

Meet ShowerKap, nudging towards a sustainable future, one shower at a time

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Steve Harding, founder and CEO Showerkap about putting social and environmental impact alongside commercial success, educating around water scarcity and harnessing technology for change.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Water scarcity is ranked among the top five global risks, threatening human lives across the globe, and we're already seeing the impacts of water shortages in the UK – hose pipe bans have become the norm each summer. However, we often fail to draw the link between these bans and the stark prediction by the Environment Agency that we could run out of water in the UK within the next 15-20 years.

The issue of water waste came into sharp focus for me during lockdown. During this period I became acutely aware of just how much time our teenagers were spending in the shower. The average shower in the UK uses around 150 litres of water, meaning that every day we are sending two billion litres of shower water down the drain. This not only exacerbates water scarcity, but also has a significant impact on CO2 production, due to the energy needed to heat the water.

This motivated me to use my engineering know-how to come up with a simple tech solution to help encourage people to take shorter showers and in doing so, to address the growing water crisis. I strongly believe

that the movement to reduce water waste is something we can all be part of, by each of us 'doing our bit'.

Tell us about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Showerkap is a UK tech startup which has designed the world's first water management system using innovative engineering and behavioural science. The ethical solution nudges users to be more eco-friendly and take shorter showers, reducing water consumption, carbon emissions and costs. The innovation – which combines a patented valve, smartbox and consumer app – gives organisations the ability to track and analyse their water usage, measure CO2, detect abnormal events like leaks and maintain water safety.

The Showerkap system works by using a patented valve which gently fades down the water temperature over time, and, by simulating water running out, prompts the user to finish their shower earlier. At the same time, the valve smartbox relays captured usage data to a cloud based platform and a web app provides users with detailed analytics. Focusing on information such as total water usage, costs and CO2 emissions, it allows detailed classification of water outlets and offers a suite of sophisticated leak detection tools and alerts. Alongside the analytics, the same data forms the basis of the system's unique set of behavioural 'nudge tools'. Aligned with users' preferences and controlled by the user in an app, these tailored, personalised nudges can help encourage better choices about making every drop count and offer individuals the means to make more sustainable water and energy decisions.

There is no single solution to the water problem – while technology can help by creating sustainable solutions, a parallel transformation is needed

in our relationship with water - we must learn to do more with less.

Our business strategy is to focus on some of the biggest water consumers, like universities and hotels, enabling them to monitor and conserve water usage in one easy platform and app. Our goal is to motivate rather than force people to change, and to incentivise users with rewards and discounts, helping to create a ripple effect for other sustainable choices. Because people are not being forced into something, they are far more likely to make changes and stick to them.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

Showerkap was formed in 2022. In under 16 months, we have manufactured and patented a product, a user app and we are now in advanced discussions with UK universities and hotel chains about implementing our product.

Last month we officially launched Showerkap at the UK's largest net zero show, where we attracted significant interest and support from sectors including agriculture, oil and gas, higher education, hotels and hospitality and finance.

Tell us about the working culture at Showerkap

We're a close-knit team who are strongly motivated by our purpose to tackle the issue of water scarcity by transforming the way we interact with water. We have an open and collaborative culture where everyone is encouraged to contribute their ideas and concerns, and our ethical approach is reflected both in the way we operate as a team and our technology offering.

How are you funded?

Traditional startups have long been driven by the singular goal of maximising profits and shareholder returns. However, we are part of a new breed of purpose-led businesses who are challenging this model by prioritising social and environmental impact alongside commercial success.

Because of this, we initially looked outside of institutional investors to secure funding – this included support from individuals motivated by the cause – which allowed us to secure regular cash injections to get our business off the ground quickly and to develop at pace.

As the business grew, we got to a point where we needed to go down more formal routes. We have now completed two successful funding rounds, totalling £1.2M, and our company is valued at £150M.

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

One of our biggest challenges is raising awareness about the issue of water scarcity. Although many of us have read the news, there is still a sense of ‘this won’t impact me’. However, the reality is that we are all completely reliant on water for our survival, and that no one anywhere in the world is immune from the impacts of water scarcity. This is something that threatens all of humanity.

Our goal is to share this difficult message, while also putting across a more positive one – all of us can do something. Our technology can help businesses and individuals to take small steps that make a big difference, helping us conserve our most precious resource.

How does Showerkap answer an unmet need?

We provide one answer to the BIG question “What can I do?”. People are keen to do their bit to reduce water use and save this vital resource, but prior to Showerkap, no one had addressed a workable solution that enabled this behaviour shift.

We’ve also devised ways to incentivise users with rewards and discounts to carry on the good work and to create a ripple effect for making other sustainable decisions.

What’s in store for the future?

Our focus over the coming 12 months will be on universities and hotels. We’re already in advanced discussions with top UK universities who have plans to roll out our solution in student accommodation. The goal is that our technology will help universities to tackle the urgent need for water conservation and will support them in their pursuit of net-zero targets.

We’re also talking to some leading UK hotels about deploying the technology across the industry.

Once we have established our presence across these two sectors, we will look to expand our reach to other industries.

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

I am neurodiverse (dyslexic) which made it tough for me growing up. School life was a struggle, due to how the education system measures your abilities. I was lucky, as in secondary education I had craft subjects

that I excelled in - woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing and art - which made it much more bearable. Being told you aren't good at maths because you can't recite your times tables can be very damaging to a young person. Only after I left school and became a toolmaker, did I discover I was actually very good at maths. I later went on to own my own companies and to achieve business success.

My advice to someone in business or to anyone who is struggling at school is to find your strengths and work to improve these. Don't give up, as there is a world beyond your current situation where you will find your way.

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

I start the day with Wordle, which is a family challenge. I try to go to the gym three times a week and walk the dog daily, workload permitting.

The top rule that I live by is to treat others as you wish to be treated. Integrity and respect are two words I would hope people associate with me.

Steve Harding is the founder and CEO [*Showerkap*](#).