

# MSDUK Accelerator **2021-2023** **Impact Report**

**I am excited to share with you the MSDUK Accelerator 2021-2023 Impact Report.**

It is hard to believe that two years have passed since we launched this programme in June 2021. Over this time, it has been a tremendous learning experience for our team as we delivered over 160 hours of training and offered hundreds of hours of mentoring and 1-2-1 support to increase founders' understanding of business venture growth and development.

However, what we are most proud of is the community we have built. We have created a supportive and engaged network of almost 100 entrepreneurs, mentors, and advisors who are committed to making a difference and supporting ethnic minority founders in becoming the diverse leaders of tomorrow.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to our headline sponsor Unilever and sponsors Dow, Google, and WPP whose support has been invaluable in helping us achieve our goals.

In this report, we are looking back at the impact we have had since the programme began in 2021 and we look forward to continuing to serve and support the ethnic minority community. We hope this report gives you an insight into our progress and inspires you to join us in our mission.



**Bao Tieu**

Head of Business & Ventures  
MSDUK

Headline  
Sponsor



Sponsors



# Our Why

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**MSDUK recognises that Ethnic Minority Businesses (EMBs) often face unique challenges that their non-ethnic peers do not.**

According to MSDUK's own research from the 2021 'Minority Business Matters' report, EMBs often encounter discrimination, disconnection from mainstream business and financial networks, and disproportionate levels of doubt. While these challenges hold many minority businesses back, minority entrepreneurs also have strengths; notably their drive to succeed, determination to overcome challenges as well as diversity of skills, perspectives, experiences, and contacts.

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## CHALLENGES

DISCRIMINATION

DISCONNECTION

DOUBT

## STRENGTHS

DRIVE

DETERMINATION

DIVERSITY

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The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Aston University found in their 2020 'Unlocking Opportunity' report that small EMBs contribute a significant £25 billion to the UK economy but are held back by various barriers. Although, some minority entrepreneurs can overcome these obstacles through perseverance and determination, others struggle to reach their full potential due to these hurdles.

Through a survey our founders completed before starting the MSDUK Accelerator, we have been able to indicate areas businesses need the most support with:

- |                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Corporate procurement | • MVP Development and Validation |
| • Investment Strategy   | • Finance                        |
| • Growth Marketing      |                                  |

Through the MSDUK Accelerator, we offer a range of masterclasses, workshops, and 1-2-1 opportunities for founders to upskill in these areas so that they complete the programme with an improved understanding.

# Our Principals

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The MSDUK Accelerator was created to elevate ambitious ethnic minority entrepreneurs. We want to achieve this by educating, challenging, and connecting ethnic minority founders with a community of peers and a powerful network of experts, corporates, and advisors.

▶ **Experiential Learning:**

We believe that taking action and implementing learnings quickly is the best way to validate assumptions, develop new perspectives, and reflect on old challenges.

▶ **Growth Mindset:**

Instead of investing time and money into something that may not work, we encourage our founders to fail fast because that will cultivate a mindset shift and growth.

▶ **Supportive Ecosystem:**

We have brought together a vast ecosystem of expert facilitators, successful entrepreneurs, and committed mentors for founders to utilise during their time on the programme.

▶ **Fully-funded:**

Places on the programme are fully-funded by our corporate sponsors and we do not take equity. Following the programme, founders are offered one-year free MSDUK membership.

▶ **Community-driven:**

Our tribe is growing with innovative and ambitious ethnic minority entrepreneurs who support one another long after the programme has finished.

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*"Through the MSDUK Accelerator, we take immense pride in championing the ethnic minority entrepreneurs, equipping them with the tools, resources, and connections needed to break barriers, redefine success, and paving the way for a future of equitable opportunities and entrepreneurial success."*

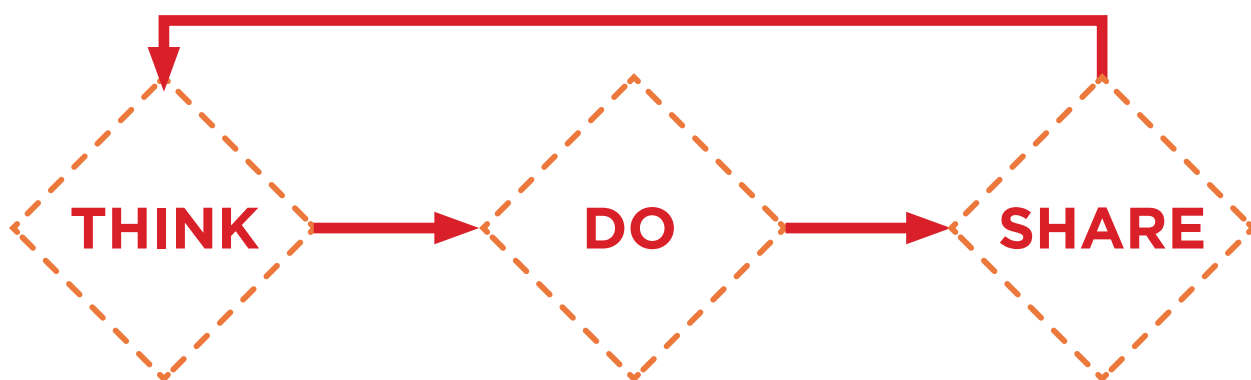
**Karolina Jagodzinska,**  
Senior Manager for Innovation Hub, MSDUK

# Programme Overview

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## Our Learning Model:

Our programme runs on a three-week learning sprint. Each of the five modules focuses on a different aspect of running and scaling a business venture. This format allows founders to implement learnings in a structured way.



### Week 1 - THINK

Founders engage in educational masterclasses and activities led by expert facilitators.

### Week 2 - DO

Founders complete tasks set by facilitators as well as receive 1-2-1 support during their office hours.

They also gain additional insights through guest workshops and EMB Insights sessions.

### Week 3 - SHARE

Founders use this opportunity to reflect on their learnings, failures, and successes during Peer Masterminds.

Meetings with experts-in-residence and mentors are also arranged.

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### Module 1: Customer Discovery and Validation

Founders often make assumptions about who their customer is, and these assumptions are critical to validate. This module helps founders articulate the problem they are solving, create testable hypotheses, and develop actionable customer personas to test.

### Module 2: Product Thinking/Scaling Services

This module is split into two funnels: product-based and service-based. The product-based masterclasses cover product strategy and thinking, developing an MVP, and creating validation experiments. The service-based masterclasses show how to use automation, outsourcing, and delegation to scale a business.

### Module 3: Growth Marketing

This module outlines growth marketing principles to help provide value to customers across their entire user lifecycle.

Founders learn about inbound marketing and outbound sales, outreach, and what free tools are available to improve efficiency.

### Module 4: Sales and Communication

Being able to sell and communicate effectively is crucial for any founder, especially in B2B. In this module, founders learn how to articulate their offering clearly, how to find those that need their business and then, how to make the sale.

### Module 5: Pitching

One of the big challenges founders have, is not the lack of great products or services but, being able to articulate their offering clearly, confidently, and authentically. This module helps our founders prepare their B2B sales pitch.



WHO DO WE SUPPORT? ▲



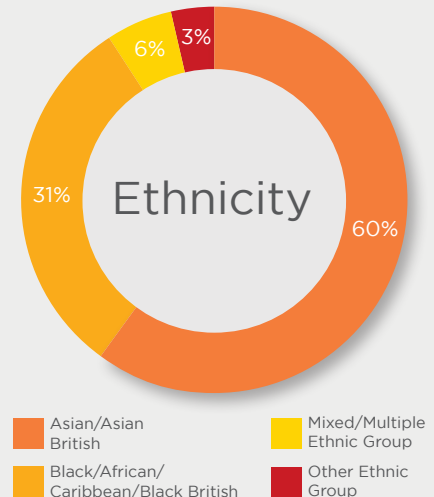
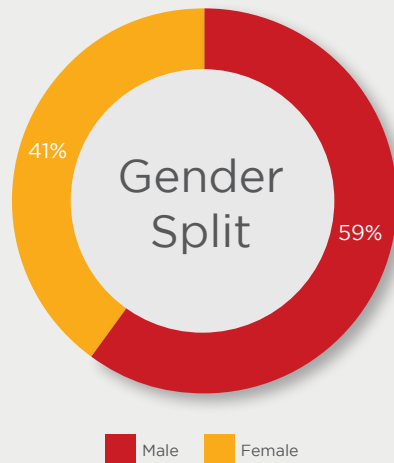


# Who Do We Support?

**88**  
FOUNDERS

**03**  
COHORTS

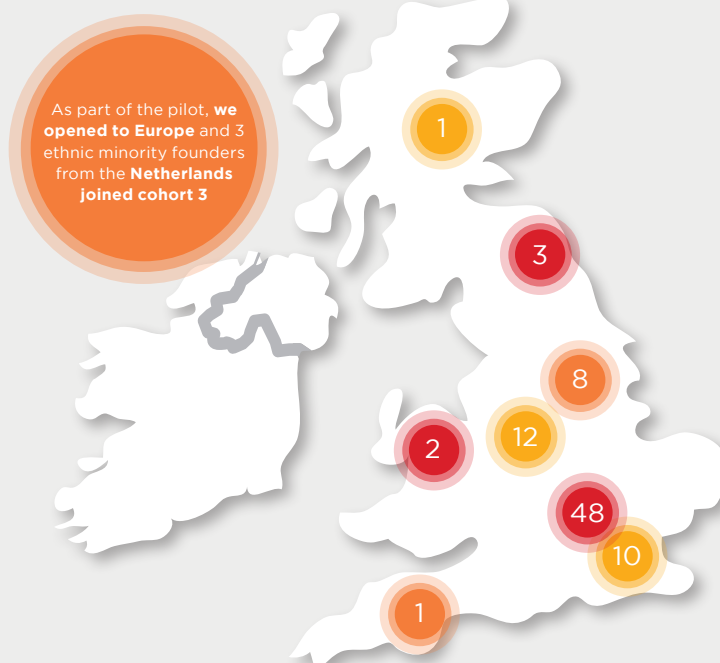
**03**  
YEARS



We are proud of our growing community of ethnic minority businesses. Regardless of the founders' backgrounds there, is a shared lived experience of what makes them stand out and the challenges they face in the UK ecosystem with each founder bringing their own cultural insight.

It is important to us that we continue to work on equal distribution when it comes to gender, ethnicity, and location of the founders that we support.

## Location Map Breakdown



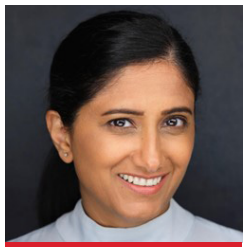
*"I knew that getting a space on MSDUK was going to be impactful.*

*What I loved was that it opened my world to things I'd either long forgotten from my corporate life, didn't think applied to me or were new discoveries.*

*That's the fantastic thing about MSDUK, the opportunity to learn was phenomenal."*

**Juanita Rosenior**, The Girl in the Red Glasses (Cohort 2)

# Case Study: DEFY Brands



**Suni Sekhon**  
DEFY Brands  
Cohort 3

**Suni was not expecting how valuable the learnings of the MSDUK Accelerator would be. From the curated group of expert facilitators to inspiring guest speakers offering additional insights, Suni walked away from the programme with in-depth learnings, different insights, and new contacts.**

DEFY Brands, founded in 2021, is a social enterprise branding impact consultancy with more female creatives at the forefront of design, eliminating disparity and diversifying the creative services industry. This defiant kinship of women helps purpose-led businesses to create an impact through disruptive branding. When I was accepted to be part of Cohort 3, I truly was not expecting the immense value and depth of knowledge the programme offered for my business.

## Learning Experience

Every module of the programme focused on different areas of running a business, and I came away from each one with new resources I could use to grow my business.

The live interactivity of some sessions, such as Entrepreneurial Finance and the Hype Yourself PR Workshop, added another level of value because I could implement the learnings immediately. I also appreciated the constant reiteration of the importance of customer validation in Module 1, as this is the root of my work as a founder and entrepreneur.

However, as a service-based business, the programme's 'Scaling Services' module taught me the difference between growing my business and scaling my business. This module prompted me to think more about where I truly wanted my business to be in a few years and where I want to be in my personal life as a founder.

I was able to look at my business from a growth perspective, and by using the experts' resources, I can shape, craft, and tighten my business operations so that it's ready to scale.

## Module Tasks – Implementing Learnings Quickly

After every module, the facilitators set a task for us to complete, which really encouraged me to implement my learnings quickly. Clearly, these tasks were planned beforehand, and it meant that the learning was not passive. From the first task, I could take a step back and look at my business with fresh eyes. Immediately, I updated my LinkedIn profile, adjusted parts of my brand story in my company deck, which I send to clients, and became sharper in my own brand's storytelling.

My focus area is remodelling my website so that my brand's storytelling is accurate and true to its goal, and the module tasks gave me that push to take steps towards doing that.

## Working with MSDUK

I am still very much involved with MSDUK as they continue to support my entrepreneurial journey. MSDUK approached me towards the end of 2022 to uncover the impact of their branding for the European Supplier Diversity project and to redesign the brand to reflect its ambitions, which aims to expand MSDUK into Europe.

This has led to a long-term brand partnership forming, where I am strategically leading the European brand development aligned with the project's mission, to create the right impact across Europe.

DEFY have also created the branding for the inaugural European Innovation Challenge, a partnership of value that continues to grow as they lead the brand creation and conference experience for the first 2023 MSDUK European Supplier Diversity Conference.



# Our Impact 2021 - 2023

**80**  
MENTORS

**07**  
EXPERTS IN  
RESIDENCE

**1-YEAR**  
FREE  
MEMBERSHIP

To all Accelerator Graduates

**10**  
FACILITATORS

**27**  
GUEST  
SPEAKERS



**164.5**  
HOURS

of interactive sessions,  
guest workshops &  
masterclasses

**ACCELERATOR  
OF THE YEAR**

UK BAA Angel  
Investment Awards

## 5 LEARNING MODULES

Customer Discovery & Validation, Product Management  
& Scaling Services, Growth Marketing, Sales &  
Communications and Pitching

**HUSTLE** AWARDS **22**  
**FINALIST**

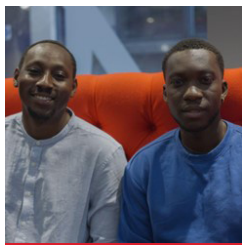
**OUTSTANDING  
START-UP  
SUPPORTER**  
Hustle Awards

**1/3 OF BUDGET**  
Spent with Ethnic Minority  
Suppliers

**874**  
HOURS

of mentoring &  
1-2-1 support  
offered

# Case Study: Gusto Snacks



**Claudio Owusu &  
Giuseppe Baidoo**  
Gusto Snacks  
Cohort 3

**Gusto Snacks is an ethical-focused company that uses farm-rejected fruits to produce delicious and healthy snacks to reduce food waste. We act as a bridge between farmers and consumers, improving the economic output of farmers by re-introducing the rescued produce to the market using innovative flavours.**

As a growing ethnic minority-owned business, we wanted to become better connected within networks that support businesses like ours. We thought that having the additional credibility through MSDUK's certification would help our brand within the marketplace.

## Learning Experience

Through the Accelerator programme, we have built amazing relationships with the MSDUK team, business advisors, and fellow cohort members. The learning experience has been remarkable, and we came away from the programme with new tools which we have already implemented into the business. The sessions that we particularly resonated with were masterclasses on sales and communication and workshops on growth marketing. We have already started applying these learnings to the Gusto Snacks sales processes, especially in the branding side and email campaigns.

However, the real game changer were the No-code workshops. These sessions helped us answer questions that we were pondering for a while. We were introduced to no-code tools that we could use to develop and test apps. We have been thinking about developing an app for a while, but we could not afford an app developer. After these workshops, we learned how we can create an app without an app developer and test it before committing time and money to a more sophisticated version.

## The Power of Mentoring

Our mentoring experience through the MSDUK Accelerator has been amazing. Thanh Catachanas, Head of Collaboration and Acquisition at JCDecaux, has been an engaging mentor for Gusto Snacks. From the first meeting, she did not limit our interactions to online calls, and she invited us to the JCDecaux London headquarters. With Thanh's help, we revisited our company values and made sure they were communicated clearly and stayed true to our brand. She has helped us refine our branding and messaging.

The support we received did not just end after our meetings or calls. Thanh connected us with JCDecaux's office

manager in hopes that we could stock our snacks in their offices, and this continues to be a work in progress. We're grateful for how our mentor has gone above and beyond to support us on our journey. It has been a supportive and close relationship we built thanks to the MSDUK Accelerator.

## Having a Corporate Mentor

Having a corporate mentor who works within a large corporation has been invaluable to our business. Our mentor helped us understand the processes of becoming a corporate supplier and the advice that a corporate mentor offers can be directly applied to our business by telling us who to connect with to what to include in our proposal.

Additionally, working with a corporate mentor encouraged us to expand our horizons.

A corporate mentor encourages the vision that you can go beyond where you are right now as a business and advises on what we need to do to bring that vision to life.

# Case Study: DataGardener

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**Tarun is the Founder and CEO of DataGardener. He joined MSDUK as he also supports the mission of diversity and inclusion.**

The DataGardener platform is the B2B SaaS ecosystem for businesses to access interconnected public and private corporate datasets to improve their business performance through advanced prospecting and effective financial risk management and analysis.

**Tarun Kumar**  
DataGardener  
Cohort 3

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## **Working with Unilever**

MSDUK supports Ethnic Minority Businesses to get equal opportunities with corporates and ensures the fundamentals of equality and inclusion.

I joined MSDUK as I also support this mission of diversity and inclusion. Through MSDUK, we were able to work with Unilever on a data project to help them identify ethnic minority-owned businesses on their extensive supplier list.

We met the Unilever team at the 2022 MSDUK Annual Conference and Awards where we discussed the work DataGardener does and the value we offer.

After the connection was made, we continued the conversation which led to us working with Unilever on a data project.

With our help, Unilever found out that over 100+ of their suppliers were either ethnic minority-owned, female-owned, or B-corp certified which enabled them to continue the path of fulfilling their commitments.

As an EMB, it was great to see a global company committed to fulfilling its diversity and inclusion goals. We saw, in action, the steps they were willing to go to nurture their current suppliers.

## **Building Relationships with Corporates**

Building relationships with corporates requires patience. We say, 'The bigger the company, the longer the sales cycle'.

However, it is important to note that these companies want to work with us and perseverance will lead to beneficial relationships in the end.

When nurturing a relationship, it's important to make sure you're speaking to the right person within the organisation as they will very often be your advocate within the organisation. MSDUK have created opportunities for us and we're proud to serve their partners and clients.

# Educate, Challenge & Connect

MSDUK Accelerator's mission is to develop the ethnic minority businesses of today, so they become the diverse suppliers and leaders of tomorrow. Through **educating, challenging, and connecting** them, we want to help the founders realise their full potential.

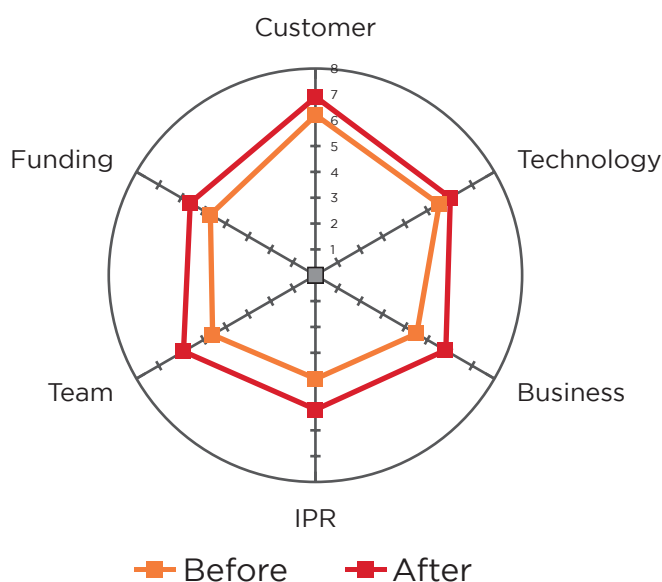
## Educate:

**We use the KTH Innovation Readiness Level™ tool to evaluate founders' development as they progress through the programme. Founders complete it before and after the MSDUK Accelerator.**

The KTH Innovation Readiness Level™ is a complete framework which covers six different criteria related to business development. It helps founders identify where their business is and the steps they need to take to get to their desired stage.

The analysis of the KTH Test results shows an increase in all 6 dimensions - this is in line with modules covered as part of the programme. The highest improvements were for **Business Readiness Level (30% increase)** and the **Funding Readiness Level (29% increase)**.

## Cohort 1 & 2 KTH Scores



*"I really enjoyed the programme. The involvement of corporate sponsors such as WPP to deliver some of the sessions added a lot of value. I've been through a few Accelerators but this one stands out in its individualised support approach - it's practical, useful, and relevant."*

**Drishdey Caullychurn,**  
TEXpert AI (Cohort 1)



*"It's rewarding to see that the learning opportunities has supported founders in one stage of their entrepreneurial journey whilst also being surrounded with like-minded people. It's not easy being a minority founder and accessing these types of opportunities can be expensive and time-consuming so I'm happy to have worked on a programme where we can offer this for free."*

**Shazeda Begum,**  
Accelerator Coordinator, MSDUK



## Challenge:

**Experiential learning is a key element of the MSDUK Accelerator. For that reason, each module ends with a task set by our facilitators. The tasks are designed to challenge founders to put the theory they just learned into practice.**

These tasks are practical and can even be used in the day-to-day running of the business meaning founders continue implementing their learnings during and after the programme. Some of our entrepreneurs may have come across these tasks before whilst others may be approaching it for the first time. Either way, we believe there are benefits: for some, it is an opportunity to revisit old challenges but for others, they take on tasks they otherwise would not have done before.

▶ **91%**

of the MSDUK Accelerator Cohort 1 & 2 graduates found the programme valuable for themselves and their businesses



*"I truly enjoyed the masterclasses from the programme and got a lot of value from them but only because, I put in the work. I put my time and energy into attending the sessions and doing the module tasks which really helped me take my start-up to the next level"*

**Daniel Byrd,**  
Agave Networks (Cohort 2)

## Connect:

**We have built a strong and supportive community of founders, experts, and partners who support one another long after the programme has finished.** Through direct introductions and referrals from MSDUK, our graduates took part in and won corporate innovation challenges, presented at supplier days, and worked on projects with our network.

### SINCE THE PROGRAMME STARTED:



**Facilitated 65 connections and referrals to partners opportunities and the MSDUK network**



**Made 99 introductions with mentors**



**Our community remains active as our founders meet on average every quarter**

### OUR CORPORATE MENTORS COME FROM THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES:

- Accenture
- Baker Hughes
- BDB Pitmans
- BT
- Burson Cohn & Wolfe
- Cushman and Wakefield
- Diageo
- Dow
- GSK
- HSBC
- ISS World
- JCDecaux
- Kyndryl
- Meta
- Nationwide Building Society
- Sony
- The Lego Group
- TJX
- Unilever
- WPP
- WTW
- Zurich Insurance

# Accelerator Ecosystem

Since June 2021, we have built an ecosystem of startup experts, entrepreneurship advisors and corporate professionals who believe in and support our mission of elevating ambitious ethnic minority founders. As part of the programme, our participants can reach out to:

## Facilitators

Our facilitators are experts in their respective disciplines. Apart from delivering masterclasses and setting the module tasks, they also offer 1-2-1 meetings for founders.

## Mentors

Our mentors are some of the brightest industry leaders in the UK and have expertise in corporate procurement, B2B sales, start-up leadership and investment strategy.

## Experts in Residence

These experienced entrepreneurs and start-up advisors give specific insight on the challenges our founders are seeking to overcome.

## Case Study: ZeroCode Cloud



**David Osideko**  
ZeroCode Cloud  
Cohort 2

**Through the MSDUK Accelerator programme, ZeroCode Cloud's mentor helped them break through barriers within their business and opened their doors to Amazon within one phone call.**

ZeroCode Cloud was founded in 2020 and we offer affordable and fully supported cloud solutions for businesses straight out of the box. ZeroCode Cloud allows businesses to 'drag and drop' design their own software systems without knowing how to write code—saving them time, resources, and money.

As a start-up, there are always barriers to launching. However, we had a strong vision of what we wanted to deliver—an intelligent software solution for businesses without the headache of hiring software developers. I heard about the MSDUK Accelerator programme through a connection and contacted them to see if they could help. As a result, I applied for the MSDUK Accelerator to give us a bit of momentum.

### Game-changing Mentor Call

We were accepted onto Cohort 2 of the MSDUK Accelerator to help us overcome some challenges we were having as a business. One of the many benefits of the programme is the corporate mentoring that is offered that is delivered by the likes of senior professionals from Unilever, Dow, WPP, Sony, JCDecaux, BT, Aramark, Impact X Capital, and AB InBev. Our Impact X Capital mentor via MSDUK Accelerator was brilliant and, within one phone call, supported us in breaking through a significant barrier for our business and helped us connect with Amazon. It was a game-changing moment for our business and something we had struggled to overcome for several months.

### Accelerate to Launch

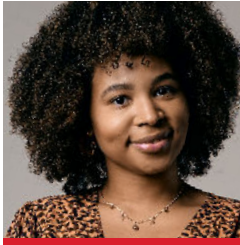
MSDUK has supported us in our journey to take ZeroCode Cloud to the next level. Through that one conversation with our mentor, we were on our way to launch. Our MSDUK mentor opened doors to Amazon and other

providers across the industry, and our vision is fast becoming a reality. Additionally, the MSDUK Accelerator has helped us by widening our network of contacts. We now have more networking partners and people around us who share our vision and values, like our suppliers and customers.

Furthermore, we have a steadily growing healthy pipeline of over 500 clients waiting to join ZeroCode Cloud. Becoming an MSDUK member has delivered on multiple levels, has been very rewarding, and in terms of value to our business. It has delivered hundreds of thousands of pounds. Undoubtedly, joining the MSDUK Accelerator programme has been a key stepping-stone for our business.

# Case Study: BetterShared

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**Swakara Atwell-Bennett**  
BetterShared  
Cohort 1

**Africa is the fastest-growing continent in the world and exceptional creative talent does not get the visibility it deserves.**

Therefore, BetterShared's mission is to bring this talent into the public consumer space by shipping art prints by African artists and their diaspora worldwide.

We are not only encouraging nationwide and global visibility but also, we are supporting the careers of African and diaspora artists whilst making everyday spaces inclusive through diverse art.

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## Business Matters

As a scale-up business and CEO, I found the MSDUK Accelerator a great time to review my existing business, reflect, and stress test any future ideas. The programme helped me understand the inner workings of large corporations from how to manage a long-term relationship to navigating their sales cycles.

The MSDUK Accelerator was incredible; we learnt so much. The support network was terrific throughout the process, and the insight from other businesses in the cohort was invaluable.

## Working with MSDUK

The most valuable lesson I learnt from the Accelerator programme was taking ownership. This relates to taking ownership of the fact that we are an EMB (Ethnic Minority Business) and leveraging that for the good of your business. When thinking about the business needs and what steps need to be taken to secure contracts, getting MSDUK certification has opened many doors which has led to the opportunity to work with global brands.

BetterShared continues to be very involved with MSDUK and following the programme, we provided African artwork as prizes to the winners of the 2022 MSDUK Annual Supplier Diversity Awards. The process of liaising with MSDUK, designing the custom boxes, and then presenting them to the winners was seamless. It is rewarding to know that the artwork of talented African artists is sitting on the shelves of corporate members and EMBs.

## Winning CBRE Innovation Challenge

In 2022, BetterShared won the Workplace Experience category for our Diverse Art Rental Service during CBRE Innovation Challenge. We were introduced to CBRE at MSDUK Business Opportunity Day. After hearing about our business, CBRE recommended applying to their Innovation Challenge. We were successful in becoming a finalist and after pitching at CBRE's London headquarters we won the competition.

From the introduction made at an MSDUK event, we became a category winner, and we are now an official CBRE supplier. As part of the reward, we were assigned an executive sponsor who we continue to work closely with.

## The MSDUK Community

As a scale-up business, an essential part of our journey has been reviewing and reflecting, learning from our peers on the Accelerator Programme, and adjusting some of our existing processes.

I continue to keep in contact with my fellow cohort participants and we meet up every couple of months to catch up. It's nice knowing that we were all part of the same accelerator and when we meet, we're able to talk about our shared experiences. It's important to have a community where we can speak to founders who understand our struggles and successes but also, have the potential of working with each other.

# Our Impact 2021 - 2023

## Business Growth:

**57%**

of alumni grew  
their team since the  
programme

**35**

new full-time jobs  
and 7 part-time  
positions created

**42%**

turnover increase within  
1 year of graduating from  
the programme

As an Accelerator programme, our goal is to help early-stage businesses gain traction and validate key assumptions about their business so that they can develop and grow. We hope the success of our graduates may inspire more ethnic minority entrepreneurs to start their own ventures. Whilst we stress that founders will get out of the programme what they put in, we are thrilled to see that the ecosystem we have built has facilitated the level of growth we have seen.



*"Facilitators on the programme have been extremely supportive; they worked with me on a one-to-one basis to refine my customer validation strategy. As a result, I asked more relevant questions and felt more confident with the customer interviews which meant the company may pay for a pilot with us."*

**Pinky Ghadiali,**  
Netwomen.co (Cohort 1)

## Community Value:

We believe that our community is one of the most important elements of the MSDUK Accelerator. It is encouraging to see that our founders feel the same.

**79%**

of founders felt a sense of  
community with the other  
cohort founders

**93%**

have found the  
community of  
founders valuable

**89%**

of founders are still  
in touch with their  
fellow founders

We know that disconnection from mainstream networks and doubt are the challenges that ethnic minority founders face. It is encouraging to see that our community offers a solution to these hurdles. Founders in the MSDUK Accelerator network provide each other with advice, make relevant introductions and give practical support, further strengthening the community. This creates a culture of inclusivity; regardless of the founders' background there is a shared lived experience of what makes them stand out and the challenges they face in the UK ecosystem with each founder bringing their own cultural insight.



*"If I had to choose the best aspect of the programme, it's everybody else. It's the founders and spending time speaking to each other and learning from each other's backgrounds and experiences. Learning that everyone is a little bit nervous and feels imposter syndrome in this space but also learning from other's challenges."*

**Eugene Gilkes,**  
IncludeMe Consulting (Cohort 2)



# Case Study: Cambond



**Xiaobin Zhao**  
Cambond  
Cohort 1

**Xiaobin Zhao, CEO of Cambond Ltd, continues to reap the benefits of the MSDUK Accelerator two years after completing the programme. He saw his mindset shift from that of a start-up founder to a business owner aiming to share his sustainable products across the globe.**

Cambond Ltd aims to tackle climate change and issues around immense food waste from the foundation industries by turning that waste into valuable products, particularly the Cambond bio-resin. Following Cohort 1 of the MSDUK Accelerator, I continued to engage with MSDUK and kept in frequent communication with my fellow cohort participants. Cambond has also exhibited at the 2022 MSDUK Annual Conference where we showcased our products in front of the corporate and Ethnic Minority Business (EMB) network.

## Customer Validation – Beer Leather Project

Before being accepted onto the programme, most of my time was focused on developing the technology needed rather than on the commercial elements of running a business and making it profitable. I have not been on another business support programme that would have done this much for my business growth as the MSDUK Accelerator.

This structured curriculum helped me implement my learnings quickly and led to the launch of Cambond's Beer Leather project. We developed Beer Leather, a vegan leather made from beer waste. Our mentor on the programme encouraged me to run a simple customer validation test by creating a website to see how many potential customers would be interested in the product. I created [www.BeerLeather.com](http://www.BeerLeather.com) and shortly after launching, we received requests from customers interested in our vegan leather. As a result, we generated interest in the fashion industry, and we sent samples to countries such as China and Hong Kong.

## After the Programme

One of Cambond's biggest wins was securing the £7.3 million Innovate UK supported BONDIFI project.

BONDIFI is an ambitious, world-leading innovation to build a green chemistry industry in the UK. The project launched the UK's first circular economy system for making construction and metal products.

This project has allowed Cambond to set up a manufacturing process, work with partners, nurture our customers, and use our products to start making a profit. We were finally able to turn our ideas and technology into commercial products that we could sell. We have worked with the largest companies across Europe and SMEs who want to make a conscious change. This was a great opportunity to see our product being validated. We are currently working with three SMEs who are using our resin product to build furniture. For the next six months, Cambond will continue to work with those three SMEs and, two universities who will continue to help us validate our product and make sure we are meeting the highest standards.

## Approaching Challenges

### – Xiaobin's Biggest Takeaway

As Cambond grows, my mindset has shifted towards strategic thinking: how can Cambond build partnerships and work with partners globally. MSDUK has been our strategic partner on this journey.

It's all in the name, Minority Supplier Development. MSDUK are bringing a community of ethnic minority founders who work together and support one another. They are putting these programmes in place to offer easy access to learnings and experts to help our business grow. We are being encouraged to use our strengths to help one another, and we celebrate each other's successes.

# Case Study: Firstplanit



**Ankita Dwivedi**  
Firstplanit  
Cohort 1

**Ankita Dwivedi is the founder of Firstplanit that is the digital platform that is looking to rapidly accelerate the adoption of sustainability in the building sector.**

When I was introduced to MSDUK through the Accelerator programme, I had no idea what to expect. But looking back, it was an excellent decision.

I came into entrepreneurship following my career working as an architect and researcher. Initially, I set up a consultancy but quickly realised that for my vision, I needed something that could scale quickly. As many founders have experienced, starting a scalable business comes with its unique challenges, but I decided to give it a go because I truly believed in my vision.

## MSDUK Experience

I was introduced to MSDUK through a colleague and that is how I found out about the MSDUK Accelerator programme.

I knew I wanted to be around people who looked like me, who were in similar stage with their start-ups, and who understood the biases that ethnic minority founders face.

After I was accepted onto Cohort 1 and we had our first meeting in Birmingham, I looked around the room and I thought, I'm not alone. This was my first experience with MSDUK.

## Open Mindset

When the programme started, I was keen to start practical application as I had done a lot of research before the MSDUK sessions.

However, from the first session, I was not expecting the level of value I received. I truly enjoyed the live interactivity of all the sessions.

One can study a problem theoretically and try to find solutions online but being able to learn from and talk to founders that came across similar problems brought deeper insight to the forefront. I was exposed to new solutions that I may have not thought about.

If I could go back and do the programme again, I would love to do the module tasks again as I felt they were an amazing way of implementing and reiterating the learnings.

Being a founder and owning a business is not a linear process so I find myself having to go back sometimes to go forward. In a world where the need for speed is so high, we can forget that faster is not always better.

Even after two years of completing the programme, I continue to revisit the recorded masterclasses. I see myself going back to the recordings to reiterate the learnings and revisit some topics.

# Thank you to all our Sponsors

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**We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous sponsors; our headline sponsor Unilever and sponsors Dow, Google and WPP who believed in our mission and supported the programme not only financially but also with in-kind contributions. Thank you to Accenture for providing sponsorship for three founders from the Netherlands allowing them to take part in the Accelerator events in the UK.**

We are grateful for your support in hosting our events at your offices, mentoring our founders, delivering workshops as part of the programme, and connecting us with experts. Your support and contribution have allowed us to provide crucial resources and support to the ethnic minority founders we serve, and your in-kind support has been invaluable in helping us achieve our goals.

Thank you for being a valued partner and helping us achieve our mission.

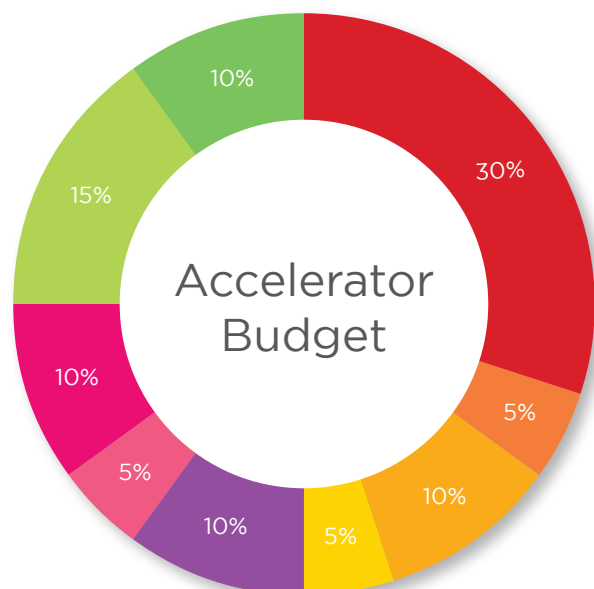


## How our budget was spent:

**Founders on the MSDUK Accelerator programme are at the heart of everything that we do.**

Therefore, 50% of our budget was spent directly on delivering valuable support for the founders. This includes facilitators delivering workshops, 1-2-1 expert support, community events, and programme deliverable incentives.

The remaining funds were allocated to operational costs, programme marketing, and EMB recruitment.



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# ACCELERATOR

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