

Elysian Fields, helping founders secure an unfair advantage in the pursuit of growth

As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Martin Bailie, cofounder of Elysian Fields about provocative market positioning, lead-generation and the value of meaningful marketing.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Elysian Fields helps tech startup and scaleup founders create a marketing Unfair Advantage made up of 1) a provocative market positioning and 2) lead-generating marketing operations. When combined, this marketing Unfair Advantage helps clients differentiate from the competition and run their marketing campaigns effectively and efficiently from day one.

What was the catalyst for launching the product?

Over our 20 year careers in marketing, tech startups and investing we've seen how marketing is most often poorly organised, hugely people intensive, poor at process and consequently inefficiently managed.

On the supply side, there's 20k marketing agencies in the UK, 90k in the US. It's a highly fragmented cottage industry focused on selling the time of mid-level talent when clients want to buy senior agency talent. The services clients receive can be expensive and error-prone. So the agency model is ripe for disruption and productisation.

On the buy side, clients have changed, with technology led businesses increasingly the norm. These companies are led by great engineers alien to the jargon and inefficiencies of 'traditional' marketing practices. They don't act and think like the big consumer businesses of the past. They want a system that delivers sales, not workshops about social content or branding.

So we created one. We adopted product development and engineering thinking to create a marketing system (from strategy to creative to delivery) designed for the founders of Series A and beyond technology businesses. Our primary focus is B2B marketing as it is the most systems driven, while also being the least creative or effective as a whole.

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

The 'Unfair Advantage' marketing system delivers the two essential parts of marketing:

1. A truly insightful and distinctive positioning and marketing strategy
2. An engineered 'Growth Machine' to deliver and rapidly iterate the strategy and deliver leads.

While many businesses feel they have a strategy and marketing channels up and running, we know from our research that the vast majority of marketing is 'shallow'; it's most often category-generic and not built upon insights that buyers will respond to. Consequently it is forgettable and substantially less effective than it should be.

You need 4 core insights to create powerful marketing that cuts through a noisy market and delivers leads: they are

1. Clarity of your founding insight
2. A validated 'real problem' customers are seeking to solve
3. A 'real life' understanding of the alternatives they use to solve that problem
4. Your 'new thing' you've invented that solves the problem better than the alternatives.

Founding teams know these answers but it takes time to uncover the truths and insights that will resonate with buyers. So we've developed tools to get to these insights as quickly and painlessly as possible (it's not always easy!).

With these insights we can then assemble a Go To Market strategy and Growth Machine. We construct them out of 'building blocks', frameworks that contain our new thinking that snap together to create the marketing system and messaging at each stage of the buying journey.

This method creates huge efficiencies: clients can assemble their growth machine within days, and the system guarantees high quality content in market within a handful of weeks.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We've iterated the product with clients over three years. We now have a system that delivers strategy and execution quicker and more reliably than ever before. Clients invest a few hours into the process (versus the weeks or months demanded by the slow, highly bespoke methods used by traditional agencies). It's also 8x cheaper than London or New York agencies, but with the same (or better) strategic and delivery quality.

What is your favourite thing about being a founder?

We are entrepreneurs who want to provide an alternative to the expensive, bespoke approach of people-heavy agencies. So we love disrupting and helping our clients do the same. We're founders working with some of the best client founders in the world.

Which founders or businesses do you see as being the most inspirational?

I've worked on many Virgin brands. I greatly admire the central tenet - which is to add fun and innovation to a staid category. It's timeless and works for a huge range of categories. It's a model that (more often than not) inspires staff to do the best work of their careers as they seek to have fun and stand out. With a staff-first approach you create a culture that endures.

Which other figures in your life inspire you?

As cheesy as it sounds, my colleagues inspire me. When you've worked in many businesses and with many founders you lose patience with B level people. You seek those that excite you; those who are positive, open minded and productive versus those who just talk, or who find problems everywhere. So we've actively sought people for Elysian Fields who are fun to work with and have high levels of personal integrity: fountains, not drains. We've a no arseholes rule - and that applies to clients too.

What has been your biggest business failure?

Probably the most embarrassing was my first attempt at business. When the internet was very young I raised investment and created a CRM

software for the arts and charities market. Noble cause, shitty business model. But it got me into the digital agency sector and to my first exit.

What are the things you're really good at as a leader?

I like to think I keep all discussions open for counterintuitive ideas. I guess with age comes some humility, so the ego BS of your 20s is replaced with an understanding that answers need to be discovered, not dictated.

Which areas do you need to improve on?

Self promotion. I'd rather solve a client or product problem than post about myself. I love writing and capturing insights that are helpful for people, but I just struggle on social media. The irony is that this is marketing - so I've been finding ways to productise this process too!

What's in store for the future of the business?

I'm really excited with the strides we're making to simplify and productise every aspect of the marketing delivery process. Having felt the pains as a tech CMO and also on the marketing agency side I know the problem inside out. And I know the ways we can solve it. So I know the business will grow even more rapidly as we put the final pieces of the jigsaw in place.

What advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

Test, test, test. We didn't test enough in my tech startup, and it failed after 4 years. We've tested endlessly in Elysian Fields and we'll continue

to improve the core product. So my advice is that no one knows the answer and any answers that work will need to keep changing, so testing is the only way to survive.

And finally, a more personal question! We like to ask everyone we interview about their daily routine and the rules they live by. Is it up at 4am for yoga, or something a little more traditional?

After reading *The Miracle Morning* and studying yoga I've become a fan of meditation and exercise to start the day. Meditation in particular is the only way to help the brain filter all the information you process and to allow space for new ideas. Nothing beats a 30-40min meditation each day to help you mentally and emotionally flourish no matter what is occurring in your life.

Martin Bailie is the cofounder of *Elysian Fields*.

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