

Cartd, a creator-led grocery platform, converting social media recipes into shoppable grocery carts

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 Watson Gardiner, cofounder of cartd.

Temps de lecture : minute

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As Co-founders, we both love cooking. Despite following hundreds of food creators on social media for inspiration, we realised that we rarely ever made the food we 'saved' - even though we intended to.

When we dug into why, we kept coming back to two things: 1) We forget having saved the recipe when we do our food shop; and 2) On the odd occasion we did remember, it felt prohibitively expensive to buy ingredients for just one recipe, knowing so many would go to waste and end up in the bin. We thought we could streamline the journey, whilst saving your pocket and the planet.

Can you share your elevator pitch?

We're experiencing a generational shift in shopping behaviour. Like us, 97% of consumers get their inspiration from social platforms - they buy fashion, cosmetics, electronics and even travel, directly from video content - we're making that possible for food.

Cartd connects social media platforms to grocery checkouts - so you can send that Feta Pasta recipe you've just seen on Instagram directly to your weekly food shop at Tesco, or to be picked up by Deliveroo for tonight's dinner.

Social commerce is expected to explode to \$6.2T by 2030, so we're building the ecosystem that benefits all parties. Creators earn a fair income for the purchases that they inspire, whilst Brands and Grocers acquire new consumers, with clear attribution that maps content to commerce.

Can you tell our readers about your engagement with Antler?

It was a stroke of luck - I stumbled across the application 5 days before the submission deadline. I was set on starting my own business, but knew I wanted a co-founder (starting on your own is a lot harder), and most of my network was outside of the UK. One of the key selling points at Antler was the curated group of talented folks in each cohort, and it delivered - I met Ben, immediately gelled and shared a problem space we were passionate about.



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Tell us about the working culture at cartd?

As with any startup, it takes a lot of hard yards to be successful; so we want to make it as easy and enjoyable as possible to do your best work. A big part is feeling that you can bring your whole self to work, without any pretense. We encourage candor and accountability and prioritise the best-idea over ego, with the success of the business at the heart of every decision. We take time everyday to check-in with each other on a personal level, being sympathetic to the things life throws up, and always try to keep in mind that it's a privilege to pursue your passion.

What has been your biggest challenge so far

and how have you overcome this?

We're building something that's completely novel, particularly in Europe. That's the exciting part, and where the opportunity lies, but also creates hurdles. The fun challenge has been helping educate different stakeholders on the scale of opportunity, and how this can unlock such an extensive new channel of income (if you're a creator) and sales (if you're a brand or grocer).

The shopper journey is a key differentiator for cartd - we're a mechanism to transact, not a destination app - so key has been to illustrate what this looks and feels like experientially. We were quick off the mark with a working prototype to help showcase that seamless experience in product walkthroughs, and it's been awesome to get so many "A-ha" moments from that. Huge credit to Ben for making that possible!

What's in store for the future?

We've just completed a successful pilot, so are now moving onto our pre-seed raise. Naturally a lot of effort goes into that fundraising process in the immediate future, but we have lofty ambitions to build the future of grocery shopping - that means onboarding more and more creators to cover every cuisine and dietary requirement, and unlocking more grocery integrations so consumers can send recipes to their weekly cart, wherever they shop.

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

It's a big part of why we're building cartd now. Brits throw away £17B of food at home every year. That's effectively money spent, in the bin. 40%

of that is excess food going off before it's ever cooked. Saving consumers the money that is currently wasted, feels like a good place to start, to help ease the pinch.

The downturn has sadly resulted in huge industry-wide layoffs. This has led to an abundance of unbelievably high-calibre individuals available to explore ventures outside of big tech - giving the startup ecosystem an injection of talent, that it might otherwise not have benefitted from. History shows that there tends to be mass innovation post downturn for this very reason.

How can we make entrepreneurship more accessible in the UK?

My parents had a janitorial supplies business when I was growing up, so I was introduced to the idea of running a company at a young age, which I'm immensely thankful for. The journey into this role has been gradual for me, starting as an accountant and inching closer to the coalface. For me, a big part of that inertia was the financial void between employment and startup.

For young people today, life is so expensive that it can seem implausible to quit your job in pursuit of something that may not immediately pay off. Unless you're well financially supported or living with your parents, that transition can be impossible. I don't have the answer, it's complex, but a quick win could be in continuing to extend the grant ecosystem to make the financial gap less of a consideration.

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

Don't let perfection get in the way of progress. It's easier said than done,

and I have to remind myself everyday, but it's essential to keep moving forward. For anyone with the itch to be a Founder, no amount of desktop research or planning will prepare you for the journey, the only way to learn is by doing. James Clear (Atomic Habits) would call it taking "*action not motion*" and we know what slogan Nike has built a business around

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

I have a 4 month old son; so he's calling the shots on routine at the moment. It has actually been a huge blessing to my routine - I have particular windows first-thing in the morning and around his bedtime, when I'm 100% offline. Having such a wonderful active distraction gives me a true mental break from the machinations of being a founder.

Outside of those windows, we bookend each day with a quick check-in to set priorities, which for me usually consists of speaking to Creators, Brands and Grocers. We're also ramping towards our pre-seed round, so investor calls are a big part of my day.

Watson Gardiner is the cofounder of [cartd](#).

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.