



COMPANY OVERVIEW

Shape Saver: Sustainability and Efficiency Through Design

Founded by Philip Robinson

Postgraduate Researcher in Alliance Manchester Business School,
Faculty of Humanities

Three words to describe your journey so far... Rollercoaster, Unpredictable, Insightful!



Tell us a little bit about yourself, the Enterprise and your journey so far. I'm a postgraduate researcher undertaking the fantastic Master of Enterprise degree at The University of Manchester, which is helping hone my entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial abilities, academic, research and business skills. The idea is a design innovation for products and has the potential to be commercialised via a service, for example via licensing and / or consulting. This is just one example of how the degree has helped me produce ideas and innovations which are ripe to be explored and commercialised. I have designed an innovative container shape to ensure that individuals can maximise the use of every millilitre of a product. This helps to save product, money and the environment, millilitre by millilitre.

How was your idea conceived? The idea was conceived when seeking to address the PZ Cussons Innovation Challenge as part of the University business competition - Venture Out. As a Master of Enterprise student, we were encouraged to enter the competition categories, of which this entry was one of several ideas I submitted, with two others making it to the Research and Digital categories. This helped me to build on presentation skills during the taught element of the course. The idea was conceived as a solution to a real, common and measurable problem – product waste leftover in personal hygiene products.

What is your company mission? My mission is to create, commercialise and counter the growing sustainability issues society faces with innovations like this one. I aim to create products which reduce waste, are more environmentally friendly and bring added value to consumers and clients.

At what point, did you realise that the idea had commercial potential? I'm still at the early stages of the journey but I realised that the idea could have both academic and commercial potential when it won 1st Prize in the PZ Cussons Innovation Challenge at Venture Out. Equally, the potential commercial applications were realised when a UMIP

Commercialisation Executive discussed the idea with me after a class visit. However, my realisations that it had commercial potential were cemented especially during the Innovation Optimiser Roadmap course, which helped me grow in confidence, outlook and knowledge.

What approaches did you first employ to develop the idea?

The type and scale of the problem was common with these product dispensers. Traditional product dispensers often leave waste product in the bottle which is difficult to utilise. I used the original product first hand, and I was able to apply some basic measuring and testing with which to build a picture of the problem, then apply a priori reason and logic with some light craft work to develop the innovation.

How did you get involved with the Innovation Optimiser?

I heard about Innovation Optimiser from a course mate, and having seen the potential of the Roadmap workshops, got in touch with Laura Etchells and Ellie Buckley who run the sessions. I was invited to attend and I've been an enthusiastic attendee ever since/

How did this engagement help you? The engagement helped support me a great deal, building on some skills I had learned on my degree units, placing them within an ambitious and

diverse group of potential entrepreneurs and innovators. The support from Ian Brookes who delivers the Roadmap sessions was very helpful and extremely engaging, as were other contributors. I feel more confident in taking this idea forward now, which can be a hurdle in itself.

Were there any standout moments from Innovation Optimiser that helped to propel your idea forward? During the programme we were asking to complete various tasks as our knowledge and the teaching elements increased and expanded respectively. There was one session which elicited further ideas I had when considering a range of clients to market to, in which I realised the idea had greater applications across sectors and therefore commercial and environmental impacts. This was a real standout moment for me as it expanded my thinking.

What have been your major milestones and achievements so far? I entered several ideas into different categories in the Manchester Enterprise Centre Venture Out Business Competition including; PZ Cussons Innovation Challenge, which I won first prize for this particular idea, the Research category in which I won 3rd prize and the Digital category in which I was a finalist.

I've also had several great achievements in my academic career so far. I became the Scholarship Ambassador and I've spoken at various Donor Relations events. I've also made great progress in my degree enterprise project – innovative alcoholic beverages, alongside securing great marks in my Strategic Marketing & New Product Development unit, Distinction: 73% and International Trade: Theory, Policy & Practice coursework, Distinction: 82%.

I'm definitely making the most of my time at the University to work on my enterprise and securing a place on the Innovation Optimiser Roadmap programme was a great moment. I like to keep interests varied though and I'm the Founder & President of The Wine & Spirit Society at The University of Manchester Students' Union.

How has being involved with entrepreneurial activity benefitted you? What I've learned throughout the Roadmap is applicable to other business ideas, including my research degree enterprise project. I think being involved in this kind

of activity, has helped keep my brain sharp and entrepreneurial after the exam period. The skills and insights that I've gained will no doubt help inform and improve the quality of my research and dissertation going forward.



What future support are you looking for to progress your business? The next steps for me will be to develop my course notes and create a business plan for Space Saver. I'm also going to submit for further support from the Innovation Optimiser team and submit a Business Summary and request to pitch to the Business Review Panel. Following that, I'll need to upskill and work on my Computer-Aided Design (CAD) skills etc. so that I can then create a Minimal Viable Product on a 3D Printer. Going forward I'd also like to work with UMIP in order to commercialise this idea. In terms of future support there are a range of things that I think I'll need to help unlock the potential of this idea, including; mentoring, facilities, financing and securing intellectual property rights.

I also have other innovations that I'm keen to develop so I'd like to develop my relationship with UMIP to protect and commercialise these other ideas, to the benefit of all key stakeholders. It will be important for me to seek support from mentors to progress these additional ideas.

Would you encourage other staff, academics and research students to seek support for their ideas through the Innovation Optimiser? Definitely, yes! I'm very glad I took full part in the programme and I gained a lot. I'd strongly encourage others within the University to do the same.