

60 SECONDS WITH AN ENTREPRENEUR...

GARETH CLAASE

Role: Founder

Company Name: Gecko Glazing

Sector: Sustainable Manufacturing

Base: Edinburgh

Purpose: Reducing home heating costs and emissions by cutting window heat loss easily and affordably



Tell us a bit about your business? We've invented a UK-patented form of secondary glazing which is particularly suitable for historic sash and case windows. Our Gecko panes pop inside the existing frame of windows, cutting heat loss by up to 50%. Uniquely, our system can be installed in just minutes per pane, with no tools or DIY skills needed, and don't obstruct the existing window.

How did you come up with your business idea? I was frustrated with the existing solutions on offer for my own windows. With a bit of an engineering background, it was a case of 'why can't I get something like this...' Followed by a LOT of time in the shed.

What's been your biggest challenge to date? I won't be alone here: Covid arrived just as I quit my job to pursue Gecko glazing in earnest. Net, it probably set us back a year overall... But actually no... on reflection, having to learn so much, so fast, all the time, and juggle a million and one things, is and has been the hardest thing.

How has SE (or any other support organisation in the Scottish ecosystem) helped you on your journey? Unlocking Ambition was transformational. It's well named. Sure it gives you expertise and networking, but more than that it gives you BELIEF. I came out of the programme super charged and raring to go, and to go higher and faster than I'd previously planned.

What's been the highlight of the last year for you? Ooooooh hard to choose. Hitting £30k monthly income within 12 months of our proper launch was a great business milestone. But really, I think the stream of positive messages from customers is the best thing. We're really solving a problem that has frustrated many of them. They're really complimentary.

What's your favourite thing about being an entrepreneur? The variety and control, and the need for constant problem-solving. I previously worked in finance. The routine bored the pants off me, and the socks, and the politics drove me nuts.

How did you come up with your business name? Originally the panes actually stuck to the glass. We worked out pretty quickly that sticking anything to 100 year old, 2mm thick, fragile float glass was NOT a good idea. However despite changes to the design of the product, the name stuck (SORRY!).

What's the best thing about being an entrepreneur in Scotland? The ecosystem for entrepreneurs is excellent. It's far better than most areas of the UK, with the possible (and only possible) exception of London. The support, networking and overall environment for entrepreneurs is great.

What's the best piece of advice you ever received? Never wipe your bum with a jaggy nettle. Sage. Otherwise variations of a theme of 'don't give up'. Also, never, ever worry too much, because it never, ever helps anything.

What advice do you wish you hadn't listened to? Hmm, not specific advice, but many people tend to highlight what could go wrong and advise caution. They're often well-meaning, but if you listened to them you'd never do anything.

What has been your proudest achievement since starting your businesses? I'm proudest that we're already helping to keep the heating bills of hundreds of households down at such a crucial time. Many households are under huge financial pressure thanks to rocketing heating costs. It's very satisfying to be able to help out a bit. That, and we're reducing carbon emissions due to home heating, and helping preserve historic building fabric.

Is there anything on your business bucket list? I'm looking forward to expanding internationally. Fingers crossed that international patent application comes through... (but we'll export even if not).

Who's been your biggest supporter? My wife. When I asked her if I could quit my stable, well-paid job (despite a big mortgage and two young kids) for some reason she didn't laugh me straight out of the room. She really is my proverbial rock.

How do you start your day? I try to get up at 5.30, grab a coffee and do a couple of hours' work before getting the kids' breakfast ready. You can get an amazing amount done in that time. Traditionally I'd try to do 20 mins of exercise, but I've fallen out of the habit the last year (maybe tomorrow...).

What do you do for fun after a busy week? Hang out with the family. When not being little nightmares, the kids are a scream at the moment (7 and 9). Otherwise, if I get the chance, I read.

What would you say is the secret to success? Just. Keep. Going. Everything that can go wrong will go wrong, but that is OK. Don't let it get you down.

What's your big dream? I This may sound corny, but it's to see Scotland, and of course ideally the rest of the world, hit net zero. We CAN do it. Despite setbacks, we're accelerating in the right direction. I think we're going to get it done. It just needs to happen much faster.

Where can we find out more about your business? www.geckoglazing.co.uk