

Meet ONE Essentials, the sustainable fashion brand born out of a frustration with the fashion industry

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Carries Davies, founder and CEO of ONE Essentials, about building a sustainable fashion brand, being frustrated with the fashion industry, and helping to build a circular economy.

What was the catalyst for launching ONE Essentials?

I started ONE Essentials out of frustration, frustration with the industry I was working in, frustration with the climate crisis we were in as a global community, and frustration with any action being taken to make a difference to that. I wanted to prove that there was a better way to create clothing, one that considered the whole products lifespan and not just to the point of sale. Where we created garments to have the minimal environmental impact in production, but also the minimal environmental impact once we were done with them.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

ONE Essentials is a range of everyday items that have all been created to be disposed of. Everything is designed from the start with the end of life of that garment in mind and manufactured with our GOTS certified factory in Portugal for minimal waste, maximum comfort from bio-degradable, natural and non toxic materials.

But we don't sacrifice quality or performance. Our underwear is created from our unique fabric, a blend of recycled, organic cotton, and a biodegradable elastane so the whole garment will compost back to the earth when you no longer want it anymore. We also offer a take back scheme: if you cannot compost your item, we will for you, or, in the case of our sweats and t's, they can go into fibre-fibre recycling.

Our mission is to reduce the impact of the fashion industry by making the most comfortable essentials without harming the planet, and using our collective voice to demand radical change.

That's why we don't just make our garments with the lowest footprint possible, independently verified through our LCA (Lifecycle Assessment) data, we also want to support the clean up of the waste that is already there. 1% of all sales goes to the OR Foundation, who are working with those effected by our clothing waste in one of the largest textile landfills in the world in Accra Ghana.

We are currently a direct to consumer business with a few marketplace channels and we're looking to expand our reach through wholesale partners this year. Our focus is to build an authentic and engaged community that views ONE Essentials as the most sustainable option for their everyday clothing items and is with us on the journey to a circular economy.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

When I think of evolution I think of moving forward and some sort of big shift. I don't know why. But actually sometimes it can be about tiny changes and in our case a slight slow down or recalibration.

I'll be honest, I don't think I could have picked a worse time to launch. Brexit complications, an algorithm change skyrocketing the cost of customer acquisition, a pre-Christmas lockdown scuppering our pop up plans, and a cost of living crisis hammering peoples spending power, and a war. But, as a founder I also learnt some lessons, we hired internally on marketing it didn't work, and since outsourced to an agency who have the power of a wider team. Realising that no channels were really converting almost paused all communication and forced us to relook at our messaging and organic strategy, from one that was a little softer to try to engage a wider consumer base to one that is now much more confident, forthright, and factual. We showed some gains from this in March, and with these subtle changes now rolling out on other channels we will hopefully turn the tide.

How are you funded?

I received an initial investment from Worth Capital after winning the start up series competition in April last year. I'm looking to raise a further investment round this summer to help us to build and spearhead our growth to become a known and innovative brand.

How does ONE Essentials answer an unmet need?

I believe we cater to consumers who want to find real solutions to the environmental crisis of fashion production and their wardrobes, one where they do not have to sacrifice quality, performance, or comfort for an environmental gain.

But I also think we are answering the needs of the time we are in. We are at a crisis point and we have to make radical changes in order to see any form of impact in our lifetime.

We may 'only' be making pants, but as an item of clothing that you wear every single day, what better place to start.

What's in store for the future?

We're expanding our sizing offer this spring to cover up to a 3XL in ladies with men's to follow on the next production order. I've created two new fits for women's underwear: a very flattering high rise brief and a super comfortable Brazilian cut, both in the same innovative bio-degradable fabrication.

But our focus is really to build the business channels in the UK and abroad with our initial product range to support further developments and innovations. There is a lot of excitement in this space and we want to be at the forefront of it!

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

Build your network, not of friends or supporters, but of professional advisors. Find those that have the experience that you do not and have been there and know the pitfalls and can help you work on solutions.

That's what I am still looking to build. Running a business is hard, especially if you are a solo founder, and so that knowledge will be invaluable.

Carrie Davies is founder and CEO of [ONE Essentials](#).

Article by CARRIE DAVIES