



Matt: So Simon, great to have you on the show!

Matt: Why don't you start by was by telling us a bit of who you are and sort of where you've come from, your story so far?

Simon: Yes. So, I'm Simon Cabel and I've been a beekeeper for about 16 years now, and so we started Bee Good back in 2008 as a little hobby.

Matt: As most good businesses actually started, I have to be honest.

Simon: Yeah, it was just because I was technical. I did beekeeping really, I used to work in ITM, I did beekeeping as the sort of antidotes to technology. People stand in the field with UBC on and just be, not nobody wants to come near you.

Matt: Right.

Simon: And he was talking to the bees, which is great because they can't give away your secrets. That's fine. And so I did that for a while and obviously as you are a beekeeper, you obviously the whole point of it is you get honey selling honey-

Matt: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Simon: So that's selling honey and you become known as the sort of the bee man in the village, because I live in a village in Hampshire and it's quite useful. You can barter honey for all sorts of things if you need to, so it's good fun. And then, I set up a website, fairly soon after as of 2008, not really to sell the honey, but just because I thought it'd be quite fun to do build a website.

Matt: Okay-

Simon: Very rapidly after that my wife started making lip balms and hand creams from the beeswax and the honey that we collected from the bees. We had some recipe books going back to the 1700s, so we started playing around with those-

Matt: Wow.

Simon: We left out the lead and we left out the [inaudible 00:01:43], just why [inaudible 00:01:44].



Matt: Yeah, that's probably a good thing, yeah.

Simon: Yeah, absolutely. But apart from that, they were, they were fairly authentic and we went through them and tried them and then we sort of started selling them at local fêtes and fairs. And that's really why the website came up because people were sort of asking us could they buy online? And at that point in 2008, eCommerce was still fairly new.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: So, we built a little WordPress websites and we used, I think it was WooCommerce at the time and that worked okay, and we sold stuff through there and then we just kept going to more and more fêtes and fairs and things like that, and we still have our little WordPress website and it got to the point by 2013 where we, we were either going to show every day or I was going down to the post office every day with a big bag of boxes to distribute product.

Matt: Sure.

Simon: It was that point, we either did it properly or we just gave up because it was sort of taking over our lives. So I rashly decided to carry on and I went and got some money from people I knew, some angels, so I tapped up people who owe me for money, and I did a presentation, at a thing called a Pitching for Management-

Matt: Okay.

Simon: Run by a lady called Modwenna Rees-Mogg. Yeah, one of those Rees-Mogg.

Matt: Oh, wow.

Simon: She's lovely though, she's a nice one-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: And I did this pitch and two things happen. The first thing, which was great, was every woman in the audience just sort of laser lighted, straight onto where I was standing and started to, listening to everything I was saying because I wasn't talking about cloud this or technology that-

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



Matt: Yeah.

Simon: The other pitches, and the second thing was that, afterwards in the audience I'd found out there's a guy who used to be the ex-MD of Revlon. Well actually that's a really good, that's a really good thing. You should do that. But at that point Bee Good was just a website. It didn't really have a proper business structure or anything like that. It was just us working from home-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: So I sort of started talking to him and then getting into, well maybe we could do this properly. Then at that time there was also a change in the law regarding cosmetics, where, after that it became quite difficult to be a sort of macro manufacturer stepping up.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: because you had, also have to register all the recipes and things like that-

Matt: That's right, yep.

Simon: Before 2000, at that point we thought, well why don't we do it now? So we actually jumped in and we then started talking around with. We went to various manufacturers, cosmetic manufacturers, to see what they could do for us and how it might work because I had no knowledge of the cosmetics industry whatsoever.Zero.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: But I just went to these people and went, I'd like to make some product, please. How much will it cost me? And it just, eventually we found somebody who we like working with who wants to sort of do things naturally. And at that point I brought on a friend of mine, Glen, who'd worked with me previously in the payment business that we'd set up, and then I, I brought on two ladies who used to work for a company called Liz Earle-

Matt: Oh, wow.

Simon: And there was the band manager and one of the sales managers and sales director and they came and joined me, and off we went and within a few months we had a listing in

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



Waitrose, and that was quite funny. We went into Waitrose and pitched to the Waitrose team. We didn't actually have any product. We had, we had storyboards, we have pictures of artwork-

Matt: So you had pictures of your products-

Simon: Well we had picture of the products, and we had samples of the products, but we didn't actually have products in the packaging. So they just had to imagine what it might look like. And=

Matt: did they know you didn't have products in the packaging?

Simon: Oh yeah, yes, but I mean, luckily they sort of believed in what we were doing. And went, when you make this work? we will take it. So-

Matt: Sorry, it's probably worth just pointing out actually if you don't know Waitrose is a supermarket chain here in the UK and it's quite a high end supermarket chain isn't it? There's probably a-

Simon: Yeah, I suppose the nearest equivalent US equivalent might be whole foods or high ends, something like that.

Matt: Okay, yep.

Simon: Yeah, they've got about a 100, well we are shipping until about 130 stores at the moment there's about 300, I think across the UK. But a lot of those are quite small.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: We go into all the ones that just have a beauty sector, section, sorry.

Matt: Okay.

Simon: And then subsequently from that, we are now into Waitrose International. So we are now shipping to the Middle East through Waitrose, so Waitrose take our product from the UK and sell it in Waitrose stores in Dubai and various other parts of the Middle East.

Matt: I imagine that it's actually quite good, isn't it? because the Middle East and English cosmetics tend to be good sort of.



Simon: Yeah, you'd think so, but we are not quite sure because-

Matt: Okay.

Simon: It's very difficult to find the actual sales speakers out of Waitrose international-

Matt: Right.

Simon: And they're lovely, lovely people, but they're not the most efficient in terms of reporting. So sometimes you sort of not quite sure what you've sold where-

Matt: Right.

Simon: Just, they keep placing orders almost every week, so they order every week, and we ship every week, and it's fun.

Matt: That's wonderful.

Simon: And then, so that obviously helps us. Now the reason why-

Matt: Now all the products that you are shipping are still products that you are making?

Simon: Yes.

Matt: Wow.

Simon: So, we have added a few and we have dropped a couple, but they're basically, the core range is still there, but the critical thing is that from an eCommerce point of view, when you are a new staffer, particularly in something like cosmetics or skincare, where it's all about trust. If you are not on the high street, it's very difficult to get customers to actually believe in your product. Whereas if you say to an online customer, it's in Waitrose, even if it's a Waitrose, even if they don't have a Waitrose in, I don't know, 20 miles of where they live, they'll still think, well actually if they're in Waitrose, they must be quite good.

Simon: So, therefore, that sort of trust goes up a notch.

Matt: That's really interesting. So the fact that you are in Waitrose gives you credibility?



Simon: Yes.

Matt: With people that have never bought from you?

Simon: Yeah, the fact that the customer can walk into a shop and it's all there is on the shelf or maybe buy Waitrose, or maybe buy it online, there's no difference in pricing generally there, there's nothing at all. So we have to maintain the price across all our platforms, so-

Matt: Okay, so would you still do your eCommerce website if you couldn't sell it into Waitrose but you just don't think you'd sell as many of you did?

Simon: No, I think, I think that the whole sort of process would have been, sort of, gone back a long way. It wouldn't have worked nearly as well because you need that credibility. It depends what you are into, if you are selling either headphones or, or bits of electronics, then people will just buy whatever's cheapest-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: Won't have any care. Whereas if it's something like a skincare product, which requires us to say, some trust from the consumer, particularly from female consumers who want to want the sort of, the knowledge behind the product, they are incredibly well versed our customer base.

Simon: They know everything about products, they know what the ingredients are, they know what they do, they know what they don't want in terms of an ingredient. The, they're very harsh on skincare, if I tell somebody, oh I make skincare products, and I'm talking to a group of women instantly in a conversation for only for 20 minutes-

Matt: Yep.

Simon: About their skin care regime what they do, what they like, what they don't like, those sorts of things.

Matt: Yeah.



- Simon: Right. But it is an unusual situation when you are not in, when you come from outside the business to suddenly find that you are dealing with very, very knowledgeable consumers.
- Matt: I mean, it's really, it's an interesting statement about being in Waitrose and having this sort of jewel outlet both in store and online.
- Simon: Yeah.
- Matt: If someone's listening and they're sort of, they're thinking, well, that sounds great. How do I go about doing that? What would be your top tip to someone that would look to do that?
- Simon: You basically have to research the people you are going to work with. So you have to understand how, what, how any retail the retailer works in terms of the margins they want, which will typically be 60% plus, and you have to base your entire product development and product costing on those margins. So you have to be able to make money selling a 10 pound product for four pounds.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: If you can do that and we built that model from the very beginning, then that's fine. But if you can't, then you are not going to succeed in the retailer. Also, depending on the retailer, you may have to wait up to 140 days to be paid. So that's a long, that's quite a few months-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: Of not being paid, so your cashflow is horrible and you'll probably be asked to do, to supply cash for various marketing campaigns, some of which are mandatory. So a lot of retailers are difficult to deal with if you are very small. If you are very big, then that's fine because you can use your leverage against them.
- Matt: Sure.
- Simon: If you are small, you have to do everything they say, and I know quite a few beauty brands who just don't make any money out of retailers, they just do it to, to hopefully promote themselves online so they can make money that way.



Matt: Right.

Simon: we are quite lucky. Working with Waitrose has been very, very kind. Waitrose are a very nice organisation to work with and they pay very rapidly. So our cash flows, much more beneficial for working through Waitrose more, we don't have to contribute vast sums of money to mandatory marketing campaigns that we may or may not want to do.

Matt: Well, that's, I mean that's fascinating because I mean a lot of people I talk to never think retail and digital, they just think digital, do you know what I mean. It's one of those things that people don't think, oh I should try, and do both, but actually what you are saying is certainly in high end products doing both is a good way forward. It'll give you the credibility and it'll give you the extra exposure is a good word, isn't it? To new customers which you wouldn't have seen before.

Simon: Yes, absolutely. I mean it depends on, on the product obviously, but from our point of view, it's essential because we have to build trust with the consumer. That's very difficult online because all they can see is a screen. They can't really obviously physically touch and smell and-

Matt: Yeah

Simon: And taste, well not taste but try out the products. You'll notice when a woman puts up a new product, the first she'll do if it's a skin care product, she'll smell in, she'll scent it, and see what it smells like and she'll try the back of her hand and what does it feel like? So it's very tactile, so our industry is very, very tactile, so if you can get samples into the customer's hands as it were or onto their faces, then that helps tremendously.

Matt: How do you do that online with your cosmetics?

Simon: I think the key thing, and this also relates back to Waitrose, is you have to build up a persona for your brand. So it's relatively very easy for us because honey has been used in skincare for thousands of years, I mean tens of thousands of years.

Simon: It's probably the second oldest skincare product after mud and then really popular, and so it's building up that persona around the brand. That's more than just the fact we make skincare, anybody can make skincare. But we do it with, from British bees, we support other beekeepers because now we have gone beyond our own capability in terms of supply.

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmudson.com



- Matt: Sure, you need more.
- Simon: We need more and we have got a lot of bee farmers and we sponsor their apprenticing.
- Matt: And have you found, because I mean one of the things I've noticed about your product as you have put on it a lot. The, this made in Britain made by British bees.
- Simon: Yeah.
- Matt: It's a big deal, Do you think that's, do you do that because one, you are proud to be British or do you do it because actually no, this is, this actually helps with the product, with the brand and connect with people?
- Simon: Both. So we have recently been doing some sampling in America.
- Matt: Okay.
- Simon: In the Midwest and you would think, initially you'd think, well actually the American consumer will probably prefer American products and certainly American skincare products because they're made in American.
- Matt: Sure.
- Simon: But actually in our branding we found completely the opposite, which was quite surprising. It's very surprising, I mean what had turned up was, that actually these consumers knew everything was going in those products in the American market and they didn't trust the ingredients and they didn't actually trust a lot of the standards.
- Simon: So a lot of the companies, because they felt the European standards in terms of, cosmetic ingredients and the quality, and the fact that we don't have pesticide residue in our honey, unlike America, meant that our products were probably safer than their own.
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: Well they knew more, they already knew that European safety standards are much stricter for consumers in all ways and not just skincare but also food and things like that.



So there is a natural trust of British products and the fact that we sort of package it, a sort of heritage brand helps as well because-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: We sort of come across as quaint and very English.

Matt: Well, that's fantastic. I mean that it's great and I love to see the British flag on there. I just, yeah, I was intrigued, so you've started doing testing in America and you mentioned before we started recording that you are going global, you are doing more stuff in the EU. How's that all going for you?

Simon: So that, that came partly by accident, we started shipping in Amazon in the UK.

Matt: okay.

Simon: So three years ago and we just did it because-

Matt: Do you sell on Amazon as well or just?

Simon: No, we do, we have our own Amazon web store. So if you go, Amazon.co.uk/BeeGood you'll see our little Amazon.

Matt: Okay.

Simon: And that's quite interesting, so we ship quite a lot of products through Amazon and it's probably Amazon Prime.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: Our average basket sell in the UK is about 35 pounds through our website. And on Amazon it's about 15. because as we can see people are buying individual products-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: And probably getting the sort of overall purchase of stuff, a bit like a grocery basket and getting all shipped to them by Prime the next day. So it's a different audience-

Matt: Yeah.



- Simon: And a different way of working, and then through Amazon we started getting oversea sales from Amazon in parts of Europe. And that started getting more and more and more. So, we were sort of thinking about setting up. So we just started set up Amazon France, just translated everything across the board to start selling on Amazon France.
- Simon: And we have got plans to do the same in Germany, Italy and Spain, and then out of the blue, about a month ago, Amazon came to us, rang me up and went, we have got this scheme where we'd like you to register for VAT we are going to help you to register for VAT in seven European countries, including the UK-
- Matt: Okay.
- Simon: For free, and we will pay for it.
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: we will pay for that, also will pay all the reporting for the first year. And now VAT in Europe is very complex because
- Matt: Yeah, a nightmare
- Simon: Some to do it monthly, some doing quarterly-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: Reporting regimes are all different. You've got to know the native language and all the other processes. So that's typically why we have avoided trying to place product in the individual Amazon warehouses because this is important. If you want to ship, I don't know, a product into Germany and you ship it from the UK, that's fine. But if you want to ship a product from Amazon in Germany to that German customer, you have to be registered for VAT in Germany-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: And it's the same across all the countries in Europe.
- Matt: Yeah.



- Simon: So, and also of course if you are not in Germany, then you, that German customer can't use Prime because there's no way it's going to come from the UK that fast enough.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: So again, with Amazon it's very important to, they want you to have the product locally so they can't. So now I'm just, I'm literally just filled in the forms to register ourselves in, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic and Poland.
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: And, and so we will have VAT registrations in those places. And that means we can go into all the Amazon across Europe.
- Matt: That's a really interesting service that Amazon have given you. because I remember when we had stopped registering across Europe, for VAT back because of the exports that we were doing. Like you say, it was every VAT form was in the local language, which is fair.
- Matt: I mean it wasn't in Spanish and in English, it wasn't in German and in English, and so you had to understand that form and then you had to learn how to deal with that tax office. Like you say, it's not straight forward.
- Simon: No.
- Matt: I don't think if you are, if you are in Britain and you are an eCommerce website and you are thinking about exporting, you do need to get your head around. This is pre Brexit of course, but you do need to get your head around the different VAT structures in the different countries.
- Simon: Yes. And what can catch you out, which you must be quite aware of, is if you reach a certain limit where you ship a certain amount of value into that country, even if you are based in the UK and you are shipping, I don't know, let's say electronics or motor parts into some Germany or Spain or somewhere like that. If you hit a certain limit and it can be as low as 30,000 Euros, you automatically registered with the VAT, you have no choice.
- Matt: Yeah, you do. Yeah. It's a legal requirement isn't it?



Simon: Catches people out because they didn't realise until afterwards and then suddenly like, the authorities come knocking on the door.

Matt: Yeah. It's a real strange one because, part of the free trade across Europe, everybody's to assume that VAT was included in that and actually the thing, which I have found across many eCommerce businesses across Europe is the VAT, the VAT that catches them out across international borders with the European countries.

Matt: And so it's a bit like the UK, in the UK you have a VAT threshold don't you? So if you sell over a certain amount of value in products, you have to register for VAT, which in England is sales tax or good sales tax, GST, and if you, each European country has their own limit that you have to register for, and you are right, if you hit those limits of, and you are selling goods into those countries, you then have to register for VAT and pay VAT in that country.

Simon: Yeah.

Matt: And so not only do you have to fill out their tax forms, there are some countries across Europe where VAT is 25% compared to 20% here in the UK.

Simon: Yeah. And it's paid monthly.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: Or-

Matt: And so it came a bit of a nightmare.

Simon: Yes. I mean, everybody from the outside thinks the EU is one, a sort of homogenous thing. It's not. They're still individual countries, they'll still want everything in their language, they'll still want it done in their legal way. So for Spanish VAT, we actually had to go to the Spanish embassy in London as Directors to identify ourselves with our passports to register for VAT, you know.

Matt: Yeah.



- Simon: Okay. That's different for Spain. The, the Germans are fairly straightforward, but different countries do different things. I have now, I've got nine documents for Italy and only four for France for example.
- Matt: Wow. That does sound like an administration headache. I remember it, and remember it well Simon, and I have to be honest, I don't want to go back there.
- Simon: We are using an intermediate company, that basically is going to manage that for us, but Amazon hired them for the first year, as is. So it's around 10,000 euros worth of value or \$10,000 worth of value, which is very nice. Thank you very much, Mr-
- Matt: Yeah, like I say, it's a great service from Amazon. It's very, very clever. And so you mentioned that you are selling or that you are doing some research out in the states, so do you sell out there already or are you thinking about it?
- Simon: No, not really, we have customers who order through our website. So we have a thing on our website called, again, we got approached by PayPal, through something called PayPal global, are you aware of them?
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: And then we will deal with web interpret. So on our website now, there's a little logo on the top bar, which is fairly recent and you can select the country you happen to be.
- Simon: In fact it does some auto analysis, so if you come in from American for example, it'll actually show our website in dollars and some of the spellings will change, particularly the product pages and the checkout pages, and then if you are in, I don't know, somewhere in the Middle East it'll come up in Arabic and if you are in China and-
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: Come up in all...
- Simon: Automatic and that does very well for us. So we have quite a few customers from the states who order through that service.
- Matt: Right, and so does it actually sell in dollars to US customers or is it-



- Simon: Yes.
- Matt: It's not a case of we will show you a US dollar price, but we will charge you sterling really, and it'll be about that amount in US dollars, it comes off your credit card?
- Simon: No, they basically charge US dollars and it's done, it all has to go through PayPal. So basically the customer has to pay through PayPal.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: But they pay through PayPal in their local currency. And it's roughly, it's pretty much the same amount, but because they're working with some very large global career companies, it sort of works out cheaper than we could do it.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: So the customer ordering from America for example, will get their package tracked and all the rest of it in the normal way, but we just ship it to a place in London. And then-
- Matt: Oh, okay.
- Simon: So from our point of it, it's great, because we just shipped next day to London, which is a standard price, a standard rate. And then from that point onward it goes and sort tumbles off across the Atlantic to the Americas or wherever it has to go. And we have literally shipped everywhere from Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, America, bits of, yeah. Everywhere. Really.
- Matt: Wow. And that's all through PayPal Global?
- Simon: Yes. And you can sort of sign up for that on the website and if they think you are fairly professional, they've just set it up.
- Matt: Yeah, and it's a great option I think you want to start shipping internationally and you don't know where to start or begin.
- Simon: Yes.
- Matt: Like you say you take advantage of their platform, don't you really?



Simon: Yeah, and this is a big help in terms of getting yourself out there and then as you start to go out-

Simon: So one of the reasons, for example, why we went to Amazon Germany, whilst we saw little hotspot of people buying from parts of Germany and Austria. So parts the southern Germany and parts of Austria, we kept, we basically every now and again we'd look at all these addresses and they would all be the same sort of, round, the same sort of city or couple of cities.

Simon: Clearly it was people telling every, telling their friends about us then and those little sort of hotspots developing in parts of Europe.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: And that's when we sort of thought, well actually we could do this through Amazon as well. And if we offer them Amazon, maybe they'd like that. So, sometimes they buy direct and sometimes they'll go through Amazon.

Matt: Wow. Well, I mean, it's great that you get in these international markets opening up and you are expanding that way. So I guess if I go back to what you said earlier, about 2013, you had to make a decision whether to do this properly or whether to not do it.

Matt: I take it you are quite pleased that you made the decision to do it. It sounds like you are having fun.

Simon: It's been a very long, hard road. It's not an easy thing to do, be prepared for an enormous amount of hard work and heartache because, as soon as you start succeeding, the whole world, not that the whole world comes to your door. But lots of people come to your door offering things that, that basically end up, you spend a great deal of money and not getting much back in return.

Matt: That's a really interesting statement. Yeah. The amount of phone calls you get every day from, from various different, how can I, how can I describe them? Opportunities.

Simon: Yeah.

Matt: Is quite interesting, isn't it? As your, as your site sort of starts to gather pace.

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



- Simon: Yes. And you get to know, we know how to do social media and you just get bombarded constantly by these people.
- Matt: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What are some things that you've done that you wish you, if you could go back, you wouldn't do then?
- Simon: I'd never approach agencies, ever again. Web Agencies, the bigger they are, the worst they are generally well because you go into these places and they're all in, you know in [inaudible 00:26:05] or other hot spots of, London, looking really cool now these warehouses and you look through stuff and you think, now I know I've got a friend who works in property and I know that the sorts of rental value of these sorts of places. So I'm thinking to myself as I walk in, okay, that's 100,000 a month just to be here.
- Matt: [crosstalk 00:26:25] Yeah. How much are they going to charge me? Yeah.
- Simon: And they're going to charge 30 40, 50,000 a year each. That means they're going to want, this much money. And, and you think, and what typically what happens is you meet the top people who you think, oh very great, they're really good, they obviously know what they're talking about and you got filtered down the organisation, you sort of tumble down the top people down to sort of the person who only joined two weeks ago, who knows nothing, but is learning on the job and you are paying for them to learn-
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: Which really annoys me, because after a while you get to know what you need to do, and so you sort of know that these people aren't really talking the right language and you think to yourself, do you even know what you are talking about? So now what we do is we sort of talk to other people, other websites, other people that we know and we go off and we find individuals that basically know what they're talking about. And-
- Matt: So you don't use agencies or use individuals?
- Simon: Yes.
- Matt: Sort of get recommended.
- Simon: Yes, we have. We have a person that works with us on Amazon, we have a person that works with us on Google or Google Shopping and Google Ads and Google generally. And

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



we have another specialist who's actually amazing, who does, just does Facebook Ads, nothing else. Facebook and Instagram. And our Facebook lady is fantastic and she gives us a sort of four to one ratio.

Matt: which is you take that all day long, right?

Simon: Yeah, absolutely. Every time I spend a pound with her I get for back.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: So why would I not? And the point is, its good value in the sense that it started, and the way they do it is they do it properly, they just ramp you up very slowly and, and every apart from, I think the first six to eight weeks, I think we have always been in profit.

Matt: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Simon: And that's the sort of, that's the sort of relationship we want there, we know we are giving money to these people and okay, they grow their teams, but they grow them organically and they bring these people on properly. And you know that you are actually in effect helping them in living and not funding these giants that have cushy warehouses for people who've got degrees that aren't really worth anything.

Matt: Yeah. I'm, I'm with you. I remember, I remember one time I walked into an office with a client and, we were doing some research around different companies and I took him into their office and the client I was with was extremely wealthy, very wealthy client and quite, I mean quite, I'm not going to mention his name, but he's, he's quite well known and he just, he did exactly the same thing, Simon. And we went to this office and he looked around and he says the guys, well, this all looks very new.

Matt: And they said, oh yeah, it's great. we have just moved in here and these, let me show you our drawings and they brought out these drawings, let me show you our expansion plans and all this sort of stuff. And after about 10 minutes, he just stood up and he said, right, we need to go Matt, and they said, oh, why are you leaving early? He'd just basically said, if you need me to pay for all of this, you are going to be charging way too much money and I'm not interested. And he just walked out.

Simon: Yeah, that's exactly the way we work. I've blown 60,000 pounds a month on bloody agencies and not got anywhere-

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: And never again, so we don't do that.
- Matt: So are you quite self taught, Simon? Are you quite hands on yourself? Are you?
- Simon: I'm trying not to be because my job as an MD is to find everybody else that can replace me.
- Matt: Yup.
- Simon: With what I do and just do it better than me. So you have to have an understanding and it's very simple. I just want it to be profitable guys, if I'm going to spend, as I do the Facebook lady, if I'm going to spend, a thousand pounds or 10,000 pounds or whatever it is with you, I want some more of that back.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: This is the whole point about advertising guys is, it's supposed to generate income. If it's not generating income, it's not advertising-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: Basically, I don't know, marketing or spending money and now we are prepared to do some marketing, but we are not prepared to do it forever for nothing.
- Matt: Yeah, sure, sure.
- Simon: So, we have a really good graphics lady who works from home. The other thing that we have found, which is absolutely brilliant, is Digital Mums. Have you heard of Digital Mums?
- Matt: Why don't you explain what you mean by that?
- Simon: So Digital Mums, so the scenario is, ladies that have, or not always ladies, but people basically who have had an experience in marketing or formal training, degrees or 20 years in the industry doing proper marketing, probably for well known brands who understand marketing inside and out.



- Simon: They typically go and start families, have their families and then think at a certain point, well actually I'd like to get back into the industry, but oh [inaudible 00:31:02], it's changed. And now it's all about social media, and I know nothing about social media other than my own use of Facebook or Instagram.
- Simon: So Digital Mums will take those individuals, they will basically check that they are who they say they are in terms of their qualifications. And then they will take them on a proper course, sort of homeworking, up skilling in social media.
- Matt: Oh, okay.
- Simon: You know about marketing, we are not going to tell you about marketing because you know what marketing is. But this is how you do marketing in the social media world, this is what you need to know, this is how Amazon works, this is how Google works, this is how Facebook works, this is how Instagram works.
- Simon: These are social media channels you need to think of if this customer is a, I don't know, a gym or a hairdresser versus somebody who's selling product or somebody else.
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: So they have very, very good trainers who basically train these ladies through a, well it's typical ladies, through a course lasting a few months. And at the end of that course they're then allowed or integrated with a business.
- Simon: So we might, we approached them a couple of years ago and I think at that time, and I could be wrong, it was about 300 pounds a month and we spent 300 pounds a month on this lady. And she was, I mean, she was amazing, I mean-
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: She had spent something like 50 years inside Johnson and Johnson, so while she wasn't necessarily a skincare expert, number one, she was a skincare customer. So she knew what the customer wanted.
- Matt: Absolutely. Target audience, definitely-



Simon: Her expertise was marketing in a very similar field, so she was an expert in marketing pharmaceuticals, which is not a million miles away from skincare in the sense that it's a very regulated, organised in a very regulated business and you go through certain channels and you do certain things and so she was fantastic.

Matt: Wow.

Simon: And we were with her until her husband got a posting somewhere overseas, and now we have a lady working with us now and she's actually one of the Digital Mum tutors. So, that's fantastic. we have gone from a graduate now in somebody who actually teaches the Mum.

Matt: And so is this like, I mean I've, I've heard the phrase Digital Mums, we have employed Digital Mums, but not through the service maybe that you are talking about, Is this like an online service?

Simon: Yeah, it's an online service. So you can come at it from two angles. You can either be somebody wanting to join the service to be redeployed and get money, because 99% of these people work from home around their families and just make your mitigation.

Simon: So, our mom as it were, Rebecca, she will come in once or twice a month, and we will just sit down and discuss things and then the rest of the time she's working from home and we were sort of Skype or Zoom or whatever to keep in touch, and the other approaches from companies wanting somebody to do marketing for them in the social world, but they don't have much money so you can get an additional Mum very cheaply and she learns with you. So as part of her course she works with real companies doing real marketing and she or he is overseen by a sort of supervisor person.

Matt: Yeah, yeah, that sounds like a great idea.

Simon: And I think it's fantastic because small companies expertise at a very cost effective rate.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: And obviously if you like that person, and if that person is getting back into business or getting back into work, there's no reason why you can't end up employing them

Matt: Sure.

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



- Simon: Or they can become your marketing manager, market director-
- Matt: And it works out all fantastic, fantastic.
- Simon: So, that's what-
- Matt: I'm going to check it out. Just I'll Google Digital Mums later and we will find out.
- Simon: It's a fantastic scheme because there's a huge wasted resource out there of people who've had careers in whatever field it might be, have had families and they want to come back in again. And then they feel they've lost 10 years of that knowledge.
- Matt: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I mean we have, we have hired, two new people in the last few weeks and both of which are moms returning back to the workplace-
- Simon: Yes.
- Matt: And very dynamic, very, very capable, lovely people to be around. Very determined, very stoic, just get on and solve problems. I mean, dream people to have around. I just have to be flexible.
- Simon: Yes, in a previous life when I did my first startup, there were three of us, three geeks in a dining room in Bournemouth. And our first employee was a lady called Rose. We had no idea how to interview anybody, but we thought that since she had six children, she could organise anything.
- Matt: That's probably quite true.
- Simon: She was fantastic. So within two years she became my Commercial Director and we would have people ringing us up, go, please don't let me deal with her because she's scary. Well, she knew how to get a deal and she was basically, she took no nonsense from anybody and it was just great working with her, luckily she was on our side. I don't know what we'd have done the other way, but that resource is really useful.
- Matt: That's really fun. Simon, I guess a few more questions for you. One, you use the Shopify platform for your website, right?
- Simon: Yeah. We moved into Shopify in 2013. Yeah, 2013, '14.



- Matt: So this was when you decided to do this properly, full time, you moved on to Shopify.
- Simon: Yeah.
- Matt: And you've stayed there ever since?
- Simon: Yes. we are still on Shopify and it still works for us. we are still on the sort of \$79 a month thing, but obviously it's a lot more than \$79 a month with all the various charges.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: But it works for us, I have to say it is absolutely bulletproof. I mean the amount of times that it's ever gone down, I can count, within five years, I think twice maybe.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: And it's been down for like two or three hours and it came back again. I think they were attacked at one point with a big DS attack, and it went down for a few hours, but they came back again, it all worked.
- Matt: Yep.
- Simon: So it's very reliable from that point of view. It's very good because they've got a lot of tools in built to the system. It just lets you run the business and just get [inaudible 00:37:15]. I will say it's not easy to set up because what you don't realise is there's not a lot of stuff you have to do behind the scenes in terms of things like the email content and integrating into various carriers and, the Royal Mail system or whatever courier you want to use.
- Matt: Yeah, it's not a five minute job is it's set up the shopping process?
- Simon: No it's not, and I did it myself the first time round. Well, most of the times I've done it and yeah, it took all my skills to sort of work out, you know I landed into that programming and html again, going back, looking up the symbols that I didn't know. because it is not that easy, but yeah, I mean it does literally, it just sits there and shuns as long, quite happily every day-



- Matt: Yeah, and if it is working well for you. Great. I mean the design of your site, is that something you guys did? Is that a theme? How did you come across that?
- Simon: So we, yeah, so like everybody else in the world, I think we used the Turbo theme from Out of the Sandbox, which seems to be the Shopify theme at the moment or has been for a couple of years now. And again, it's very stable and it gives us what we want to do. we are about to change the website, I think we are going to, so we can have a refresh, We-
- Matt: Are you are going to stay on Shopify, you are just going to change the design?
- Simon: we are going to turn the whole design on its head and basically start looking at it from mobile first because now, about a year ago we noticed that the mobile traffic was exceeding the desktop and obviously that means that we have to focus on mobile and so we are going to start optimising the site so it actually loads as fast as possible.
- Matt: So what would be one of the key things that you think you should change them to make it more mobile friendly?
- Simon: I think we are going to change the general, not so much the look and feel of the website. we are going to reduce the amount of texts on certain pages.
- Matt: Okay.
- Simon: So that it just gets to the point, particular product pages-
- Matt: Mm-hmm (affirmative)
- Simon: And it's a careful balance because customers want to know everything there is about our product in terms of what the ingredients are, what it does, how it works. But at the same time you've got to get to the heart of it and-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: Let the customer make the decision very quickly, I want to buy that. because of course there's two types of consumers isn't there? Well there're many types, but the two main types are people who have never seen your website before, versus people who've come the 10th time and just want to reorder something. And-

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



- Matt: And you still have a good balance between the two.
- Simon: That's a big spectrum isn't it? Between-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: Between somebody whose never heard of your brand before and wants to know everything about you, versus the person that just wants to come on and spend 10 seconds ordering something and then get the hell off and do something else.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: So trying to build a website that meets both is quite difficult. You've got to be very economical with your words and your copy to try and get that point across and yet still let the customer buy rapidly, and so we do that regularly with, with, when we send out emails to our customer base, we try and give them links to specific product pages and specific mag pages rather than just the website. Which I think is the biggest mistake that people make, I think.
- Matt: You find it's okay building landing pages in Shopify?
- Simon: No, it doesn't work very well, I find things like Zip Pages works quite well.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: we have used that in the past, I really haven't found anything that really works the way I'd love it too. Or we have been using Shogun, you know Shogun?
- Matt: Yep.
- Simon: That too at, we have probably used just about everything at some point.
- Matt: It sounds like you've tried every single thing that's out there at some point.
- Simon: I was saying this earlier, there's a curve, there's like a bell curve that people go through when they get their Shopify website and think well, I got a shop for my website, and they get a few sales and, well I've got some sales and then they think I could make it better, let's add this thing.



- Simon: So they add a thing, add an app to the website that does something. And then they add another one and then by a few months later they've got like, three dozen applications all running on the Shopify website and they wonder why all this just collapses in a heap of sort of molten slowness.
- Matt: Is that like talking from experience?
- Simon: Oh, I've been there. And then even worse, you think this is a rubbish, I get rid of all, so you go delete them all and then find the whole website now breaks because the code is still there doing stuff that it shouldn't doing because there's nothing left behind to actually link to, and then you've got to go through the code line by line, removing all the nonsense people left behind-
- Matt: Right, right.
- Simon: Or if we had to do in the end, just give up, go back to the standard theme and rebuild the website-
- Matt: Start again.
- Simon: Which is quite good in Shopify in the sense of you can go back to another theme.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: And go back to the vanilla site and to set it all up again, sometimes that's actually better than trying to repair the damage you've already done to yourself-
- Matt: Yeah.
- Simon: So they're very strict now on apps.
- Matt: Yeah, that's fair enough. I'm intrigued to talk to you about it just simply because what tends to happen is people will use Shopify as a starter to platform. So they start their site on Shopify, it's super easy. If you want to start a shop, an eCommerce site it's probably the easiest platform I think to do it on, right?
- Matt: You set up your website, you start to get a few sales, the few sales turn into a few more sales and likely you get to a place where you go, do I want to do this properly, it's



becoming a proper business. Around that point, which is typically, I'm going to say probably quarter of a million to 300,000 in turnover for an average site, right. Not every site, but just my experience, is the point in which people go, I now want to move off the Shopify platform. But you have said, actually, no, I want to stay on the Shopify platform. I want to avoid the big web agencies. I'm quite happy with what we have got. We just need to tweak it and continue to develop it.

Simon: Yeah, I mean I think the core of Shopify works very well. It does actually work and it's completely reliable. And if you want to, you can go up to Shopify plus, which is the big platform. We don't see a need to go there yet, there's some quite nice things to have, but it's a big jump cost wise for us at the moment. And we are quite happy where we are in terms of the core Shopify services.

Simon: It's the peripherals that get you, it's the fact that you've got to then vault in an email system to do nice emails to your customers to encourage them to come back. You've got to have a nice sort of thing that does invoicing properly and you've got to integrate into your accounting system and that can be an absolute nightmare.

Matt: Yep.

Simon: And then you've got stock control, and the thing that the absolutely foxes, everybody, which I'd never think about when they begin with is how do you manage returns? When somebody wants to return something and you now need to reverse the process. That's when your web, that's when your system dies. because then you suddenly realise, I've no process to do this. I don't know how to do it.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: How do I send this person a label, because I haven't integrated the postal system properly? Or how do I manage it back in the inventory when I got to put this thing back in stock or those sorts of things. So it's the peripheral around Shopify, I find the most difficult.

Matt: And that's normally the point, I think as business grows and expands, people go, now I'm willing to, to move away from this to get all the customization that I want.

Simon: Yeah. I've found that, well, I found out that we were able to do everything we to do on Shopify, there are alternatives. My previous life I've built websites in Magenta. Oh my God. I presume it's got better now?

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



Matt: No, it hasn't-

Simon: [crosstalk 00:44:45] nightmare.

Matt: Yeah, no, it's still the same now. It's fascinating. Actually, I was talking to a lady earlier on in New York, she's going to be on the podcast soon actually. She's lovely, and she was talking about Magenta and how it's just an unmitigated nightmare to do what they need to do on it, but there was no real alternative for them at the time, yeah, fascinating.

Simon: [crosstalk 00:45:04] we are skincare business, not a web developer and so let's just get the thing working reliably and to the best of our abilities. because we don't just sell on the web, we work with retailers and we now started to expand internationally through distributors and other supermarkets and places like that. So we don't want, websites are very, very important but it's not the, be all end all.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: I think you can focus too much on your website and just, you should get to a point where it just works. It should be like a series of steps, you basically run the thing level for a long period of time, nice and stable that everything works and then you plan to jump to the next level and you better plan properly so that when you do make that jump, you have a period of instability, whilst you settle everything down. And then you make sure it all runs properly for, a year or two and then you jump again.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: Not wants to do continuous development in your website.

Simon: Well, I mean I have to admit something, it's quite refreshing to hear you are quite laid, down to earth is probably the expression, the down to earth approach and it's working well for you, which is great. One final thing, I mean you mentioned, before we hit the record button and you actually went to Crowd Cube, didn't you to get some funding for business.

Simon: Yeah, We wanted to expand the business overseas and you do that we thought, well let's do Crowd Cube. We'd heard good things about or crowd funding generally. So we had a sort of quick review of the various groups that do crowd funding-

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmudson.com



Matt: Yep.

Simon: And decided to work with Crowd Cube and yeah, initially we thought we would raise a small, fairly small sum of money, which is just a hundred thousand pounds just to see what it was like.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: Actually, I went into this not really going for the money as such, the money's great, but actually to sort of use it as a marketing opportunity and the results were miraculous. So we now have 500 new investors stokebrand advocates and that's alive in the world. And when I'm in all over the world, I mean we have people in Peru, Indonesia-

Matt: Wow.

Simon: The Americas obviously, Canada, there's somebody in Iceland. These are people who've put money into our business and not necessarily huge sums of money, but the point is if I want to go into Iceland and distribute into Iceland, there's a person, I can go to that person say, what do you think about brands in Iceland? Do you think we would do well?

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: I could ask them and it will be their interest to help me.

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: So if I want them, I've now got 500 new salespeople basically who-

Matt: 500, brand advocates is what you are saying?

Simon: Yeah, people who are interested in advance and seeding now some have a put [crosstalk 00:47:59], some haven't. The point is, now I've got these new brand advocates and already a lot of them, well not a low of them, few of them are already distributing. So they're, they're quite clever.

Simon: There people who already distribute product in different markets, who come back to you going, well I've invested in your business, but actually I run this company in



Indonesia, it does skincare distribution, I'd really like to work with you. Well actually that's, that's very clever on their part and yeah, of course we will talk to them-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: because they'll know what we need to do-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: To get approval in the Indonesian skin care market, which I know actually zero, but there's somebody out there that wants to take our brand on, fine. We can talk to them.

Matt: When did the, when did the crowd funding end?

Simon: Well, you do it for a month. So we did it from mid March to mid April.

Matt: So it was just recently at the time of recording this.

Simon: So it's only a few weeks ago. So we hit our target in seven days.

Matt: Wow.

Simon: And it was just amazing just to watch this money just pouring in, but its hard work because, yes you've got 500 people coming in but about 300 of them ask questions. So you are constantly, asking, sorry answering questions-

Matt: Yeah.

Simon: From people and there asking all sorts of questions, financial questions, product questions, branding questions, your ethics. In our market, our ethics are very important and some people were asking a great deal about how do you treat the bees and what do you do with this and what do you do with that? And so you've got to be prepared to drop everything and have, we had two people doing nothing else, then responding and dealing with queries from customers.

Matt: And did you get a company to help you with your pitch and presentation or did you just do it all yourselves?

Kuriosity Podcast Transcript:

#2: From the kitchen table to a worldwide eCommerce business with Simon Cavill

www.mattedmundson.com



- Simon: We did most of it ourselves, we had a consultant who has experience doing this before. We were told, it's quite interesting, we were told, don't bother with Facebook advertising because it's not going to work for fundraising. Well actually it worked really well
- Matt: So you were told, but you completely ignored that advice and just did it anyway.
- Simon: Yeah, we got about, I mean we didn't get a vast amount, but we got about 12,000 pounds through Facebook advertising-
- Matt: Wow.
- Simon: For very little, for a few hundred.
- Matt: Still, a good ROI right?
- Simon: Absolutely, a fantastic ROI and again, I don't think it would have worked for most brands because we are skincare and because we are obviously very female focused, I think we picked up on that vibe and people would just wanted to invest because we were nice to bees.
- Matt: Well Simon listen, it's been fascinating talking to you. Really appreciate your time. If I could finish maybe with one final question.
- Simon: Yeah, sure.
- Matt: It's 2019. If you could sort of do that magic thing, where you go back to 2008 and it all starts, what's the one piece of advice you'd give yourself, do you think?
- Simon: I think stick at it, because there are days in the beginning where you think, I've not sold anything today, nothing's gone out the door, but you've just got to keep at it and you just got to keep walking and believe in yourself and eventually things will turn around and then things will come to you. But you've just got to keep working at it and be very stubborn and just keep going. Because there's that critical time where you go from working part-time or having a full-time job and doing this thing at night, to then jumping into it full- time-
- Matt: Yeah.



Simon: And you just got to keep believing in yourself.

Matt: I liked your phrase, you've got to be stubborn-

Simon: Part one.

Matt: Some ways sold as a bad thing when you are a kid. But actually in this industry it's very good, very helpful.

Simon: It's [crosstalk 00:51:29] because people will tell you it's never going to work. And you do, I'll probe you wrong, I'll scale down.

Matt: Yeah, I've definitely been there. Listen Simon, it's been great. Where can people connect with you? How can they get ahold of you?

Simon: BeeGood.co.uk

Matt: And it's worth saying, B is spelled B-E-E rather than one-

Simon: Yes, that's all one word, BeeGood.co.uk

Matt: Fantastic-

Simon: And we are on Amazon, as Amazon.co.uk/beegood

Matt: Okay, and that's just Amazon.co.uk at the moment?

Simon: Yeah, we are also on Amazon France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Matt: Wow. Okay. Well fantastic. So do get in touch with Simon and check out his beautiful website and why don't you buy his products? because I am sure they will be absolutely amazing. Simon listen, super appreciate your time, it's been great getting your wisdom and insight on eCommerce. Thanks very much.

Simon: Thank you.