

How two young entrepreneurs are serving up a new era of smart hospitality

The hospitality sector has struggled during the pandemic. Now, the added pressure of losing workers from across Europe, alongside the number of staff still on furlough has created a perfect storm for the sector.

UK hospitality venues are suffering from severe staff shortages and have been hit hard by lockdown restrictions, but are now struggling to re-adjust to their easing.

Within this uncertain climate, two entrepreneurs have built an evolving and innovative technology business over the last twelve months which has helped kick start the hospitality sector, with customers in the industry now relying on this to navigate and adjust to the challenging space.

Forbes 30 under 30 alumni, Hugo Tilmouth (25) and engineering graduate and entrepreneur, Charlie Baron (27) have created innovative solutions to the issues of working in a sector dependent on socialising, while most importantly, staying safe.

Their business, [Up.co](https://up.co), is now the parent organisation of numerous projects aimed at maintaining a thriving hospitality and retail sector in the UK.

Following the success of initial innovation, ChargedUp, in 2017, this existing database would pave the way for the successful business ventures which are propping up the hospitality sector in the period of post-pandemic recovery.

Raising £5M in seed funding between 2017-2020, ChargedUp solved the issue of mobile phones dying on the go, allowing customers to rent mobile charging packs from a network of 3,000 charging ports across Europe.

But as hospitality, retail, and several other work and social spaces closed their doors, and stay-at-home rules were put into place, the need for such a vast network of on-the-go charging ports fell and revenue dried up.

An adaptable database

Fortunately for Tilmouth and Baron, both the database and the network of contacts they had built up while developing ChargedUp could be used to propel their latest innovation, CleanedUp, into a reliable service for the sector.

As the UK's largest hand sanitiser station network, the service had secured its first contract with Transport giant, TFL, in less than a week.

"Hospitality is notoriously hard to get into," admitted the entrepreneurs. "We had been steadily building up our network for a year with ChargedUp. We'd secured 3000 venues, working with lots of the top UK chains, such as the likes of Stonegate and Green King, and were talking to lots more."

"As soon as we launched CleanedUp our sanitiser business, we tapped straight into our network, and all of a sudden we surged from supplying 3000, to 30,000 then 60,000 locations across the UK including Costa, M&S, Leon and TFL."

How did CleanedUp lead to ServedUp?

Up.co's initiative to supply hospitality venues with hygiene units so they could get back on their feet amidst consecutive lockdowns meant that Baron and

Tilmouth had begun to strike relationships and build contacts with the teams behind 1/3 of pubs across the UK.

While these venues were forced to adopt digital solutions and ordering technology to keep their business both safe and afloat, the two entrepreneurs began to tap into the need for technology which was fast, slick and accessible.

“Through talking to these venue partners, we began to realise that the tech they were using was really outdated and incredibly expensive – which was pretty much the catalyst for our next venture, ServedUp.”

“We reinvested the £8M from CleanedUp into growing our team to build an order and pay system that would outperform everything else out there.”

ServedUp soon proved to be a lifeline for hospitality venues struggling to offer effective digital solutions as mobile ordering took off.

The Garbaldi in Redhill, Surrey, had used a typical POS system for order and delivery, but soon switched to ServedUp technology after being introduced to Up.co's CleanedUp sanitising units. Since making the switch, the speed of service has increased by 50 per cent and sales by 63.3 per cent per week, with that of gin doubling.

Up.co's multiple innovations have supported the UK's hospitality industry so much so that the company is tipped to become the next Deliveroo-sized business coming out of the UK. Growing 40 per cent month on month, the business is set to turnover £10M by the end of 2021.

As restrictions begin to ease even more over the summer, this period will be key for revenue and recovery within the industry. But a safe and slick experience is still a priority for paying customers. Smart hospitality isn't going anywhere, and Up.co is set to help hospitality recover and readjust in the coming months.