

Get to know Josh Gill, CEO and founder of Everflow

Everflow is a B2B utilities disruptor with a mission to ‘make utilities simple’, helping SMEs across the UK save time and money. We spoke to its CEO and founder, Josh Gill.

Launching the business

Prior to starting the company, I began my career in the water industry as an engineer. After a couple of years, I began to notice that decision making in building new treatment works often wasn't optimal and I soon realised my passion for making things simpler.

At 23 I was put in charge of the North East division of the engineering and cost consultancy firm, Aqua Consultant. After a year I managed to double the division's turnover and it was at this point I began to consider the possibility of starting my own company.

I hadn't yet found the home for my passion, and it was only during my next role at Northumbrian Water that I identified the deregulation of the water market as an interesting growth opportunity. By this point, I had begun to build a vision for growing a business in the industry and eventually left to pursue my goal. I approached some of my contacts to help fund what would later become *Everflow* and soon after, Everflow was built around our mission to make utilities simple.

Everflow's mission

Everflow is a technology-led utilities provider, on a mission to simplify utilities for businesses, this includes improving customer experience, sustainability and value for money. To achieve this, Everflow has completely separated its profit margin from the amount of utility that a company uses, for both water and waste meaning we can genuinely be on our customers' side when working with them to reduce their usage. Currently, we provide services to 70,000 customers.

Through our mission to 'make utilities simple', we are also able to save customers time, freeing them up to focus on growing their business. Our industry first instant quoting tool, for example, is helping businesses across the UK to compare prices and find a cheaper deal. As a result, Everflow can help save businesses money and improve their environmental impact in relation to water supply.

Evolving the business

Everflow was launched in 2015 and centred around a mission to make utilities simple. In 2017, we expanded when England joined Scotland in opening its business water market for competition. This meant that non-household customers no longer had to buy their water and wastewater services from their regional wholesaler and therefore could shop around for better prices and service.

Our focus on sustainability and technology-led services has contributed to our 51% year-on-year growth and has helped to establish Everflow as the UK's fastest growing water supplier and the third fastest growing company in Europe.

Our sustainability credentials also earned us the title of the UK's first 100% carbon neutral water supplier earlier this year. We have since signed the SME Climate Commitment, pledging to *achieve Net Zero* by 2040. To support our climate pledge, we launched the nation's first free Business Water Efficiency certification scheme this year. The scheme is designed to encourage businesses to save water, in turn supporting Everflow's net zero commitment.

Financial gains and challenges

Everflow was started with funds gathered from friends and family, however, now has private investment from Perwyn and reinvests profits in creating new services and growth.

The lack of appetite and knowledge that the market had deregulated was certainly a big challenge. To resolve this, Everflow tapped into the energy broker market to cross sell and built its own quotation software to encourage brokers to sell. We created a new retail management and billing platform, which became known as Eclipse. The platform includes a broker portal that allows customers to access instant quotes for their water. The result was better than we could ever have imagined and we were thrilled to receive great feedback across the board.

Within the water market specifically, the lack of near real-time consumption data is massively stifling automation and machine learning capabilities in the sector to improve service and help drive down leakage. The industry as a whole needs to come together to deliver a smart meter rollout, learning the lessons from the original roll-out in the energy market, to ensure that we can start to make a real change to the water usage across the country.

As we go into multi utilities, our challenge will be translating initial customer demand to actual buying.

Looking ahead

The last 12 months have been characterised by rapid expansion, with the company enjoying a near 50% boost in customers.

In addition to moving forward with our ambition to reach net zero by 2040, our joint priority for the future is diversifying the business into other services. Due to the success in our approach within the water market, we have decided to go multi-utility.

Earlier this year, Everflow launched a waste management division. Following this, we intend to enter telecoms in 2023 and the commercial energy sector in 2024. These markets currently have minor amounts of regulation, and they lack the use of technology. We believe Everflow has a blueprint to shake this up in all the right ways. Not enough business owners look at pan-utilities and question how the way they use energy impacts the amounts of water and waste produced. People are currently failing to join the dots between utilities. If they were then they could create significant operational and financial efficiencies. As a multi-utility provider, we'll be able to identify where businesses can make those improvements.

In line with this, it's clear that the next decade will bring a stronger focus on machine learning and AI. the more data you have the more you can benchmark yourselves against other businesses in your field. As a business, we are also targeting as close to full automation of our utilities retail services as possible within the next ten years, allowing us as a business to focus much more time

and effort on the other big trend that will dominate: protecting our planet and reducing utility waste.

Top advice

Don't be flexible with your customer offering – John Elliott of Ebac gave me this advice around the time of Everflow's launch. To put it simply, make sure you are clear on who your customers are and what you're offering them. In the same vein, be willing to turn away customers who don't want what you are offering.

This is brilliant advice for anyone who finds themselves in the position I was in when launching Everflow. If you try and offer everything to everyone then you won't be able to offer good, consistent, service to anyone. Think of it as a restaurant trying to serve every cuisine, their pasta won't be as good as a restaurant specialising in the food.

Josh Gill is CEO and founder of *Everflow*.