

Meet Basubu, the yoga and meditation retreat marketplace

For our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to George Burgess, cofounder and CEO of Basubu, about capitalising on post-COVID trends and creating a functional website in just a few weeks.

What was the catalyst for launching Basubu?

After my cofounder and I sold our last business, we decided to roll the dice once again and started looking for new opportunities. We focused on industries that would see tailwinds off the back of COVID and thought that more people would be looking for wellness travel as a result of the pandemic. When we investigated the market in more detail, we realised there was a lot of space to build something interesting.

What is Basubu?

Basubu is an online marketplace for wellness retreats, with an initial emphasis

on yoga retreats and meditation retreats. It's a two-sided marketplace: we work with retreat organisers to help them market their experiences, and we help guests to find the perfect retreat for their needs. We do most of our outreach to organisers directly, emailing them or picking up the phone, and guests mostly discover us through Google.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We launched at the very end of August 2021: we built the initial website in just a few weeks and treated it as a test. We wanted to see how feasible it was to get people booking these experiences online and we launched with only 15 retreats. Within the first month, we generated thousands of pounds worth of bookings and we quickly realised this was an amazing opportunity – and that meant we had to play catch up.

The 'test' site we'd launched had no method of payment and no way to exchange messages – all it did was connect a potential guest with an organiser over email! We spent the next couple of months building the site out properly and it now has much more sophisticated functionality, including a built-in payment tool.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

I don't think we appreciated how much small tweaks to the site could affect the conversion of guests. Most of the products we've built in the past were services: a user would take the time to go through a sign up process, which meant they were then somewhat invested and sticky. Basubu, though, is a marketplace, and even the slightest friction results in visitors disappearing. This has been a learning curve for us as we've not done anything in ecommerce before.

How is Basubu unique?

It's fair to say Basubu has a couple of competitors, but we feel our product and tech background means we can produce a better experience for both guests and organisers. The site is still nascent, but we have a lot of interesting ideas

we'll be rolling out soon to help us stand out more significantly.

What one piece of advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

We're big believers in rapid prototyping and testing. Too often we see founders claiming they *have* to raise money before they can build their product because there's no reasonable way to validate their ideas. We've built a number of businesses now that began with the most basic of products: in some cases, these were built entirely using no-code platforms. Those basic products helped us validate what we were doing before we invested more significant amounts of time and money.

Before building Basubu, we built and tested four other ideas and researched scores of others. By building basic prototypes, we quickly ruled out ideas that on paper we thought made a ton of sense. We could've spent months working on them only to figure this out, but instead we were able to do this in weeks.

George Burgess is cofounder and CEO of [Basubu](#).

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