

Meet Urban, the app bringing a human touch to city life

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Charmain Manning, CEO of Urban, about spa and clinic treatments, geographical expansion and training opportunities

Temps de lecture : minute

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Jack Tang and Giles Williams founded Urban in 2014. They spotted a number of issues in the massage industry worth fixing: booking a treatment felt slow and clunky, massage quality was patchy, and therapists were getting a raw deal in-house, often earning as little as 20% of the booking fee.

So the duo envisioned an app to book mobile treatments with independent therapists on demand. It meant busy city-dwellers could enjoy at-home treatments, ready in as little as an hour, and therapists could find freedom, taking control of their schedules and earning more in the process.

Since then, Urban has rapidly expanded its operations to major cities across the UK and Europe, including London, Paris, Manchester, and Birmingham. We're proud of our achievements so far – 1.3 million treatments delivered, over 500,000 five-star reviews and an average rating of 4.9.

Tell us about the business

Urban is the UK's leading massage delivery app. It's the easy way to book spa and clinic treatments to your home, delivered by trusted, vetted

professionals.

Our mission is to bring a human touch to city life – literally, with treatments like massage – but also in the way we do business, ensuring fair compensation for therapists with rates that are higher than industry averages.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

Initially founded as Urban Massage in 2014, the company later rebranded to Urban in 2018 to accommodate a broader range of wellness services beyond massage, including osteopathy, physiotherapy and beauty.

In 2023 we launched a “platform-as-a-service” model, enabling high street wellness providers to offer mobile versions of their services using our tech. It means London users can now book Get A Drip’s vitamin IV drips and blood tests at home, with more services to come.

The company has grown its network of self-employed therapists to over 4,000 individuals. Urban has also adapted its business model to provide financial support for therapists in need and updated its pricing structure to offer one of the most competitive payout-per-treatment rates in the industry.

Tell us about the working culture at Urban

The working culture at Urban is dynamic and supportive, with innovation, flexibility, and empathy at the heart of our day-to-day decision making. With around 40 team members – some remote and some London-based – we’ve embraced a hybrid work environment post-pandemic.

The size of our team and the high retention rate of staff has allowed us to

cultivate a strong sense of trust and collaboration. It's made it easier to identify areas of growth and act on them quickly as a team, with a shared drive to make a difference to the lives of everyone who uses Urban.

How does Urban answer an unmet need?

Cities are alluring places, attracting motivated, ambitious people with the promise of a never-ending list of things to do and work opportunities.

The catch is that living in the city is also hard work. It can be difficult to find time for the things that energise you - whether that's having well-manicured nails or taking time out for a knot-busting massage.

Urban removes the barriers to putting your needs first with convenient treatments delivered by trusted professionals. There's no commute, no waiting rooms - and with same-day appointments available from 7am-11pm - no need to book months in advance. You're also able to choose who delivers your treatment by browsing individual bios and reading reviews.

What's in store for the future?

Now that Urban has built its reputation for mobile massage, beauty and physical therapy, our sights are set on expanding geographically and further diversifying our treatment offering.

Soon, users across the UK will be able to discover Urban in new settings, giving them even more flexibility over when and where they get their self-care fix.

We're embracing advances in technology to take our mobile beauty offering to the next level. Treatments that were once considered salon-only will soon be a reality at home.

We can't achieve our vision without continuing to invest in a platform – and a community – that empowers talented professionals to thrive. To that end, we're working closely with Urban pros to develop new features that give them maximum control over their businesses, while pushing standards ever higher with training opportunities.

What one piece of advice would you give other leaders/CEOs?

Surround yourself with good people, they are the key to business success and an enjoyable workplace.

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

My day often starts with the bounding enthusiasm of my large puppy on our morning walk. Even in the rain, this serves as a refreshing start to the day. I then normally return to the chaos of the school run, before I can settle into work mode with a coffee and try to limit it to a maximum of two in the day.

In between the meetings, emails and deadlines I make sure to take proper time for lunch to refuel. As the workday comes to a close, the focus shifts back to family and a chance to unwind and reflect on the day's events. I play netball socially once a week which helps with unwinding, as do my regular deep tissue massages at home.

Charmain Manning is the CEO of [Urban](#).

