

Meet SKOOT, the B-Corp providing frictionless solutions to counter carbon emissions

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Greg Gormley and Mark Stringer, cofounders of SKOOT about peer to peer social mobility, Net Zero targets, and the importance of visualising tangible impacts.

Temps de lecture : minute

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In 2018, Greg had a life-altering moment following a near-fatal motorbike accident which led to a period of forced convalescence. During his stay in hospital, Greg vowed to create something with purpose and a mission. Given his extensive experience in tech, and having previously co-founded a business which achieved a remarkable valuation of £100M, Greg devoted months to researching an idea he had around a peer to peer social mobility and reconnected with Mark whom he previously worked with. The pair embarked on a journey together and in 2019 created the world's first and only carbon-negative lift sharing app planting trees for every ride, aiming to reduce congestion and pollution and assist in the mobility of the masses through sharing journeys in real time.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

Due to the pandemic, SKOOT evolved from its offering of pure ride-sharing to include Errands for people self-isolating and is now an award winning climate change platform. Helping both businesses and individuals

identify, offset and avoid their carbon footprint. We've now planted over 800,000 trees, countered over 4,000 tonnes of CO2 thanks to our growing community.

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

SKOOT empowers brands and individuals to mitigate their impact on the environment through frictionless in the moment technology solutions to create a cleaner and greener world.

It is a platform that helps businesses, individuals and communities achieve their Net Zero targets by enabling them to identify, offset and avoid their carbon footprint, but is focussed on small actions to create a huge impact.

At the heart of our mission is a commitment to rebuild eco-systems. This includes responsible tree planting, tree conservation and ocean plastic removal. We work with world renowned NGO's to help deliver the UN's Social Development Goals.

SKOOT uses its technology systems to help knit together businesses, both with their communities and its own sustainability ecosystem, not only to create a positive impact on the planet, but to easily enable a business to showcase the good that it's doing.

We are committed to helping businesses across a broad spectrum of industries, but we have a particular focus on the hospitality sector, which contributes 20% of all annual carbon emissions. We are acutely aware of the challenges faced by the hospitality sector, due to the cost of living crisis and amidst the covid recovery.

SKOOT's Eco-Contribution is a straightforward yet powerful concept. For each cover or bill, trees are planted to counterbalance the carbon emissions associated with dining out, to make an instant impact each tree is "buddied" with a renewable climate project to remove 6kg of CO2 per diner with the potential for the tree to sequester anything up to 1 tonne of CO2 during its lifetime.

The Eco-Contribution not only helps to minimise carbon emissions but also empowers businesses to demonstrate their commitment to a positive climate impact and sustainable practices. SKOOT can sit across any till system so we can work within any venue, but for ease is now being fully integrated with the various hospitality POS systems. The first full integration is with the Oracle Symphony and Micros system, which enables the venue to switch on SKOOT remotely making for a seamless experience. Best of all, there is no cost to the hospitality businesses.

Tell us about the working culture at SKOOT

As a top 5% B-Corp, SKOOT officially meets the highest standard of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency - including as an employer, but more importantly we try and make the incredibly serious topic relatable for staff and customers.

We were ahead of the game when it came to remote working, having all worked remotely since day one. We really see the value in working where you feel most comfortable. Being remote enables us to hire the best talent from around the world whilst maintaining a great work-life balance. All while helping keep carbon emissions to a minimum.

We don't just enable businesses and individuals to offset their carbon, we also ensure all of our colleagues' carbon output is negative through tree planting and funding carbon projects.

How are you funded?

SKOOT has raised over £5M in funding to date, including investment from the Low Carbon Innovation Fund (LCIF2). The most recent investment formed part of a capital raising round of over £1M, which will support the business up to a planned institutional Series A in the next 12 months.

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

Launching during the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge. Whilst the shift away from ride-sharing was a tough decision to make, we've been able to harness the technology we developed at the very beginning to create a wider platform. That difficult but integral shift away from mobility has provided us with the foundations which has ultimately become a much wider mission to identify, offset and avoid the carbon footprint of businesses, individuals, visitors, fans, diners and guests.

Education and awareness of the benefits and role of countering one's carbon emissions is a crucial yet challenging element of our overall mission. Carbon offsetting when done correctly needs to be embraced, if we are to reverse climate change.

SKOOT's approach is that we all need to take more responsibility for how we behave and the choices we make and tackling climate change is a shared responsibility, and we're focused on helping people relate to carbon emissions like they do for food calories.

Carbon offsetting is a key part of a comprehensive sustainability strategy, and reduction alone will not help in reaching Net Zero in time. We work closely with our clients to provide information about the role of offsets, the importance of emission reductions, and the need for a holistic sustainability approach. By fostering understanding and promoting

responsible offsetting practices, we aim to ensure that our clients make informed decisions and take genuine action to reduce their carbon footprint.

As important as removing your carbon footprint is, it's fundamental that we also adjust our behaviour and make more sustainable choices. A good benchmark to aim for is to try and reduce your footprint by 3 tonnes to 6 tonnes per annum - even that is a very tough ask! An economy flight to Las Vegas from London alone is approximately 2.7 tonnes of CO2 - that is almost 4 months of your yearly carbon footprint in 1 flight!

How does SKOOT answer an unmet need?

We provide easy-to-use tools that make it simple for people and businesses to counter their carbon footprints. We all want to do the right thing when it comes to mitigating our carbon footprint and helping our planet, but often can't find the resources we need to get there. We're bombarded with information about us needing to do something to tackle climate change, but it remains difficult to track the small changes we make to create a big impact.

Our dashboards allow users to see the tangible impact they make, showcasing the good that an individual, business, consumer, fan, or guest is doing. By sharing this dashboard with others, we can encourage a ripple effect of positive change, as well as track customer loyalty and drive further engagement.

Our goal is to be the go-to climate platform for businesses and individuals alike and create a more sustainable planet for us all - there is no planet B, and we all need to do what we can to enact change. We celebrate all the small actions we can take to make a huge positive impact via affordable in-the-moment solutions.

What's in store for the future?

We look forward to expanding the broad spectrum of global sustainability projects we support. From tree planting, to removing plastic, conserving trees, and supporting renewable carbon projects, we work with world-renowned NGOs and companies committed to helping us all achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We already have our first clients in America and South Africa and are having really exciting conversations with global restaurant partners to be integrated internationally.

Events and festivals are a growing focus, due to our ability to integrate and add value to an experience, whether it's a fashion event, product launch or 200k people in a field.

It's inevitable that any event will release greenhouse gases, so it is crucial for organisers to look to reduce their footprint but also mitigate what's left. SKOOT already provides a variety of offerings in the events space for Agencies and helps across a broad spectrum of high profile brands, but we're always innovating to create tailored solutions.

Although our focus is B2B, we believe it's important we have a B2C offering for staff, which is our SKOOT Life product for carbon positive living,

The average carbon footprint per person in the UK is about 750kg CO₂ per person, per month. That's 9 tonnes every year! We're excited to grow our SKOOT Life offering, to offset the impact of individuals, families and employees through a subscription model. For as little as 31p per day you can remove your entire carbon footprint by planting certified trees and funding sustainable verified carbon projects from a mix of solutions hence reducing your climate impact.

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

[Greg] Being a founder is tough - it is never easy. But with the highs and lows you can see it through. The one quality you always have to possess is tenacity - never give up. You will be knocked down: get up, dust yourself off and go again!

[Mark] There's never a perfect time to launch a business, you just have to believe in your idea, your partner(s), yourself and the team you build around you.

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

[Greg] Get up early between 6.30 and 7.00 and off to exercise - which can range from a walk, run, spinning or just to the gym (need to take up yoga and pilates now as I'm starting to creak).

Have a cold shower every day. After a while your body expects it and you actually look forward to it. Honest.

Try not to constantly think of work (almost impossible when you run your own business).

Eat well and cut out processed foods! Trying to reduce my screen time, which I am monitoring.

My one rule which I always live by: be nice and treat people the way you would like them to treat you. Not so hard really!

[Mark] Get up early and get out and exercise as often as I can first thing in the morning and use it to get closer to nature.

Spend time with my family and friends to try and rebalance and get perspective every day, and use them to create a firebreak from work.

Try and find the fun in everything I do.

Put a hard stop on finishing work every day at a certain time. And force myself to go to bed at a certain time.

No phones, TV's or laptops in the room I sleep in.

Don't ever stop believing, if you don't have belief, who will.

Greg Gormley is the cofounder and CEO and Mark Stringer is the cofounder and CMO of SKOOT.

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