

Meet Ship Shape, the startup indexing investments to give mission-critical data to founders

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Daniel Sawko, CEO and cofounder of Ship Shape about finding relevant investors, undervalued groups and using data to match startups with investors.

What was the catalyst for launching Ship Shape?

Two factors crystallised. One, experiencing how tough it was to find relevant investors in a startup I was working in at the time. Two, more importantly, seeing how that same lack of access impacted and would impact many more!

This was made obvious to me by two experiences.

One, being in lockdown in South Wales, realising there were plenty of brilliant tech driven responses to the chaos that came from covid, but that these businesses wouldn't be able to scale without access to capital, which they didn't have. The other was down to hearing a talk from Carla Harris at Morgan

Stanley (Multicultural Innovation Lab).

Carla pointed out that the economics of narrow investment allocation are insane (they are!), and that investors will make better returns capitalising on undervalued geographies and groups.

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

Ship Shape is a search engine. We index investors and their investments in a similar way to the way Google indexes websites. We then make all those millions of data points freely searchable.

The brilliant thing about this (and what I'm really proud of) is this opens up access to mission-critical information to founders. Our customers ultimately are those that benefit from seeing that type of search data.

We're unique in enabling such data to be freely searchable, we think the value of what is being looked for is higher than the subscriptions a startup would pay!

How has the business evolved since its launch?

Significantly! We started out in Q3 2020 with a no-code version, it wasn't brilliant, but it proved we were on to something (we even made a couple of sales!). We've also changed business model, we initially sold subscriptions, including to the likes of Balderton (a very proud moment). It worked... ish - but it was like trying to push water up hill. We realised our strength actually lay in building out a larger data set on what demand for capital looked like, which you can't do from behind a subscription paywall.

Tell us about the working culture at Shipshape

We're a geeky bunch, but we also take breaks.

My cofounder Alistair and I have burned out previously, and we knew that

starting off the right way would be much easier than course correction later, so the company has a 4.5 day working week.

We're largely remote, with a centre of gravity in South Wales (where it all began!). Being remote has real upsides and also some downsides too. Some have suggested this can prevent a cohesive company culture from forming, I don't think that's true, but we're an odd 'vintage' of company, in that we started during covid, so had no choice but to be remote first.

How are you funded?

We've had Angel backing to date and also some Innovation Grant funding from the Government. At time of writing we're raising our Pre-Seed with a real preference for ex-founder/operator Angels who have lived the pain we're solving - I'm at daniel@shipshape.vc if you'd like to learn more!

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

We had a Family Office sign term sheets, subscription agreement and then not follow through. This nearly killed us and definitely left us scrambling.

How does Ship Shape answer an unmet need?

I think it's best if we go through a worked example :).

Bear with me...

We all know electric cars have to be the future for us to hit climate goals.

In order for that to happen, we have to put more backing into technology like 'lithium ion batteries'.

So you're in this niche (and most startups are doing something very niche and specific), but who are the right investors to be speaking with?

Well, here are the results from a search for *'Lithium Ion Batteries'*

What's in store for the future?

We're going to add US investors in, and then the rest of Europe, and then the rest of the world and branch out into indexing Angels, Syndicates and PE. We basically just want anyone in the world with a brilliant business to identify dream investors with a search phrase.

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

Treat the current course of action like a hypothesis to be tested.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

It's been a bit manic since mid-September, so no set routine. 3 nights a week are usually networking/going to events.

I've sadly picked up a bit of a McDonalds chicken nugget habit as I don't usually have time for a proper dinner!

Habits that I've found that really help me get through it are early morning walks and much less alcohol!

Daniel Sawko is CEO and cofounder of *[Ship Shape](#)*.