

Meet Love not War, the startup helping people to orgasm with a clean conscience

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Will Ranscombe, CEO and cofounder of Love Not War about having sustainability as a core pillar of the business model from day one, listening to consumers and the complexities of advertising a sextech brand.

Behind the scenes, the *Love Not War* team have a lot of collective experience in the sextech industry. We know how to design luxurious products, how to get them made and how to market them.

And with that, our experience actually led us to witness first hand all of the industry areas where sustainable practices just weren't a priority.

Sure, there are a handful of independent makers and a few designers who only work with renewable materials. And there are also some of the larger manufacturers that make claims about being vegan, some of them might occasionally go as far as offering a limited run of a particular eco-friendly product from their range and while those are all good steps, we could see that no one, especially with the ability and experience we have had, was making the decision to build their business entirely around sustainability, right from the

start.

Sex toy customers are savvier and are better educated than ever. They talk more openly about their pleasure, and their desires and if you're paying attention, there is a quickly rising tide of demand for more planet-friendly pleasure products, without the usual compromises on quality and luxury.

We knew how to do that. We knew how to make sustainability sexy and that's what led to creation of Love Not War.

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

Love Not War is a sustainable luxury sex toy brand. We design and manufacture all our products using as much recycled material as possible, all within our own custom built, green powered factory. We have a couple of private investors, a small full-time core team, and then equity is shared by a number of people all of whom work to support the growth of the business.

Despite our own personal experience, Love Not War is still very much a startup. That means the daily work is relatively decentralized, and the wider team comes together when an opportunity or a campaign emerges.

Everything is in-house. We do our own manufacturing and logistics, our graphic design and creative work is done by us, as is our PR and marketing, which is driving much of our growth. We're in that unusual space where we have the infrastructure to support scaling up but we can still pull in favours and rely on personal connections to get things like creative work done for less than the market rate, or for free. It helps that our ethos really resonates with people – people want to be involved.

The aim of Love Not War is simple: to encourage people to orgasm with a clean conscience. It's much easier to fully enjoy your body when you know that the impact your pleasure is having is small. Indirectly, a sustainable orgasm is a more pleasurable one.

How has the business evolved since its

launch? When was this?

We first launched in 2021 via a partnership with Lovehoney with six core products. We'd learned from experience that it's better to arrive in the market with a range of products rather than a single one.

Since then, we've been listening to consumers, developing and releasing new products into our range, which now sports nine products in total. We feel like this is a healthy rate for us. We take a rather laissez-faire approach to development: it's done when it's done, and if that takes two months or two years, so be it.

Tell us about the working culture at Love Not War

The work is largely remote and decentralized. We work across a number of timezones, and work with partners all over Europe. Our recent 'Break Up With Your Showerhead' campaign is a great example of our 'Pleasure Without Borders' approach. The idea was conceived in England, filmed in Italy with a Director from Argentina, and the PR and Marketing handled from Munich and Berlin with technical support in Paris.

This kind of drop-in, drop-out process of decentralized work is the future, and very much reflects the spirit that is right at the centre of Love Not War. Forward thinking, adaptable, responsive.

If the global team is not united by geography, we are united by purpose. Everyone who works with Love Not War truly wants to be working with us, and it's very easy for a brand with sustainability at its heart to find allies and advocates.

How are you funded?

We have private investors, as well as equity holders. As most startups are, we're always happy to hear from other investors who might like to contribute to a truly good cause in the name of pleasure.

What has been your biggest challenge

so far and how have you overcome this?

Advertising is always hard in the pleasure industry because no big platforms willingly carry our messaging. We've been making inroads on Meta, and they even carried some safe-for-work versions of our recent 'Break Up With Your Showerhead' campaign, but that being said, it does feel tenuous, they could change their minds at any moment. Mostly, we rely on the power of PR to help spread our messaging and build our reputation.

That being said, the obstacles to marketing that we're facing are actually a good problem to have. They force us to be creative, to think in unconventional ways. We have no choice but to be category disruptors.

How does Love Not War answer an unmet need?

The need is to prove there is a demand for socially-conscious sex toys, and then to fulfill that demand.

The way we're doing that is through the fact that sustainability was a core pillar of our business model from the very start. Our metal components are made from recycled aluminium, and they're designed modularly so that a single rechargeable battery is interchangeable with all of the heads in our range meaning that the user essentially has multiple toys in one.

The business is growing fast, so we must be doing something right...

What's in store for the future?

Listening to the consumer, research and development is the key to our growth and we plan to continue spending our time looking at ways to refine the current processes we have in place and trimming out any wastefulness where we find it. But we're also researching any new and emerging materials to see what we can use that continues to lower our footprint even further.

We're looking at simplifying our offering by reducing product variations, and using the resources that will free up to develop new designs. Watch this space.

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

Be realistic. In the startup space, there's a lot of dreamsellers who make their living by pressuring smaller businesses into having outrageously ambitious goals. They make you feel like if you're not generating millions in your first year, you're a failure. And if you do meet your goals, you'll be told that your goals weren't big enough to begin with. It's all noise, and it's exhausting.

Be ambitious, certainly, but set yourself realistic, and realisable goals.

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

Good food, good company, good sex toys. That's about it. I just make sure I build downtime into my day, spend time with my family as much as possible and get some fresh air. Beyond that, I don't need much.

Will Ranscombe is CEO and Cofounder of *Love Not War*.