

Meet YoungPlanet, the startup helping users to divert pre-loved items from landfill

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Jason Ash, cofounder of YoungPlanet about an unnecessary over-reliance on landfill, the circular economy and an inspirational bright red Radio Flyer truck.

We've always been waste conscious, but the desire to do more to protect the environment definitely increased once we had children. At that point, we began prioritising sustainable options and sourcing as many second hand things as we could for the kids and for us.

The inspiration for YoungPlanet came when we were living in New York and came across a yard sale on our way to lunch. Our son, Freddie (aged 2 at the time) fell in love with a bright red Radio Flyer truck, and he was so captivated by it that the seller gave it to us for free.

Around the same time, a friend of ours confessed that she took her children's old clothes and toys to the skip because it was "the easiest" way to get rid of them. These encounters sparked the idea for an app that uses the circular economy to make it easy for parents to pass on no-longer-used toys and children's items and avoid overburdening landfills.

Tell me about the business?

YoungPlanet is a circular economy platform designed to help families declutter whilst reducing the waste burden on the planet. It's an app which helps families source parenting and children's items for free – from clothing and toys, to buggies and changing stations. We're effectively digitising and scaling the concept of 'hand-me-downs' to allow parents to save valuable money, source items sustainably, and reduce how many items are unnecessarily manufactured.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We 'micro launched' in 2019; initially rolling out access to the platform in Hackney, London. We gained brilliant traction there and were able to use our committed community of early adopters to refine the model. Then we took the app London-wide and then expanded to the whole of the UK.

To date, YoungPlanet has helped 160,000 users to divert over one million pounds worth of pre-loved items from landfill.

Tell us about the working culture at YoungPlanet

We're a husband and wife founding duo, so it's not marketing speak to say that our culture feels like a family! Whilst juggling work and parenting does come with its difficulties, it's brilliant being on the same team and being able to support each other's schedules. Quite a few members of our wider team were app users first, which means we truly have built a community around shared values.

How are you funded?

We've successfully raised over £1M to grow our business through private funding and via two Crowdfunder campaigns to date and now we're exploring additional pre-Seed funding from institutional investors.

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

During the height of the pandemic, exchanging physical goods and making new friends suddenly felt risky for families. In the early months of the pandemic, we therefore advised our community to pause in-person exchanges whilst we figured out how to make sure they were safe. This obviously meant we saw a big drop in activity. However, once we introduced no contact exchanges, the pandemic was actually a productive time for us – everyone was thinking deeply about the value of community, how they could help each other, and lots were also having a thorough spring clean!

Despite facing the challenges of the pandemic, YoungPlanet has gone from strength to strength over the last few years, with our community of users tripling in size over the last 18 months.

Read also

[Have a green Christmas: Interview with Jason Ash, YoungPlanet](#)

How does YoungPlanet answer an unmet need?

The world has a chronic landfill problem and we manufacture far too many new things. In 2022, the earth reached the alarming milestone of consuming 100 billion tonnes of materials a year. That's way more than the planet can sustain and so much of this waste could be re-used or recycled. We're making it easy and free for families to keep items out of landfill. Our app solves this pressing sustainability issue, but it is also hugely useful at a time when many parents are trying to cut down on costs.

What's in store for the future?

Looking ahead, we'd like to become every parent's go-to platform when it comes to sharing or finding what they need for their kids.

With the help of our partners and our growing business and consumer subscription base, we hope to develop an international presence over the next year. There's no reason why we can't have the breadth and depth of eBay!

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

Don't be afraid to take risks... When we originally launched YoungPlanet in 2019, we kept to a manageable and realistic timeline; investing where we could and bringing people on board when we felt ready. We didn't go crazy and were really mindful of not running before we could walk. Our measured approach saw us outlast competitors that expanded too soon, but in hindsight, we could probably have taken a few more calculated risks at the start of our journey - our team and product were definitely strong enough to handle it.

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

Balancing family and work is always a challenge, but getting up early helps and the daily reminder that the children are growing so fast means we're pretty disciplined about time together. That can be a movie night, cooking Sunday lunch or going for a walk. It's important to stay grounded in the reality of what we are trying to achieve and who we are trying to make a difference for with YoungPlanet.

Jason Ash is the cofounder of circular economy platform, YoungPlanet