

Meet Skin+Me, the UK startup democratising dermatology

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Horatio Cary, Co-founder and CEO of Skin + Me about revolutionising the the skincare industry, the critical importance of personalisation and how to build a team ready to deal with inevitable ambiguity and uncertainty.

Back in 2019 we realised there was a huge problem in the world of skincare – in a £140B industry there was 55% consumer dissatisfaction. People don't just struggle with their skin – they struggle with how they're supposed to deal with it, and we knew there had to be a better way to give everyone's skin what it really needed.

Despite a market saturated with products, there were very few viable options available for anyone looking to tackle either skin concerns or a skin condition. There was nothing efficacious on the high street, it's expensive to see a Dermatologist (£750), or there's a six month wait for an NHS referral. We launched Skin + Me to offer access to custom-made treatments, formulated with evidence-based, prescription-only active ingredients for customers looking to tackle skin conditions such as acne, rosacea, dark spots and pigmentation, or cosmetic skin concerns like visible pores, glow, fine lines or texture. Now, for the first time in the UK, people have easy access to affordable treatments that works.

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

At Skin + Me we have a strong and growing team of dermatologists, pharmacists, direct-to-consumer experts, and other brilliantly innovative people, working tirelessly to change the face of the skincare industry.

We're based and manufactured entirely in the UK, our growth is testament not only to the efficacy of the product but the extreme efficiency of our vertically integrated operations. We've scaled rapidly, prescribing millions of products to help hundreds of thousands of customers achieve their skin goals.

We're a DTC business on a mission to build an accessible way for millions of people to achieve their skin goals with powerful personalised skincare solutions that truly work.

It's been almost 3 years since we launched and we've been blown away with the personal progress and stories from our customers so far. We recently ran our first OOH campaign across London to showcase their results.

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

The business was launched in 2020 with our hero product – the Daily Doser, a patented piece of technology that dispenses the exact dose of personalised solution inside for each nightly treatment. At launch we were able to treat acne, pigmentation, fine lines and wrinkles, pores and skin texture, we then broadened our prescription pathways to include treatments for both rosacea and melasma and in spring last year, we launched cleanser and moisturiser in response to customer demand for the complete evening routine.

Tell us about the working culture at Skin+Me

One of our values is Obsess Over Customer Delight — our target customer is fed up and disillusioned and we can change that, so we frame every decision with customer happiness at its heart, so far we've built a loyal group of brand

advocates whose lives really are better because of Skin + Me.

Another is Challenge and be challenged – If our team thinks something can be improved, we always want people to speak up. Everyone's opinion is valuable, in every area of our business. Be constructive, polite and to-the-point. In return, be open to receiving the same, it makes us all better in the long-run.

Deliver impact – We work to deliver impact to the customer and the business. We encourage the team to move fast and not let anything stop them from delivering impact quickly.

Embrace the unknown – We're building an incredible brand from scratch and that comes with challenges. Embrace the inevitable ambiguity and uncertainty, be autonomous and forge exciting new paths every day.

We have weekly company wide meetings where the floor is always open, as well as very open Slack channels. Ultimately, we're all aligned in working hard to deliver impact to the customer and the business.

How are you funded?

Skin + Me is funded through Venture Capital. We recently announced a *£10M investment from Octopus Ventures* during our Series B funding. Octopus Ventures strengthened their investment on the basis of our business trajectory and shared values.

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

Developing a product that is superior to any product in the market was a major challenge because the cosmetics market is large, mature and has had billions of dollars spent on innovation. After talking to dermatologists we understood how much more effective prescription products could be but to get these to customers was a huge challenge. We had to build our own factory, setup our own channels to find customers and build a brand. Solving these was very difficult but it is extremely rewarding to see customers receiving better products and a better service than they have had before.

How does Skin+Me answer an unmet

need?

What we've aimed to do is democratise dermatology – to give everyone access to our dermatological expertise plus prescription strength ingredients that are proven to work. Our science-backed ingredients can only be prescribed by a medical professional – they cannot be bought at a beauty counter or chemist. So we are giving everyone access to science-backed ingredients that will treat and transform the skin.

We know a lot of people are confused about skincare – there is so much choice, so many claims and so much conflicting advice. Our aim was to take all that confusion away and to collaborate with our customers to create individual daily skin treatments that will safely and effectively achieve their skin goals – whether that's tackling fine lines and wrinkles, pigmentation, skin texture, melasma, rosacea or acne.

Effective skincare has to be personalised to the individual to be effective because we are all different, our skin is unique to us and our lifestyles are all different. Therefore a one-size fits all approach is hit and miss and can be a very expensive investment.

What's in store for the future?

As a result of our recent capital injection, Skin + Me will continue to revolutionise the skincare industry by further developing our market-leading personalisation strategy. Watch this space.

Horatio Cary is cofounder and CEO of *Skin + Me*.

Article by HORATIO CARY