

People powered shopping, meet i love it

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Ella d'Amato Co-Founder & CEO of i love it about why sharing matters, harnessing the value of customer satisfaction and how to create a fairer and trusted shopping space for all.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What was the catalyst for launching i love it?

We believe that your words mean more to your friends and family than any advert ever could. Be it that pair of trainers that carried you through a marathon, or that restaurant you're obsessed about, when someone is passionate or truly believes in something, what they share matters more to everyone involved - shoppers, brands and of course the sharer themselves. The problem is that few of us get anything in return. We wanted to right that wrong and create a platform where everyone could win together.

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

With the *i love it app*, anyone can store the things that they love, share them with their friends, family or followers, and every time someone goes on to buy from their recommendation, they will get rewarded.

Sharing and giving recommendations is something that happens naturally

every day between friends, passion and community groups. If I'm going travelling, I phone my friend Leanne. If I want any hair advice, I phone my sister Tara. Then I've got my besties group where I might ask for recommendations on leggings that don't fall down, and my netball group if I need new trainers. That kind of communication and sharing happens all the time. We just felt it was time for a platform that harnessed that and enabled the people that generate the value to be rewarded for it too.

The natural output of i love it, is that the brands and products that will do best on the app - the ones we are getting the most excitement from already - are the brands that people genuinely love and believe in. Similarly, the sharers that will benefit most, irrespective of their follower size, will be the ones that shoppers come to trust, because the products that arrive, live up to the recommendation behind them.

We believe that the combination of genuine, heartfelt recommendations and an AI approach focused on customer satisfaction - as opposed to sales alone - is what will set us apart from anyone else in the market.

In short, i love it is a people-powered shopping platform where you can shop, share and earn from the things you genuinely love.

When will i love it launch its full offering to market?

We're currently in our beta phase, testing and learning lots. We decided to start in running, fitness & wellness because it's an Olympic year, and we wanted to begin in a space that has positivity and genuine passion at heart. We'll move to open launch and then into other passions and categories as the business grows throughout 2025.

Tell us about the working culture at i love it?

My style has evolved over time, in line with all the different experiences I have had throughout my career, but overall I try to lead through kindness. You can have the best idea in the world but if you don't have a thriving team, and culture that nurtures them, the results won't come. For me, the team is the most important part of any business. I try to help people direct their energy towards the things they can control and not waste time on things they can't.

I believe in being open and honest with each other, using time to prepare and prioritise the right things, being brave and not perfect, staying curious and always learning. One thing's for sure, it won't always go your way, but resilience builds around the challenges - and those hard things make you more rounded. I have learned to accept that there will be good and bad days, and forever try to ensure there are more good than bad. I am not scared to make tough decisions but I do them in line with my values. In fact, the first thing we did as a team was to align on the behaviours we wanted to shape i love it around, and they are kindness, courage, passion, fairness and fun.

How are you funded?

We have 3 investors currently. We are about to raise again and are actively seeking the right investors, those that want to democratise wealth, change the face of social commerce for the better, and have experience in hyper-growth. We will close the round in January 2025.

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

Fundraising as a woman is super challenging - only 2% of VC money goes

to women founders, so that instantly puts me at a disadvantage when out raising money. It was tough last year but I didn't let that stop us. We raised £3M in January, we are out raising again now, and I honestly think i love it is such a fantastic opportunity for an investor, so it's a pleasure to be out there hearing all the positivity around the business.

Related to my leadership style, I value humbleness and that can sadly be mistaken for a lack of confidence in the investor world at times, so I have been working on how I stay true to myself, whilst doing justice to the amazing opportunity I believe i love it will bring us all for years to come.

The vision is about creating a fairer and trusted shopping space for all. We have had some challenges from those stating that we would make money faster if we let brands determine the commission level, or placed ads on the platform. Whilst that may be true, it would completely destroy our vision. Therefore we have had to hold strongly to that, by explaining to them how being firm on authenticity will lead to a much bigger, stronger and better company in the long term. In fact, our early users say that the thing they love the most about the experience is the authenticity.

How does i love it answer an unmet need?

I love it offers brands, sharers and shoppers a social commerce platform they can actually trust and believe in. The best way to think about us and why we're different, is if Reddit and TikTok had a purpose-led baby, that would be i love it. It looks and feels like TikTok and Pinterest, where you're either searching or getting video recommendations from followers and friends. But the way the algorithm works is more like Reddit, where the most respected recommendations and products rise to the top.

On other platforms, like LTK or TikTok, the commission rate is dictated by the brands too. We interviewed so many 'influencers' using them who said they just share the brands that pay them the most, rather than the

things that they genuinely believe in, and we just didn't want to be a part of that social media problem. Because we're ad-free, brands can't determine the commission on i love it. It's a flat commission; brands keep 80% of the sale, i Love it keeps 10% and 10% goes to the sharer.

A big ambition in our approach also relates to the environment. Who doesn't hate having to return things bought online. It's commercially tough for brands too, and of course the planet doesn't thank us for it either, so we are using AI to train our feeds on understanding the customer so that we can put the best products in front of them, whatever their passions. Our goal, as we learn and get better, is to reduce online returns by half. To create a solution that offers 'no regrets'.

Bringing it back to the question, we hope i love it impacts on consumer behaviour by planting a simple thought in people's minds as they go to shop; 'I can trust i love it, and everyone wins in the process'.

What's in store for the future?

We want to positively reset what 'people powered shopping' means and become the 'Every Passion Store'. I love it will eventually include everything you could possibly love and recommend - it will be there for you, and feel personal and relevant to your interests throughout your whole 'love life'. We want to be the most trusted platform out there, helping people to realise the value of their word of mouth, thus putting money back in people's pockets so they can do more of what they love.

For me, it's about celebrating the little wins, keeping the team motivated and believing in what we're building, being kind to myself and those rooting for us. I am also really enjoying learning about the power of AI and how it can be a force for good in business, when rooted in the right company values and putting the customer first.

Mostly, I can't wait to prove that by leading a company with kindness and empathy you attract the best talent and can create one of the most loved companies in the world.

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

On an emotional level, my advice is always centred on creating the best support system for yourself and others. For me personally, I couldn't do what I do without my amazing husband, friends and family. I have also found that my children are happy if I am happy, so you have to look after yourself.

From a business perspective, my advice is to test the concept and product with as many people as you can, as quickly as possible, so that you can create a culture obsessed with learning and adding value to people's lives.

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

A routine would be lovely! But I always try to find time to connect with the team and my children everyday, regardless of what I am doing or where I am. If I was to live by a rulebook it would be Ted Lasso's.

Ella d'Amato is the cofounder, CEO and Chief Believer of *i love it*.



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