

## Making a Positive Impact on People and the Planet

In 2018, Banasa Williams created **Ksoni**, a sustainable haircare brand that's focused on two things: reducing plastic waste in the bathroom and increasing natural haircare accessibility for people with textured hair.



The business was born to encourage change for the better as Banasa explains: "I started the business after learning that while 90% of products are recycled in the kitchen, only 50% are recycled in the bathroom. I wanted to change that because all of the discussions around climate change and the impact we are having on the earth is, quite frankly, scary."

Ksoni's products are housed in aluminium cans, avoiding single-use plastics, and the business launched to the public in October 2019. "We were facing Brexit, Covid and various lockdowns so it was a challenging time," says Banasa. "Despite all of that, the business survived and I wanted to learn from the experience and build investment. I wanted to expand beyond e-commerce channels and learn how best to go about fundraising - understanding how much we needed to raise, who we should raise it from and how best to present the business opportunity so that it's compelling to potential investors. The area for me

*"What I like about the programme is that it's clear, straightforward, there are tangible outcomes and there's accountability."*

personally that I found the most nebulous was this notion of valuation. I went through an initial seminar with Hatty (the founder of the Funding Accelerator) which gave me an insight into everything I could learn and I thought there was so much more to know, so I signed up for the full programme."

### Inspiring Real Change

The Funding Accelerator programme spans eight weeks and covers a multitude of topics, from how to value your business to how to create a pitch deck. Going into the first session, Banasa felt a mixture of emotions: "I was feeling hopeful and also nervous because as a small business owner it's a big investment. I wanted to finish the programme with something tangible, not theoretical. The sessions exceeded my expectations."

The programme combines weekly immersive workshops with practical assignments, which is what really made an impact on Banasa: "I'm a person who's big on accountability so I liked the weekly check-ins. There were also other businesses in different sectors on the programme, and I

*"Hatty is really interested in seeing all of the businesses succeed."*

really liked that in terms of learning from other founders.”

During the eight weeks, Banasa says there were a number of areas she gained value from but there were two specific lessons she believes has helped to shape the future of Ksoni: “The financial modelling gave a really clear picture of forecasting as well as how much you really need to raise, along with the rationale for that. The other thing I thought was really good was being able to speak to experts from different areas, from personal branding to finance. Being able to have conversations around the value drivers for the business and matching the story we’re telling in words and numbers was incredibly valuable; I think it’s what turned our proposition from good to great.”

## Finding the Courage to do Things Differently

*“Being an entrepreneur and running a business is lonely and when things happen it’s tempting to think things are just happening to you and everybody else has everything together. As a business owner the programme has definitely increased my confidence and it’s increased my knowledge as well - I feel like a more well-rounded entrepreneur.”*

Before the programme began, Banasa hadn’t been through the process of raising equity investment, so was facing this for the first time: “I was really nervous about getting into the weeds of the investment piece but I was excited when I finished the programme because I felt that I had all the tools ready to successfully pitch to investors.”

Armed with a one pager (an overview of the investment opportunity) and a methodology for how and when to present the pitch deck, Banasa began practising in front of other business owners and potential investors, using the feedback to grow the brand offer.

*“Had it not been for the programme I don’t know if I’d have had the courage to keep going; I might have just wound up the business and found a job but everything I learnt gave me the strength to see it was worth continuing on as opposed to saying I’ll chalk it up to another failed startup.”*

A few months later, she started the first round of fundraising and in the process had some big decisions to make, something she believes the programme empowered her to do: “During the pitches themselves I felt I was far more confident than I was prior to starting the Funding Accelerator. We raised £25,000 to start and



we're in due diligence right now for another £40,000. Being able to meet potential investors and gain their feedback also prompted me to engage in a major brand restructure. Had it not been for the programme I don't know if I'd have had the courage to keep going; I might have just wound up the business and found a job but everything I learnt gave me the strength to see it was worth continuing on as opposed to saying I'll chalk it up to another failed startup."

## Building a Sustainable Future

Now, having secured initial investment, Ksoni is set to begin long-term growth plans which are focused around a multi-channel volume play, with expansion into more retailers, an increasing product line and a rebrand to realise the vision of creating less waste and redefining beauty on every level.

The Funding Accelerator has helped the brand's future mission in a number of ways, explains Banasa: "I have a clear path and strategy for growth now, I know what kind of funding I need, not just for this first funding round but potential future funding too. It's also made me consider things I wouldn't have before, like exit. I hadn't thought about that but it's helped me understand that there are other ways to evolve with your business as opposed to just staying on in the position of CEO forever. I think the biggest lesson I've learnt has been the confidence factor. Being an entrepreneur and running a business is lonely and when things happen it's tempting to think things are just happening to you and everybody else has everything together. This programme has definitely increased my confidence and knowledge - I feel like a more well-rounded entrepreneur."

*"If you're looking for a programme where you're going to come out of it with tools that you can actually see and use as well as confidence and an understanding of the rationale of how you got to this place then I would strongly consider the Funding Accelerator."*



Funding Accelerator is an eight week programme designed to make it quicker and easier to raise equity investment

[Find Out More](#)