

Cano Water, a better way to drink water

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Josh White, co-founder and Global Brand Director of Cano Water about the war on single-use plastic, celebrity endorsement and overcoming the difficulty of combining sustainability and convenience.

Temps de lecture : minute

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In 2015, on a trip to Thailand, a couple of my friends and I were struck by the sheer volume of plastic polluting what should have been some of the most beautiful beaches we'd ever seen. Then we realised that many of the plastic bottles in the mess of rubbish were brands that we recognised – and loved – from home, and we knew that someone in the UK had to present a consumer-friendly alternative to these single-use plastic brands that far too commonly end up in landfill or littering a beautiful beach.

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

We were the first business to ever put water in a can, using aluminium as a solution to reduce single-use plastics by confronting the bottled water industry head-on. Our goal is to be the go-to convenient and sustainable water option for people on the move, and in doing so influence consumer buying behaviour away from plastic bottles.

We are proud to be stocked at some incredible businesses such as Tesco,

Ocado, and Virgin Atlantic, as well as landmarks like London Zoo and Buckingham Palace. We're also lucky to have been seen with some amazing celebrities in the UK, from Harry Styles to Dua Lipa, Ed Sheeran and more, so we've achieved great brand recognition and reach through these appearances.

One of our proudest moments as a business was getting stocked by Selfridge's only six months after we launched in 2016, and that was a huge driver of recognition, too - we went from being a trendy product to one that people actually remember and regularly buy from.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

When we launched *Cano Water* in 2015, we were all working full-time jobs and spending our evenings working on building the business with our own spare time and money. Now, it has grown into a multi-million-pound business tackling big plastic, and we've sold over 50 million cans through our retailers at Selfridge's, Tesco, Waitrose and more. It really feels like we're making a difference in the UK's plastic consumption and use - but we still want to do more! Watch this space...

Tell us about the working culture at Cano Water?

Cano Water embodies a vibrant startup culture, where socialising among coworkers is prioritised to drive business growth. With a "Don't Bottle It" attitude, the company encourages openness and transparency, while embracing creativity throughout the organisation. This approach cultivates an environment where team members feel empowered to think outside the box, innovate, and collaborate effectively. Cano Water's working culture reflects a commitment to agility, innovation, and

teamwork, contributing to its dynamic and successful trajectory in the market.

How are you funded?

Cano Water started as a self-funded business project, bankrolled by our jobs and hobbies that we pursued on the side. We were then able to raise money through a group of angel investors who really took a chance on us and believed in what we were building, and that helped us get off the ground. We now have a number of really exciting celebrity investors including Ricky Gervais, who has been an incredible support for Cano Water and our mission to help the UK become a more sustainable country overall.

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

Our biggest challenge has been exceeding other people's expectations of us. We were told 'no' countless times during our journey towards starting Cano Water, based on things like our age, background, and knowledge - but we made it our mission to educate ourselves and be armed with so much information that no one could say we didn't have what it takes to start a successful business and make an impact on the world.

We spearheaded a category that didn't exist when we launched. And we were going up against all of the big plastic water bottle players, too - no one understood the need for what we were building, and we were the underdog that no one wanted or expected to win. We used that challenge to drive us forward and prove the nay-sayers wrong.

How does Cano Water answer an unmet need?

We knew from the beginning that sustainability and convenience can be difficult to combine. This is how plastic water bottles have remained so dominant in the drinks space – their grab-and-go ease and the reliability of being able to find one anywhere. So, when we launched Cano Water, we set out to bridge that gap and offer a reliable, convenient water option that doesn't compromise the planet.

What's in store for the future?

Exciting times lie ahead for Cano Water! We've just dipped our toes into the US market with a soft launch in California, gearing up for some serious growth. Our disruptive marketing tactics are turning heads, spreading the word about Cano far and wide. Plus, we're thrilled to announce our plans to shift production to the UK, slashing our carbon footprint and boosting our sustainability credentials. Keep your eyes peeled for Cano Water at loads of events across the UK and popping up in LA – we're everywhere you want to be!

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

No idea is too big or small – and it doesn't matter where you come from when you start building a business. We were just three boys from Northwest London who happened upon something that we didn't necessarily know much about, but with our passion for entrepreneurship and the important topic we wanted to tackle, we were able to educate ourselves quickly and offer a one-of-a-kind product that consumers needed to see on the market. Whatever you're passionate about can become a successful business with the right amount of drive.

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

My daily routine is all about finding balance and growth while admitting I'm not perfect, but giving it my all. I kickstart my mornings with things like a walk, music, or going to the gym to get an early dopamine hit. If I don't do this, I can definitely notice! Using my Whoop tracker, I keep an eye on my sleep patterns to improve recovery, which is super important for me and helps me track progress and knowing when to rest to restrict burn-out.

Breakfast is usually eggs and porridge to keep me going. Work starts with a coffee-fuelled brainstorm before diving into meetings with the team to spark creativity. Lunch is normally chicken and veggies, always! After work I go to the gym and spend the evening with family/friends or getting inspired through what's going on in the world and I make sure to catch quality Z's at night to gear up for tomorrow's challenges.

Josh White, co-founder and Global Brand Director of Cano Water

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