

Meet Kaido, the startup inspiring teams to come together through their culture

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Rich Westman, founder of Kaido, a company that creates inclusive shared experiences for businesses that support employee wellbeing, build meaningful connections between teams and empower employees to build their great place to work together.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What is Kaido's unique offering?

We help hybrid and remote companies create a great working environment by providing the tools they need to develop culture from within. With our combined offering of Challenges, Experiences and Culture Champion training, the Kaido Platform facilitates activities to improve company culture and keep teams happy, healthy and connected all year-round, as opposed to one-off wellbeing activities or team away days.

Our services are tailored to meet businesses' needs, enabling intentional interactions that foster meaningful, lasting connections and relationships. There is something on offer to suit everyone, from green initiatives to sleep challenges - allowing employees to interact organically and feel safe and accepted. By bringing together teams in this way, we create shared context and a sense of psychological safety, ultimately building a better company culture.

How has COVID-19 affected Kaido as a business?

When we first launched, our Challenges were only available to NHS Trusts and Public Sector organisations and in 2019 as an 'Enterprise only' offering, for large businesses looking for a more inclusive and accessible alternative to the more traditional company-wide steps/physical activity challenges.

When the pandemic came along and forced teams into remote working, it left every business regardless of size, facing a disconnect. We were able to offer our Challenges as a solution to this, helping to keep teams connected and talking - something all businesses needed and continue to need.

This created increased demand across both the SME market segment and with enterprise customers and led to 420% growth in sales and a renewed vision to create a SaaS product to help businesses develop their company culture intentionally for the 'future of work'.

What does Kaido help teams achieve?

Prior to COVID-19, so much of a company's culture was created via in-person touchpoints - in-office meetings, water cooler conversations and after-work drinks. The absence of these in-person interactions in a 'hybrid' working world has left employees feeling disconnected from their colleagues and like they don't belong.

Kaido exists to bring back those meaningful moments between teams. From companywide Challenges that get teams talking, moving and motivated, to ongoing team Experiences that help smaller teams to connect meaningfully through creativity, conversation and collaboration.

Our feedback has shown that participants have become more motivated, experienced an improvement in team communication and even seen a boost in team morale as a result of the Shared Experiences.. 76 per cent of participants reported an improvement in team interactions, as well as 88 per cent, who noticed an improvement in their health and wellbeing.

What are the common problems faced in the workplace and how does Kaido help combat them?

One of the biggest problems our clients face is a disconnect between their teams. While hybrid working has become the norm and been universally accepted, it has led to a divide emerging amongst teams, with recent reports from Slack and Microsoft showing a loss of belonging and connection between colleagues. The move to hybrid meant we lost many of the in-person moments that we relied on to build teams and culture, and this loss has naturally impacted people's loyalty to a company as we see a shift in people valuing relationships and a sense of belonging above anything else in a job.

At Kaido, we help breathe new life into a company's culture and create inclusive shared experiences that support employee wellbeing and build meaningful connections between teams to ultimately restore people's social capital in a business and create happier, healthier places to work.

How important is company culture and what is your top tip to getting it right?

There needs to be a healthy balance when it comes to creating a fun, inclusive team culture. Company culture is invaluable to improving employee engagement and productivity as well as retaining employees. Typically, businesses have focused on introducing perks and benefits such

as gym memberships, private health insurance, away days and weekly company breakfast mornings, however, these alone are not effective in restoring connections. To create a truly inclusive, happy environment, companies need to be more intentional in how they keep people connected by embracing meaningful shared experiences. To do so, companies need to be encouraging interactions between everyone - especially in a hybrid world - and making sure their workplace strategy is set up to include everyone, not just those in the office. The social aspect of company culture is something to be nurtured and can truly thrive with the right opportunities. My top tip would be to make building social capital your top priority. Be both creative and intentional about bringing your people together no matter where they are, and create meaningful Shared Experiences that encourage both virtual (online) and real (offline) interactions.

In what way do you think employee engagement has changed over the last year?

There is ongoing conversation around 'The Great Resignation' due to employee dissatisfaction throughout the pandemic and as a result, people's attitudes towards work and what they want to gain from their job are changing. It is the responsibility of management to introduce work methods and policies that encourage emotional connections between employees and their workplaces and encourage them to remain committed for the long run.

The past year has highlighted how important intentional interactions in the workplace are and businesses who continue to put employees first, and put human connection at the heart of their employee engagement strategy, will ultimately have teams who are happier, feel supported and therefore feel connected to the company's purpose, mission and values.

What does the future hold for Kaido?

Kaido has ambitious plans to become a market leading culture as a service platform, supporting businesses and their people to *build great places to work together*. Over the next two years, we want to recruit and train 100,000 Culture Champions across our client businesses who are empowered to create a company culture that they are proud to be part of. To achieve this we will be looking to close a Series A funding round at the end of 2022 to help further accelerate our scaling journey. This round will be between £3M and £5M depending on traction and progress.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned so far as a startup founder?

Money can feel like the primary goal and the biggest challenge when you first start out in business, but if you put your time into building a passionate and driven team, dedicated to the company's mission and customer needs, investment will follow. I have learnt that it is important to make mistakes in order to grow - and a mistake is only a mistake if you make it twice. As you evolve with your business, you will no longer be learning through trial and error, but become more experienced in knowing how to solve the problems that matter most.

Rich Westman is the founder of *Kaido*