

Meet Housemates, the instant global student accommodation booking platform

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Lydia Jones, CEO of Housemates about digitalising the student booking journey, dealing with multiple stakeholders and the importance of focus.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What was the catalyst for launching Housemates?

Witnessing how long it was taking globally for students to reserve their rooms and spotting the opportunity to take the booking process online. There has been a lot of noise in the industry, and I wanted to create an end-to-end solution that delivered on its promise to digitalise the student booking journey. Our vision is to connect the student housing ecosystem and all its stakeholders.

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

At Housemates we are the instant book accommodation booking solution - students can book directly on our website or through our network partners we now power. We work with accommodation providers that are always businesses, including purpose-built student accommodation, HMO

Management, Airbnb Management and more. Now, through our API, we also work with property management systems and student platforms.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We officially launched in early 2022 and have grown significantly in the number of accommodation providers to over 1 million rooms; we have two global offices and have delivered millions in GMV to the sector. We have just launched the market's first accommodation booking API, now powering many other platforms in EdTech and more.

Tell us about the working culture at Housemates

Working at Housemates is a collaborative environment that has been built with a clear vision. We are changing a traditional sector that takes patience and grit - expectations are high because we have many stakeholders but this is an environment that both challenges and rewards people.

How are you funded?

High net worths have funded us to date, but we will raise our VC Series A round later next year from funds.

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

For instant booking to happen, two things need to work together - availability and payment. Some of our biggest challenges have been working with accommodation providers to capture payments and working

with their existing systems or, in some cases, no systems. I think initial naivety is great for founders who initially set out on the journey to rebuild something. I underestimated the initial challenges and fortunately after three years we finally have solid foundations in place with our partners.

How does Housemates answer an unmet need?

Housemates provides student consumers with the capacity to book their accommodation entirely online. For the businesses in our network, we help them gain access to high-intent student funnels at a low cost - circa 65% more cost-effective in comparison to the traditional ways of working.

What's in store for the future?

We will be the most embedded accommodation booking solution through our APIs - allowing hundreds of thousands of students to book their rooms seamlessly online through our infrastructure with the end goal of millions of students. That data through our APIs will provide us with the capacity to help businesses become more efficient, which has yet to be a thing in student housing regardless of the billions of yearly investment tech now has to lead.

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

Focus on one thing; it's easy to become distracted, but focusing on one point or existing solution and understanding how to build something 10x better will take time, but that's how change is created. The whole journey will take longer than anticipated, and no matter how many books you read, there will be times when you feel completely in the unknown - avoid distractions and be resilient.

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

My morning routine always starts with journaling and meditation; I have realised over the last few years that for clarity, it's important I workout and although some see that as pushing two extremes, it helps me operate. I used to say when I have achieved X, I will do this, but I realised you have to make time for yourself, or there will never be the right time. I have a combination of CrossFit, Olympic weight lifting, boxing and running within a week. Investing in myself makes me a better leader, and I enjoy pushing the boundaries.

Lydia Jones is the CEO of *Housemates*.

Article écrit par Lydia Jones