



empowering innovators®

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Careaux Ltd

Founded by Rachel and Laura Beattie

Graduates of Mathematics, Faculty of Science and Engineering

www.careaux.com | [@careauxofficial](https://twitter.com/careauxofficial)

Three words to describe your journey so far... Determination, Fulfilling, Eye-opening!



CAREAUX •



Tell us a little bit about yourself, the Enterprise and your journey so far. We are Rachel and Laura, sisters who have co-founded Careaux Ltd, which is an online premium womenswear brand based here in Manchester. We've designed a dress that has never been done before... The Careaux dress changes to fit every woman, instead of women feeling they must change themselves to fit the dress! Our design zips around the waist, allowing it to be separated into a top and skirt. With this, the dress can have different sized tops and bottoms (over 90% of women have different sized tops to bottoms) or both the same size - adapting to the wearer. Not only that, the tops and skirts can be mixed and matched to create different dress styles and assorted colour combinations. This dress is a true symbol of uniqueness: every one of us has our own shape and style, each different and changing. Yet, dresses have not changed and are still one size, not allowing for women's different shapes and styles, nor accommodating

us as individuals. Our dress has been crafted for women to have full choice, to reinvent dresses as we know them for the modern woman. So far, we've designed the dress, protected our IP, sourced dress material and the other materials that go with it.

How was your idea conceived? Rachel: It came from an idea I had when I was 14, combining my two loves of fashion and Maths, to invent a completely new dress concept. I could not wait to tell Laura, and from that moment Careaux was born.

My experience at University helped develop the Mathematics and mission behind Careaux. As part of my passion to encourage younger students to pursue STEM, I worked for an educational charity, The Tutor Trust, with Laura. During this time as Math's primary tutors, we saw the unlimited potential that children see in the world and wanted to restore this faith: anything is possible... I then studied abroad at the University of North Carolina, where I explored new topics of Mathematics. This was a turning point for me. I studied Combinatorics, Number Theory, Linear Algebra and the Geography of North Carolina. Combinatorics was unlike anything I'd studied before, and I initially found it extremely challenging, combined with adjusting to living in a different country! However, from my experience with Mathematics, I knew if I kept trying, working hard trying different methods, then I would eventually get there. This has been integral to developing my business mindset. Studying abroad allowed

me to explore Combinatorics, the mathematical foundations of Careaux, and formalise the ideas and thoughts that I'd already been applying. This exemplifies the beauty of mathematics; it truly is everywhere and informs every part of our world...

What is your company mission? We want Careaux to be a global brand, changing the way we dress and the world we care about, for the better, forever. We want every woman to have a dress she can turn to that fits her and her lifestyle, celebrating our uniqueness and diversity. The brand embodies the idea that we can achieve anything we put our mind to, creating the change we want to see with a strong social purpose. We want every action we make, no matter how big or small, to make a positive impact: from sustainability (the dresses are made locally in Manchester and designed to be recycled / reworn), to backing causes that help others make partnerships with social organisations. We're doing our bit to make the world better.

At what point, did you realise that the idea had commercial potential? Rachel: This was always a problem I had struggled with. I used to 'borrow' (not steal) Laura's clothes but I always wanted to change something. Either the sleeves were too short

or the top was too small - I felt like I had to change to fit the dress. This reiterated the extremely important message we are told when growing up: everybody is different! However, dresses never accommodated this, so with my Math's background, naturally I wanted to solve this problem. When I did some market research, it emerged that over 90% of women have a different size top to bottom, and the demand for personalisation in pieces which were sustainable, with the ability to change and re-wear was growing. I wanted to create a dress which adapted to every woman's unique shape and style, that they could turn to at any point in life - I hoped this was something that would resonate with women.

What approaches did you first employ to develop the idea?

From the moment Careaux was born we both knew that it was exactly what we wanted to do. We didn't know at this point where to start, but it was just a question of how to practically do it. So, we started researching the problem, manufacturers, and materials with sustainability at the forefront. We trademarked the Careaux name and put our minds to finding pattern cutters, dressmakers and sourcing material. Then we approached the BIPC in Central Library who run workshops on starting businesses and it spiraled from there. We went to more events and met lots of entrepreneurs, learning as much as we could to make sure Careaux had the best chance to become the brand we dreamt about for so long.



How did you get involved with the Innovation Optimiser? Laura: Rachel engaged with UMIP when she was at university and we also attended a patent advice session. After this, I was working part-time and

was told about the Innovation Optimiser and that I could attend the Roadmap sessions, which I was very happy about.

How did this engagement help you? Laura: It was brilliant to start from the beginning, working my way through the sessions doing practical examples that were personal to my own business. It was interesting to learn about the Lean Startup and look at the various aspects of business in a very detailed way. It helped to support me, giving me the tools and skills to use as a start-up. An aspect that I feel better prepared for now is the value proposition. Working through this in the session was insightful and laid the foundations to build upon. The support from Ian and the group helped in so many ways.



Were there any standout moments from the Innovation Optimiser that helped propel your idea forward? Laura: All the sessions were fantastic, interesting and enjoyable. Everyone was brilliant. Although each session encouraged me to move forward, the standout moment for me was the last session when we did our 5-minute pitch. It brought together everything we'd worked on during the sessions, and made me think about each aspect of the business. The encouragement from Ian and the group was great and made me feel I could take the idea forward, creating a brand and product to be really proud of.

What have been your major milestones and achievements so far? Laura: The concept had never been done before, so it took a long time to prove it was possible, getting the design right and making it work. It was a major milestone when, after many months, the dress was created. It was brilliant to see the dress finally come alive! That feeling will be hard to beat!

How has being involved with Entrepreneurial activity benefitted you? Laura: It's great, surrounding myself with like-minded people has really helped, allowing me to talk to others on the same journey. It really has benefitted as you can get support and advice when you need it, and can hear some great ideas from other people that you may not have even thought of.

What future support are you looking for to progress your business? We need to source alternative fabrics and get help with marketing and launching the product with significant impact. We're also looking for feedback on our product and business. Our next steps will be preparing for launch later this year and developing the collection.

Would you encourage other staff, academics and research students to seek support for their ideas through the Innovation Optimiser? Laura: Absolutely! It's brilliant - really helpful and interesting. The programme was insightful and I learnt a lot. It made me think about the business journey plus specific aspects of my business, which was great. I felt so welcomed and the opportunities to ask questions and get feedback was fantastic.