

Find trusted local carers and helpers in your community with Gladys

Creating a startup is always challenging. Founding one during a tech downturn, cost of living crisis and recession seems near impossible. However, with risk comes reward and many of the world's most successful companies were founded during times of economic uncertainty. As part of a series with Antler, Maddyness has interviewed founders hoping to become the entrepreneurial success stories to emerge from this time of crisis. This week, Maddyness spoke to George Robinson, cofounder of Gladys.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What was the catalyst for launching Gladys?

I spent a decade working as a Barrister. Life was comfortable, but I was frustrated by systematic failures impacting the lives of vulnerable people and the slow pace of change. Looking after my elderly grandmother showed me similar dysfunction in the care sector.

I saw an opportunity to build a scalable business in the care space which could solve some of the biggest challenges facing the sector using technology and expert operational efficiency. Joining Antler gave me time and space to take on these thorny challenges one by one, resulting in Gladys's unique offering.

Can you share your elevator pitch?

60,000 people die every year without receiving necessary care. The shortage of 150k care staff is the root of the problem. Little wonder, given the terrible pay and working conditions in the care sector is known for. So, who is profiting from this £28B industry? Agencies.

Imagine if it was possible to use technology to put the power and tools used by agencies into the hands of individuals. Imagine finding local work that is flexible around your schedule and pays at least £16 per hour to support an older person in your community with the tasks you already do in your own home.

That is what Gladys does. 6 months since launch, Gladys already has a wait list for people wanting to work in care! We are making excellent returns whilst also saving older people 30% in care costs. All this whilst making care a desirable and well paid career. Gladys is making finding care work and local care support as easy as booking an Uber.

Gladys is your glamorous mother who no longer wants to struggle with dull domestic tasks. She wants to be empowered to get the most out of her life. Gladys's message of enablement, rather than decline, resonates with a lot of older people who are too often treated like a problem to be solved.

Can you tell our readers about your engagement with Antler?

Building a tech enabled startup was not something that I could have imagined doing a few years ago. Antler gave me a toolbox, a contact book and the support I needed to make the transition from lawyer to CEO. We all know how challenging it is for women in tech, particularly when it comes to fundraising. Antler have been real champions for Gladys and for

me as a female founder.

Tell us about the working culture at Gladys?

Dynamic, fast-paced and supportive. We have overseen thousands of hours of home care since we launched a few months ago. Running a revenue generating pilot whilst building technology & fundraising for our pre-seed has been full on. But, we are enormously proud of the positive impact that we have had so far, and the potential for Gladys's solution to create thousands of well-paid jobs whilst saving lives.

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

For me, it has been psychological. The urgency of the Gladys mission is enormous. Having to walk before we can run, with a lean budget, means that we have had to pack a punch with every bit of expenditure. I am also having to learn to manage impatience better. I can't say that I have mastered it yet.

What's in store for the future?

Testing, growth and meaningful impact are all in our sights.

How has the cost of living crisis and the tech downturn impacted your experience building Gladys?

The cost of living crisis has made people more interested in exploring Gladys. We are 30% cheaper than care agencies and this makes a huge difference for our clients and their families.

For Carers, being paid minimum wage is no longer an option. Because Carers and Helpers earn at least £16 per hour with Gladys, we are helping people at a time of real need.

It is also a great time for finding tech talent we're seeing more. In terms of fundraising, Gladys is a robust startup that has a great margin offering dependable returns. This may explain the volume of meetings we have been having so far.

What barriers have you faced in realising your entrepreneurial ambitions?

There are still very few female founders out there, and even fewer women working at VCs deploying capital, despite a lot of 'pink-washing'. There is still a preoccupation and stigma around women having families or juggling childcare responsibilities which does not seem to extend to men. These things can feel like barriers to entry. There remains a more general diversity problem.

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

I don't miss my career in law. But, the lack of stability and compromises that are necessitated by starting a business should not be underestimated. Find friends who 'get it' and don't forget to have fun.

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

Work smart. I did the 18-hour days as a lawyer. A lesson that I have

carried into my work now is to make sure that when you do burn the midnight oil, your endeavours are purposeful and adding value.

I like to get out for a walk whilst it is still light, even if I have to work later that evening. Some time each weekend with my loved ones is sacred. It gives me the fuel that I need to make everything else happen.

George Robinson is the cofounder of *Gladys*.

Antler is one of the world's most active early-stage investors. With 1,000 portfolio companies in 27 countries, they have a global community of early-stage founders addressing the world's biggest challenges.

Article by George Robinson, Co-Founder