

UNiDAYS, all the best student discounts in one place

As part of our QFQ series - we spoke to Alex Gallagher, CSO at UNiDAYS about working with partners, meeting the needs of young people and why Gen Z is the most vocal and purpose-led generation.

Temps de lecture : minute

11 July 2024

The idea for UNiDAYS was born at a time when people were increasingly living their lives online. We saw this shift bring a sharper focus on digital identities, and a need to create more trusted relationships between people and services online.

This growing awareness of the value of our digital identities, coupled with a belief that young people - putting themselves through college or university - deserved more, saw the creation of UNiDAYS in 2011. Our founders established early partnerships with youth focused brands. And we haven't looked back since; we now have over 800 leading brand partners, who offer savings, incentives and experiences to our student community of more than 30 million individuals across the globe.

Through our verification technology and student marketplace, we have helped brands verify student customers and open up countless opportunities for discounts, incentives and experiences to support this cohort of young people.

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

We are a world-leading, verification enabled, platform for students. This means that we connect students across the world with the best brands and products, spanning health & fitness, technology, food & drink, fashion, lifestyle - you name it.

Our ambition is to help students and graduates save, learn and earn - supporting them as they transition from education to working life.

We think carefully about who we work with and what we offer; we partner with brands that address the common challenges faced by students and align with our goal to make the student experience as enjoyable as possible.

Our digital verification technology is a core element of our proposition. Our proprietary tech instantly and securely verifies the enrolment status of student members. This is pretty unique and an innovation we are very proud of.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

The business has grown exponentially since its launch in 2011. The founding team knew they were on to something in the UK - but then quickly realised that students globally are facing the same challenges and we have seen that there is an appetite for UNiDAYS' services all over the world.

Following initial expansion to the US in 2013, it has been incredible to see

the international engagement grow with the platform in the seven years since I joined the company. We now have a footprint in 115 markets; with over 30 million students across the world using UNiDAYS, we can say in full confidence that we are the leading global verification-enabled student platform.

Tell us about the working culture at UNiDAYS

The UNiDAYS culture is flexible, collaborative and, ultimately, one that is driven by an unwavering determination to support young people. Uniting the team around this vision has been important, and it's reflected in the brilliant team that makes up the business.

Retaining our talent is important to me personally, as is making sure colleagues feel valued. Many of our team have been with us throughout our growth journey - and it's always heartening to see them pass on their expertise, knowledge and passion for the business to new joiners.

How are you funded?

UNiDAYS is privately owned and has been self-funded from day one. The founding team believed in the philosophy of “beautiful constraints” - this principle has guided the company throughout its 13 years of growth.

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

One of the biggest challenges has been making sure our platform evolves to meet the priorities of changing student demographics. When UNiDAYS started in 2011 the target audience was Millennial students. Today's student population, made up of Gen Z, is an entirely different ball game.

Growing up in a digital-first world, characterised by the backdrop of the

pandemic, cost-of-living and the climate crisis, this generation is the most vocal and purpose-led yet.

Our Gen Z Insights platform provides us with unique data about the needs and wants of students - on topics such as spending priorities, mental health, the cost of living, technology and more.

Equipped with this insight, we have been able to adapt and evolve our brand partner offering and educational content to be as useful as possible, ensuring UNiDAYS remains in-step with the students of today.

How does UNiDAYS answer an unmet need?

When the company was started, student and financial pressures were certainly talking points. But we have seen this increase dramatically in the last decade- with the pandemic taking a particular toll on the student population.

With the extensive scale of our student membership base, we can tap into students' feelings, struggles, wants and needs. We understand that this group is particularly concerned about the cost of living and its impact on their current lifestyle and how it will affect their futures.

It's important that we reflect these insights in our offering to young people. We are placing a particular emphasis on partnering with brands in the learning, earning and wellbeing categories and building a really robust offering for young people, which we hope will play a role in relieving some of the pressures they are feeling.

What's in store for the future?

To continue meeting the earning, learning and saving needs of young people. To partner with some of the world's best-known brands who

understand the value of this incredible audience and want to build and grow their student programmes via our verification technology, and to continue developing our proposition in Germany, France, India, Australia and the US.

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

Whilst I wasn't a founder at UNiDAYS, I was fortunate to join the company in its early days, and I can say that starting a business is challenging. Keeping it going is even harder - especially in the beginning. Don't be afraid of trying new things and failing. Stay focused on your ultimate goal, but be prepared for diversions and moments where you have to adapt at lightning speed.

And ultimately, bring people on the journey with you. Surround yourself with people who have the right stage expertise, logic, growth mindset and curiosity.

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

Two values that are incredibly important to me are curiosity and logic. In my daily approach to both personal and professional challenges, I try to prioritise them, continually seeking to understand the 'why' behind each situation and making decisions grounded in clear, rational thinking.

Life at UNiDAYS is fast-paced, but I like to think I have a good balance. Like many people, I use exercise as a way to break up the day, take my mind elsewhere and relax. I try to do some form of exercise at least three or four times a week - this involves a mixture of cardio and strength

training - which helps focus my mind and energy when I get back to my desk!

Alex Gallagher is Chief Strategy Officer at UNiDAYS.



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