

Strategy, design, and technology to accelerate early-stage businesses, a profile of Justified Studio

With #QVCS, Maddyness profiles different funds to give founders and entrepreneurs the information they need to choose the right investor. Today we interview Will Whiting, cofounder and Design Director of Justified Studio

Justified Studio, the creative agency, started with a creative engagement with the United Nations. Four years ago, myself and my cofounders were tasked with solving an ongoing challenge the UN was facing: attracting a more diverse audience to their work and the values it represented.

As we collaborated closely with a working group of the United Nations, this first brief helped us fully realise our core skill-set of strategy, design and technology, and showed us the impact these disciplines can have to an organisation of this scale. It then became clear that these same fundamentals could help supercharge other businesses and organisations.

We then started working with all sorts of purpose-led, innovative businesses we knew could be positively impacted or accelerated by creativity – from global organisations to early stage startups and VCs. Essentially, anyone who shares our values – we're passionate about working with founders and businesses who

are committed to telling their stories; heroing the authenticity behind their brand, product, and mission.

More recently, our expertise working within the startup ecosystem led us to launch Justified Ventures, an initiative to accelerate the growth of early-stage businesses with our specialty: strategy, design, and technology.

Which industries are you focusing on today?

Currently, we have two business arms operating. On one side, there's Justified Studio, our industry agnostic, creative studio where we work with many global organisations such as Google, the United Nations and FIFA.

On the other side there's *Justified Ventures*, which has been specifically designed to accelerate the growth of purpose-led or disruptive tech businesses and startups, providing them access to our studio's extensive network of partners. Our work for startups and VCs spans across a wide range of industries – from fintech to agrotech – and includes work with businesses like MoonPay, Cleo, The-Dots, FINDS, Holi and KROO, to name a few.

When you meet a founder – what do you look for?

Clearly, the founder and the team behind a business are incredibly important, but at Justified Ventures, we really focus on understanding what the idea is, its fit in the market, and how we can utilise our creative services to stick a flag in the ground and disrupt the preconceived ideologies that particular sector may have – how can we shake things up.

Ultimately, what really triggers us is exploring the intersection between the founder, a business idea, the market, and its potential for impact

Can you talk about your current investment portfolio?

Justified Ventures also invests in early stage start-ups and exciting founders at the beginning of their journeys. We focus on purpose-led businesses with a tech component and at a specific stage of their growth, with the eagerness to be led and driven by creativity.

This mindset has given us the opportunity to invest in lots of different industries and businesses, from the alternative art world with XVERESO, to live-streaming fashion marketplaces with FINDS.

What does the future look like?

The recent developments in AI and automation are just fascinating. No one can really quantify how these technologies are going to end up looking, or how much it will change people's daily lives and jobs across the globe.

We're privileged to be working with some incredibly creative technologists at the moment - who specialise in AI and automation. Truth is, we're always trying to explore and bring new disruptors into Justified's world because, ultimately, new technologies trigger business growth and create revolutionary outputs.

It's such a captivating time to be working in this ecosystem, with all this massive change in technology happening. Thankfully, we're really well-placed to tap into this booming industry, and we're excited to work with founders determined to change the world.

What makes Justified Studio different from other creative studios?

Our extensive experience working with startups and VCs has given us a really competitive advantage. Similarly, the cross industry portfolio we've built over the years creates really interesting outcomes that make us special in this space.

For example, we can take learnings from working with a company like Google or FIFA, and embed that in creative ways into the work we do with the United Nations - or startups. And vice versa.

As a business, we're led by strategy, design and technology, and we're privileged to take on some really big projects and solve massive challenges across multiple industries. As such, these learnings give us a unique perspective on other business challenges.

I'd say I'm super excited by the work coming out of Justified right now and the impact we can make across multiple sectors.

What one piece of advice would you give founders?

I would say that a good idea is just the beginning. The hustle that goes into it is of equal importance. Separately, building a dream team made up of members with complimentary skills is paramount.

For me, personally, being a good creative is simply not enough. To have a real impact in this ecosystem, you need to be smart about how you surround yourself. I could never be a 'solo' founder, which is why I consider myself lucky for having two other co-founders Josh and Luke to tackle the big challenges we face every day.

So, get an amazing idea, prepare yourself for the hustle, and build a team around you. And, hopefully, your team members will be smarter than you.

Will Whiting is cofounder and Design Director of *Justified Studio*.

Article by WILL WHITING