

HOW TO GET UP AND RUNNING

Where do you start when starting up - especially if your business has never really been done before? Dr Craig Rose is the founder of Seaweed & Co., a business that advises on, supplies, and accredits superior seaweed. From starting out experimenting with new technologies in the Hebrides, they now supply seaweed globally. Here's how Craig got the business up and running.

Seaweed & Co. has been going nearly 3 years, and we have come a long way. We spent the first year or so, with help of our Virgin Start-up Loan, investing in technologies to uniquely process our seaweed ingredients and ensure an extremely high quality for applications in food and nutrition products.

We now have Patent Pending on our processing, and have sales into some of the biggest food manufacturers in the UK, and a distribution network covering all Europe, the USA, South Korea, Israel and Australia. Our seaweeds are used for flavour and nutrition on products sold into Waitrose, M&S, and other brands that span all the major retailers. We are now embarking on the next exciting stage: our own branded products for later in 2018 (more news to come soon...)



Spotting an opportunity

With a background in marine biology, I always saw the opportunity seaweed offers as a sustainable and highly nutritious food, and which is vastly under utilised. Having worked on various seaweed related projects and businesses for around the last nine years, Seaweed & Co. began trading in 2014 to invest in taking seaweed to the mainstream - from sea to store!

The first steps to put it into practice

Our first 3 steps were:

- Researching the market and knowing who and what people wanted - especially crucial with such a unique product.
- Securing supply, and investing in what was needed to make it work. I had to show commitment, and go full pelt.
- Innovating constantly, and addressing market questions and opportunities through this innovation (e.g. we developed naturally oak-smoked seaweeds to offer all the nutritional benefits, plus superb flavours).

Encountering and overcoming hurdles

Working with the sea is always a challenge, dependent on weather and various uncontrollable challenges. Being reliant on harvesting seaweed in the pristine Scottish Outer Hebrides was a challenge due to the remote location, and we were developing unique and significant technologies. However, we have an incredible group of people around us, who have been supportive throughout the process and believe in what we are doing. This helps us overcome any challenge thrown our way.

When we first got our technologies working and we saw (and independently verified) the outstanding quality of what we were producing it was a huge relief, and the start of being able to really confidently push sales to the successes we have today. Running your own business is a constant sequence of surprises! Everything takes longer than you want and expect, but the interest and support people give is a wonderful surprise all the time.

One last tip

You will always encounter negativity from those who are naturally cynical, or simply jealous of the fact you are going out to try and achieve your dreams. Don't let them pull you down. Surround yourself with sincere and positive people who want you to succeed, and will be honest and frank about what you are doing right, as well as what you are doing wrong.

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