

Kalda, the app providing therapy from leading LGBTQ+ therapists

Creating a startup is always challenging. Founding one during a tech downturn, cost of living crisis and recession seems near impossible. However, with risk comes reward and many of the world's most successful companies were founded during times of economic uncertainty. As part of a series with Antler, Maddyness has interviewed founders hoping to become the entrepreneurial success stories to emerge from this time of crisis. This week, Maddyness spoke to Daniel Botcherby, Co-Founder of Kalda.

During the pandemic we saw a rise of mental health issues and people spoke more openly than ever before. At that time I was Head of Product of MyCognition, which was undergoing an acquisition and I used that opportunity to work toward applying my knowledge in the field of neuroscience and cognitive training to mental health.

The area I felt most passionate about was addressing the lack of information I had around being LGBTQ+ whilst growing up. As I got older I saw the impact on

mental health on my friends in the community and I was determined to provide better access to evidenced based therapies.

Can you share your elevator pitch?

Kalda is the LGBTQ+ mental wellbeing app providing video therapy courses from leading LGBTQ+ therapists. Shockingly, one in two people in the LGBTQ+ community experience depression every year, which is three times more than the general population. We're addressing a fundamental lack of therapists with the lived experience to help the whole community.

We're a consumer app on Android and iOS and we've been steadily releasing new courses throughout last year including overcoming loneliness, embracing bisexuality, and managing queer imposter syndrome.

Can you tell our readers about your engagement with Antler?

I joined Antler London in the middle of the second lockdown, and it was a wonderful hybrid working experience. Antler's undeniable skill is bringing together a powerful community of founders that exist and support each other outside of the fixed residency programmes.

The startup journey is challenging, and the teams formed at Antler support each other through the ups and downs. I love the team at Antler and I've even spoken to many founders globally in the other Antler hubs.

Tell us about the working culture at Kalda?

We bring together three core values; curiosity, inclusivity, and transparency.

These values shape the way we think, act, and speak. Ultimately, we have to follow our curiosity to get things done and be kind to each other, and transparency allows us to operate independently.

What has been your biggest challenge

so far and how have you overcome this?

We're constantly evolving our product and refining our understanding of what works.

Previously we didn't have a way of measuring the impact of what we were doing and we solved that by applying our knowledge in the clinical trial space. This meant that we could test our products and now know that they lead to 65% reductions in anxiety and depression. This and further trials continue to boost our confidence in building a health product.

What's in store for the future?

We're going to launch more courses and programmes very soon on over 200 topics!

How has the cost of living crisis and the tech downturn impacted your experience building Kalda?

We're really proud at Kalda to be resourceful and lean with our spending, but time has become more expensive, which does have the potential to impact our running costs. It's made us operationally strict about where we should spend our money.

What barriers have you faced in realising your entrepreneurial ambitions? How can we make entrepreneurship more accessible in the UK?

Access to funding and access to networks. I had a small network before Antler, and with networks come opportunities for funding. Antler is a fantastic network that has opened up so many opportunities to me realising my entrepreneurial dreams.

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

Be aware of focusing on illusions and keep your head out of the sand.

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

I'm focused on a stricter bed time, and a natural wake up. I'm leaning into managing my energy over my time.

I'm also training for a marathon, raising money for Lung Cancer, in memory of my father, who recently passed away. Any donations would be very welcome.

Daniel Botcherby is Co-Founder of Kalda.

Antler is one of the world's most active early-stage investors. With 900 portfolio companies in 27 countries, they have a global community of early-stage founders addressing the world's biggest challenges.

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