

Meet Seat Unique, redefining premium ticketing and experiences for fans

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Phillipa Hicks and Robin Sherry, Founders of Seat Unique, about access to premium experiences, ticket sales, and making mistakes.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What was the catalyst for launching Seat Unique?

[Robin] We have Adele to thank! I was desperately looking for tickets for one of her concerts, but general admission was impossible to get hold of. After a lot of phone calls and paperwork, I managed to secure a hospitality package. It was an unforgettable evening, and my then girlfriend is now my wife. But we realised more people would want to experience this if it was just a bit easier. We knew there had to be a better way, so the Seat Unique idea was born.

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

[Pip] We've made it our mission to redefine how fans access premium experiences. Traditional hospitality has been costly and dominated by corporates, making it difficult for people to access with outdated

processes. The Seat Unique product allows venues and rights holders to make the most of their inventory and reach a whole new market of experience-driven fans.

On average we can fuel 24% boosts in premium ticket sales, 69% growth in new audiences, 80% uplift in new business buying hospitality experiences, 85% boost in new business, plus 48% of this happening outside of office hours.

We now have over 75 partners, which has grown 100% in the past six months. These partners include some of the biggest names in the industry including: Lloyd Webber Theatres, Wembley Stadium, and the Jacksonville Jaguars.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

[Robin] We launched five years ago and gained some decent momentum before starting a round of funding. We were laser focused on getting the product right. A sleek platform that was easy to use, simple and well-thought-out, and, critically - no waiting rooms. That mass scramble is one of the biggest turn-offs for people trying to access tickets. You shouldn't have to set alarms, skip meetings and endlessly hit refresh just to find you've not got tickets. Queuing, even virtually, isn't part of a premium experience.

From there we started to get out in the industry and tell people about what we had built to find partners and fans. We did this in a number of ways, some you may expect such as cold calling and recruitment of brand ambassadors. Some less orthodox for example, the rugby legend and our brand ambassador Sam Warburton got us an introduction with the Welsh Rugby Union (one of our earliest partnerships) and that continues to go from strength to strength. Connections were key, as was persistence.

Tell us about the working culture at Seat Unique

[Pip] We're in the live events business, which means in-person events are our core. This translates to our company culture. While some might consider it traditional, we believe in having everyone in the office five days a week..

This in-person environment fosters agility. Being together allows our team to make quick decisions and adapt to the constant changes in our industry. Ultimately, our focus is on the fans. Our team is known for its swift decision-making and unwavering focus on creating the best possible fan experience. We prioritise fun and a positive work environment while always keeping the fan's experience at the forefront.

How are you funded?

[Robin] Seat Unique has raised a total of £12M, the most recent raise being a *£7M Series A funding in June* last year led by Nickleby Capital. We've been embraced by the sports industry with investment from our chairman Richard Flint, Ex-CEO of Sky Betting & Gaming and a current director at Lad Bible. Along with former English Rugby coach, Sir Clive Woodward, and football and broadcasting legend, Chris Kamara.

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

[Robin] Launching a business dependent on live events, just months before a pandemic that threatened the industry as we knew it certainly posed some challenges! We had taken money from our friends and family to get the first iteration of our product out there - only to then, have no events to sell! Visionary investors stuck with us through a time when live

events ceased to exist. But since then, the rebound has been incredible. You can feel it. People had been cooped up for almost 18-months and they wanted to be back in the crowds and immersed in live events - and this “experience economy” just continues to boom.

How does Seat Unique answer an unmet need?

[Pip] The experience economy is driving a relentless appetite from consumers for bigger and better events and unforgettable moments. There’s more value than ever put on experiences over material “things” which is a massive opportunity for us.

Tapping into premium and luxury experiences for those special occasions will be key. Top seats, player access and fine dining will appeal to a lot of people, but “smaller” premium packages that include complimentary drinks or food will also have large-scale appeal to fans too.

We’re very different to the incumbents - both in the primary and secondary markets. Seat Unique serves a growing portion of the market that historically has been hugely underserved by the ticketing giants. We provide the best seats and experiences to those who are willing to pay rather than general admission like other larger brands.

What’s in store for the future?

[Robin] Looking ahead, we've got some exciting plans brewing at Seat Unique, and the future is looking bigger and better! We're gearing up to dive into new territories, eyeing up some major live events like Formula 1 and plotting to expand our footprint into the world of tennis and horse racing - as proven by our latest partnerships with Chester Racecourse and Arena Racing Company which take the spectator experience to a whole new level across the country!

But that's not all - we've got our sights set on the global stage. So, we're working on making the buying process a breeze for international folks too. No more hassle - just pure, unadulterated event excitement, no matter where you're from.

The live events space is buzzing, and we're right at the front of that wave.

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

[Pip] You're always going to make mistakes as a founder, but learn from them. And don't underestimate the sacrifices you have to make behind the scenes. The moments you have to miss. The late nights, early mornings, weekends. But it's all totally worth it.

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

[Pip] As a leader, I prioritise activities that keep me energised. Whether that's working out at one of central London's incredible gyms, or attending a class like 1Rebel, these activities really help me clear my head and get ready to tackle the challenges of a startup before I even start my day.

We hold an 8 am stand-up meeting every day, where the team aligns on the sprint delivery. My time is then spent reviewing features ready for testing before moving on to managing and developing our product roadmap. This involves balancing long-term and short-term goals, identifying quick wins, ensuring we stay on track with our roadmap - and communicating developments with key stakeholders.

I like to finish my day by going home and cooking dinner for my family and friends. I am also a keen baker, so when I have the time, I enjoy baking for the people I love. I've had the honour of creating wedding cakes for some of my closest friends and family.

The rules I live by are rooted in why I started a live events business in the first place. We should never underestimate the power of connection. There's nothing like experiencing things and meeting people in person, and I want to make these moments happen with Seat Unique. Fostering real-life connections is what live events are all about.

Phillipa Hicks & Robin Sherry are the founders of Seat Unique.



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