

From co-working nursery to digital nursery: Babbu's tips on pivoting to zoom culture

Charlie Rosier, cofounder of Babbu, writes about making the heartbreaking decision to close her co-working nursery business during the pandemic, and her subsequent pivot to open and fund the UK's first online nursery.

For four years, we had been running one of the only co-working nurseries in the UK. We founded the company from our experience as working parents. Covid hit, we lost 90% of our members and eventually, after months of soul-searching, we had to close the doors. Ultimately the dynamics of working shifted, but other parenting struggles remained and the conversation around the importance of Early Years became much more pronounced.

As founders, we believed passionately in what our business offered to parents – high-quality Early Years education, personalised care and fantastic partnerships between practitioners and parents. So after riding the waves of the pandemic along with the rest of the world, we regrouped. Many of the principles that underpinned our business were still valid and needed, and once we recognised these, we pivoted our business. We recently launched the UK's first online nursery Babbu.

Here are the steps that we took to pivot our business to support parents' needs today:

Understanding our 'why' in a flexible workplace

Parents who used our service were looking to support their children's development around working and struggling to know what was best for their little ones. What they needed had changed; they didn't need to go to a fixed location anymore, but the purpose remained. Our 'why' was to help children to thrive in the Early Years and to support working parents in achieving this. This 'why' remains today.

Identify key customer behaviours

One of the reasons that parents used our co-working nursery was because they wanted to be present as parents and to balance spending time with their children around working. We took this truth into our online offering to offer educational and fun content that fits around busy parents' lives.

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Speak to customers today

The first thing we did during and after Covid was to speak to our customers. When the dust had settled, we needed to understand how the pandemic had impacted parents and what concerns they had regarding their children's development now. 60% of parents with children under five told us they were concerned that Covid had impacted their child's development, and 28% told us that they believe their child is struggling with personal, emotional and social development. We recognise this in Babbu, which takes the tools, resources and expertise from a nursery and puts them in the hands of parents and carers everywhere, navigating this journey without little support.

Learning from the past

We had many learnings from parents who had used the nursery space. One learning was the praise we received for incorporating different cultures and genuinely celebrating diversity and inclusion within our daily practice. We have carried this on into the service we offer today; our proprietary curriculum teaches children about the world and focuses on raising kind and independent children. We also learnt that parents who want to fit nursery life around their work were craving opportunities to continue this support themselves at home. So we captured that sentiment to give parents the tools to support their child's development from home.

Recognise what worked

Every child is unique, they learn in different ways, and they develop at different times. We kept the personalisation our nursery setting offered and developed it into a tailored curriculum unique to each child's developmental stage and preferences. Parents also come in all shapes and sizes and have different concerns at different times. So we folded this into the experience so that they, too can engage with Babbu in the same way they used to engage with our nursery practitioners. We like to think of Babbu as your wing-parent. We're here for you whenever you need us, wherever you are, helping you get through tough times and find joy in every day.

It's early days for Babbu, but we're excited to see the impact we're having on parents as we continue to develop our offering to support modern parents, thanks in part to the lessons we learned the hard way.

Charlie Rosier is cofounder and CEO of [Babbu](#).

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