

Meet ufurnish, the website transforming the way we shop for our homes

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Deirdre McGettrick, cofounder and CEO of ufurnish about revolutionising the way we discover products for our home, angel investment and investing in the right people for your business and stage of growth.

It all started as a young child in my family's drapery shop in Ireland. I was fascinated by the homes of our customers, and it was a real treat when my Dad let me join him to hang curtains as part of their interiors projects. I was so inspired I was soon spending time on the floor in our family home, cutting up the Argos catalogue and creating my version of my dream home.

Fast forward 20 years and the time had come to buy my first home in London with my husband. It was then that I realised how hard it is to find the perfect furniture and furnishings to make our dream home a reality. I was clear on my style... sorry "our style" ☹ but I also wanted to be inspired. I was clear on our budget, but how could I be sure I was finding the best prices when I only knew a few retailers. How could I be confident I had seen the entire market and had truly found the perfect items for us. I spent hours trawling websites and social media, sharing images with friends and family, only to forget where I had seen that perfect item. With a full time job I quickly became frustrated with the time it was taking to 'create my home' rather than what I wanted for us both, to be

‘living in our dream home’. Surely there was a simpler way...

Fast forward 4 years and I now proudly lead a team who share my mission to transform the way we all shop for our homes. We believe it should be simple for everyone to create their dream home, which is why we bring together over 110+ of the UK’s most exciting retailers, from John Lewis, Wayfair and Dunelm to Cult Furniture, Claire Gaudion and French Bedroom all on one website.

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

ufurnish.com is the furniture and furnishings website that’s revolutionising the way we all discover, search and compare products for our home. ufurnish.com brings together 110+ high street names and smaller independents in one place, giving everyone the confidence that you’ve found the perfect item.

We work with a huge breadth of retail partners and we are committed to helping our users find their perfect product from across the market in the simplest way possible. We have developed proprietary technology that enables us to take in our retail partners data feed and reconstruct it so that our search engine and data based filters help a consumer go from thousands of products to their perfect item in seconds.

We have also invested heavily in making the process for our retailers as simple as possible and due to our rapid growth we can give them real time industry insights on consumer search and purchase behaviour.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

The business launched in July 2020 but prior to that we had an MVP in market to prove the user case for our product. It was so successful that we now have over 180 retail partners signed up and to date we have had over 5 million people use the platform.

We have always been committed to building a business that can be scaled internationally and we knew that proprietary technology, data and a trusted brand were key to this. We hired the right people as fast as we could and invested accordingly.

How are you funded?

We are funded by angels and are incredibly proud of both their commitment to us in terms of time and money. Their experience and generosity in sharing their learning is incredibly valuable to us at every stage of our scale up journey.

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

Finding the right team is tough – it takes a certain type of person to join us... we are fast paced, incredibly collaborative and obsessed by leveraging data to build something truly disruptive in this sector. We do not have any hierarchy, we co-created our values as a team and we work remotely...

For the right people we are a perfect fit... but it isn't always easy to gauge that in a traditional interview process, for either party – so we have learned a lot already on how we finding amazing people.

How does u furnish answer an unmet need?

Our research shows that people spend up to 38 days a year trying to find the right furniture and furnishings for their home, and we believe that time should be spent loving the home you have creatednot constantly searching for the right item. We are perfectly positioned to uniquely solve this for both our consumers and our retailer partners.

One of my favourite pieces of feedback is from our recent event with Grand Designs Live ...

“wow, that is genius, why doesn't that exist already... its so obvious and will save me so much time and money! – I am whatsapping my friends tight now”

What's in store for the future?

We are scaling rapidly and have just launched an amazing partnership with Connells the leading UK Estate Agent Group... and we have lots more exciting news coming.

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

People really matter... invest in finding the right people for your business and stage of growth. Create a culture of transparency and ambition. These are the people that will realise your idea and help make it, and you, even better.

Deirdre McGettrick is cofounder and CEO of ufurnish.

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