

Edamame sets out to make Ireland more sustainable

Edamame was started by Zoe Hertelendi in December 2018 and plans to "disrupt and fix the current corporate gifting market".

How did Edamame come about?

The company was started in Dublin in December 2018 as an online business. The official launch was with a six week pop up during the Christmas period in Belfast and then we continued online.

What is the problem you are trying to solve and the size of the market you are addressing?

[Edamame](#) is on a mission to disrupt and fix the current corporate gifting market. Why? The promotional products industry is incredibly wasteful. Rarely do you keep or use something given at a conference or a product launch.

Edamame's mission is to produce responsible, and long-lasting gifts with a meaning for your clients. If you believe in a sustainable future and value longevity and usefulness as well as brand loyalty and awareness, you naturally start to consider gifts worth giving. As a result, you attract clients and partners who value those same qualities as well. We at Edamame prioritise sustainability throughout the entire creation process.

What is your core product and service about and how does it work?

Our core products include promotional stainless-steel water bottles, coffee cups made of bamboo, stainless steel or glass, bamboo lanyards, bags and diaries, and even sustainable umbrellas. All our products are made from sustainable materials such as bamboo, glass, stainless steel and paper. In our packaging, we vow to only use recycled materials and recyclable packaging wherever possible. This is a massive shift in the promotional products industry and by making these changes, we believe we will create lasting effects for your brand and for the environment.

What experiences encouraged you to become an entrepreneur?

I am the founder of the company and I have to say, pre-Covid, all my experiences have been extremely positive. I have been welcomed into the sustainability circles around Europe, attended conferences and events and met a lot of inspiring leaders in the business community. Continuous networking within Ireland and the EU are extremely important and I have found a lot of support in my professional circles.

What are your impressions of the start-up ecosystem in your region and in Ireland in

general?

In my opinion, start-ups get a lot of support from the business community in Ireland as well as through DCC and Enterprise Ireland. There are numerous initiatives available to offer both advisory and financial support.

What are your growth plans?

To plan is to make Edamame Eco the leader in the promotional products industry and promote sustainability and circular products and economy as the only way of life. Business sustainability makes perfect sense as it not only educates your employees to understand how their actions affect the natural environment and try to reduce their impact, but it also creates long-term financial value.

Companies that embrace sustainability go beyond short-term financial goals and consider environmental and social implications – both in their day-to-day operations and when making long-term investments. Together with our franchise partners, we develop sustainability action plans, policies and workshops for SMEs and medium size companies. We also partner with sustainability teams in large organisations on sustainability education, lunch and learn talks and workshops. Our workshops are adapted to different requirements and interests of our clients and are based on the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UNSDG).

Despite Covid-19, I am still very optimistic as I think we are now building a more sustainable and transparent future. We have shown that we can be more adaptable, more compassionate and kinder to one another and the planet. We must not forget this once were out of the pandemic.

Transparency and sustainability in everything we do will become even more important. As sustainability information becomes further aligned and embedded within financial transparency, it will be expected to be presented with the same rigor as financial transparency.

Secondly, technology will revolutionise the way sustainability reporting is reviewed and compiled. Developments such as artificial intelligence, big data and blockchain will make possible new achievements such as tracking sustainability data related to supply chains, providing accurate measures of performance based on global standards and automating aspects of report production.

What are the biggest mistakes or lessons you have learned so far?

The biggest mistake and the most valuable lesson learnt is getting rid of any doubts as a start-up and approaching every project and every client with the same conviction. Believing in your own success and maintaining integrity is the most valuable lesson.

You soon realise that even the biggest corporations start believing in your dream and are delighted they can support you and your company. This is how I managed to land amazing clients such as Diageo and the Guinness Storehouse, Kerrygold, Volkswagen, Skoda, Apleona, TedX events and many more.

As a start-up, you have to believe in your greatness first and go for the seemingly unachievable heights. Your own passion and enthusiasm is what sells you and your brand and your clients will believe in you because of who you are. Never doubt yourself!

Interview by Stephen Larkin

Published: 30 July, 2020