

Asking the questions: Maddyness UK. Our top ten Quick Fire Questions from 2022

Over the past year we've had the pleasure of profiling a huge array of UK-founded startups at different stages of their journeys for our QFQ series. Whilst each startup is tackling a different issue - from urban mobility to female urinals or sustainable packaging - they are united in their resolve to challenge system justification, disrupting our sense of the possible. Below, we've chosen ten of our favourite QFQ articles from 2022.

Temps de lecture : minute

27 December 2022

1. Notpla.

We spoke to Pierre Yves-Paslier, cofounder at Notpla, about the sustainable offering of seaweed, juggling team growth and scaling up a business, and the problem with common-use packaging. That was back in March: earlier this month, Notpla won the Earthshot Prize in the category of 'Build a Waste-Free World'.

What is Notpla?

Notpla is a sustainable packaging company based in London that is pioneering the use of seaweed as an alternative to single-use plastic. The startup is addressing both the environmental and health implications of single-use plastic pollution by using only natural materials like seaweed that can biodegrade in nature in four to six weeks.

2. Novus

In September, we spoke to Shruti Rai, cofounder and chief growth officer at Novus, about the power of people to transform the world, growing a remote team and building a super app for the conscious consumer.

Tell me about the business.

Novus offers our customers four important features, including:

- *Impact banking* – Novus makes it easy to look after your money and the planet. Using the Novus card, every time you make a purchase, Novus pays a portion of its revenue from that transaction automatically to the cause of your choice. Novus members know they generate positive impact with every payment they make and feel good about their money not being used to fund dirty industries, as many banks still do.
- *Ten different impact partners*– Novus shares its revenue from each transaction you make with your choice from its 10 different NGOs, each working to solve some of the world’s biggest challenges across the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.
- *Track and offset your carbon footprint* – Novus automatically calculates and shows you the impact of each of your transactions right there on your phone, and gives you the opportunity to offset this impact easily by investing in one of its range of carbon neutralising projects.

3. Proportunity

Right at the beginning of the year, we spoke to Vadim Toader, cofounder of Proportunity, a mortgage lender that allows homebuyers to purchase a property with only a 5% deposit.

What is Proportunity?

Proportunity is a neolender that enables buyers to afford homes with only a 5% deposit, reducing the amount they need in savings. The Proportunity equity loan of up to £150,000 – or 25% of the house price – sits on top of the maximum mortgage that can be secured from a mainstream lender, enabling a buyer to borrow up to six times their income level. This additional financial leverage closes the significant gap between what many UK borrowers can secure from a mortgage and the cost of a home they wish to purchase.

[Read our Proportunity QFQ here](#)

4. Solivus

In March we spoke to Jo Parker-Swift, CEO at Solivus about decarbonisation, securing your energy supply whatever the scale of your needs and making partnerships to drive business forward.

What was the catalyst for launching Solivus?

I wanted a secure green energy supply for my home – but did not want ugly solar panels on the roof. This meant something in the garden, and the question in my head was how can I create something that looks good and can generate energy in small space? The initial idea was a solar tree

and over time this has become the Solivus Arc.

[Read our Solivus QFQ here](#)

5. Tenzing

Now a household name, it was great to speak to Huib Van Bockel, founder and CEO of TENZING about the story behind the can we see on the shelves. Huib told us about his choice to make a positive impact, climbing Everest, the power of nature and plans for a TENZING festival in the future.

Tell me about the business

At TENZING we exist to inspire people to drink, experience, and protect the power of nature. It's why we create plant-based energy drinks that are big on energy and low on impact. From being carbon negative, to cleaning up Everest, we take action to protect our planet. Because we believe that nothing beats the thrill of climbing clean mountains, surfing pristine oceans and running through fresh air.

Our all-natural blends provide a low-calorie triple hit of natural caffeine, vitamin C and electrolytes containing about 60% less sugar than other major energy drinks. A big part of our purpose is offering people a low calorie alternative that is free from artificial ingredients but doesn't compromise on taste.

[Read our Tenzing QFQ here](#)

6. Really Clever

(Clue's in the name here) we spoke to Patrick Pinto, co-founder of Really Clever, about creating leather from fungi, assessing consumer behaviour, and working with infant technologies.

What was the catalyst for launching Really Clever?

...we understood that the final frontier of displacing/reducing the reliance on animal derived products was going to be the skin. Working back from the customer, it was evident that the precursor of change is mass adoption. For this to occur we had to create a product that not only was truly sustainable, but one that could be made with comparable sensory and performance elements that consumers are accustomed to, could scale aggressively to meet customer demand, and most importantly a price that could include every person at every level of affordability.

I believe that most people genuinely want to make a positive impact on our planet, but the main barrier is affordability and access. After a lot of research, we learnt that bovine leather has the highest environmental impact of any fabric - but to date, plant-based alternatives have been very expensive and inaccessible to most people. That was the catalyst for *Really Clever* - we wanted to make truly sustainable biomaterial that could be a substitute for leather and accessible to anyone.

[Read our Really Clever Q&A here](#)

7. Peequal

Back in February, we spoke to Amber Probyn and Hazel McShane, about their ambitions for the startup, their recent successful funding round, and

their quest to halve women's toilet queues at big events.

What is PEEQUAL's origin story?

We started PEEQUAL because we were sick and tired of waiting in female toilet queues at events. When there was an opportunity to explore a real world problem in our Masters year, we knew that this was a problem worth tackling. To solve this problem, we created PEEQUAL, the UK's first standalone, touch-free women's urinal that halves the queues for the women's toilets.

To use PEEQUAL, the user steps up into the structure and squats over what we call the pedestal. This is a comfortable and hygienic bowl shape, created to prevent splash back. It is much like 'wild peeing' outside, but is ultra-quick, safe and clean. We hope to provide facilities for women at events across the UK before going international, because we value women's time and believe that women should have that time back.

[Read our Peequal QFQ here](#)

8. Beta Bugs

As part of our series with Innovate UK KTN, we spoke to Thomas Farrugia, founder of Beta Bugs. We are introducing several of the 13 'startups of the future' chosen by Innovate UK KTN to take part in its three-month sustainability accelerator programme. Working with Innovate UK KTN, Growth Studio and their ecosystems, these startups will prepare to raise external capital.

Tell me about your business

Beta Bugs is an insect genetics company that provides insect farmers with high-performance Black Soldier Fly breeds, enabling them to increase their yields. We have a breeding programme which selectively breeds Black Soldier Fly for increased performance, creating our product HiPer-Fly® (high-performance fly) and an egg production facility, The Multiplier, that supplies insect farmers, our customers, with the eggs to hatch into larvae.

The farmers grow the larvae on food waste to produce a local, sustainable and high-quality protein source for the animal feed sector. Recent world events such as the War in Ukraine really show we need this kind of protein, since it makes the agri-food supply chain more resilient.

[Read our Beta Bugs QFQ here](#)

9. Chattermill

In the Spring, we spoke to Mikhail Dubov, CEO of Chattermill, about working with not-so-small businesses including Deliveroo, Wise, Uber and HelloFresh and harnessing data to drive the future of unified customer intelligence. More recently, they've just raised over £23M in their latest funding round.

How does your business address an unmet need?

Pretty much every consumer brand that has become successful over the last 20 years did so by building a great customer experience. Amazon, Asos, Deliveroo and Wise all harnessed CX as their main growth driver. But at the moment, companies don't have the tools, frameworks or intelligence to holistically analyse and improve their CX.

As a result, a lot of opportunities are delayed or even wasted. Chattermill

helps companies close this gap and embed CX into daily decision making.

[Read our Chattermill QFQ here](#)

10. Trilvee

Recently, we spoke to Michael Mangion, CEO of Trilvee about right-sizing vehicles, moving from A to B cleaner, faster, and cheaper and building a shared participation model. We also attended their demo day earlier this month, where we were driven in the remotely controlled ('teleoperated') vehicle in central London...

Tell me about the business

Trilvee is developing a platform to enable customers to move from A to B cleaner, faster, and cheaper. This will be achieved by allowing customers to hail on demand, the right vehicle for each trip which is then delivered to them 'driverless' using teleoperation.

For most urban trips, the right vehicle is a 1-2 seat lightweight EV that can get through traffic and uses much less energy than a regular car, but when a customer does need a full-size car or even van then that is what is delivered. In this way we can maximise the versatility of the service while optimising for speed, efficiency, and comfort.

[Read our Trilvee QFQ here](#)

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