.

How has the enterprise evolved since its launch?

From the beginning, I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the many talented people who made MELIOR what it is today. We all worked remotely and determinedly – from the worlds of science, design, art and communications – towards a shared vision. And we will never veer from our purpose, which is to support marginalised people into employment with products that are beautifully kind to people and planet.

I am very grateful and honoured to be on this journey and the response from the wider community has been equally overwhelming. We are close to reaching our 100th order and we've had orders from Southampton to Dunfermline and Ayr in Scotland, and from Swindon to Kent in the East.

What are your aspirations for MELIOR in 2021 and beyond?

We will remain true to our purpose and create more jobs for people with disabilities and long term health conditions. We are a small yet mighty crew that will only grow if people believe in us and our products. We have exciting product development plans in the pipeline that will continue pushing the boundaries of what it truly means to be a responsible enterprise in the 21st century.

Diane Cheung is founder of social enterprise [MELIOR](#) .

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