

60 SECONDS WITH AN ENTREPRENEUR... LESLEY THOMSON

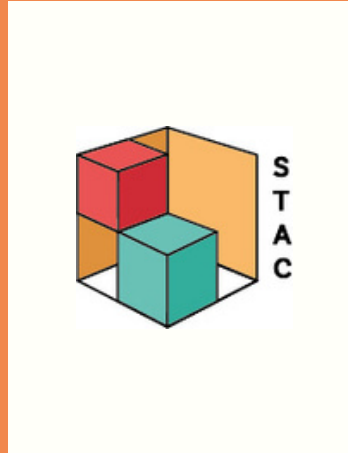
Role: CEO

Company Name: WashR

Sector: Environmental Technology

Base: Glasgow

Purpose: A cup washing system that will allow users to quickly clean their reusable coffee cups on the go



Tell us a bit about your business? At WashR we are developing products that make it easier to make sustainable lifestyle choices without compromising convenience.

How did you come up with your business idea? Whilst studying the circular economy at university, the class was challenged to become more circular in our everyday behaviours. As a regular coffee drinker, I was disposing of 2 cups a day. After switching to a reusable cup I realised how difficult it was to make reuse a habit, as I didn't have anywhere on the go to clean between uses. By developing WashR we hope it becomes easier to make a habit out of reusing!

What's been your biggest challenge to date? The development journey has taken around 5 years, and securing funding to sustain the focus and continue to develop the product has been a challenge, as I am sure most start-ups find!

How has SE (or any other support organisation in the Scottish ecosystem) helped you on your journey? Having won Scottish Edge, we were able to kick-start product development to prove the concept, SE funding to support IP protection, Glasgow City Council funding to support design development and the Glasgow Guarantee Scheme for recruitment of our engineer. Zero Waste Scotland consultancy to build a carbon calculator to demonstrate the carbon benefit of WashR. SE funding has enabled us to develop finished products for market trials. Throughout the entrepreneurial journey, we have been supported by Scottish accelerators, RBS and Strathclyde Inspire who provided advice, mentoring and consultancy. Most recently we have benefited from the ecosystem and partnerships at the Smart Things Accelerator (STAC), who have supported us in reaching the final development stages to get to market.

What's been the highlight of the last year for you? A visit to Ireland to meet potential customers. The Irish government at planning to introduce a cup levy so there is demand for a cup cleaning system to encourage use of reusable cups.

What's the best thing about being an entrepreneur in Scotland? The support of fellow entrepreneurs who are willing to share their wisdom.

What's the best piece of advice you ever received? You can't eat an elephant in one bite – take it one step at a time and you'll reach your end goal!

Who's been your biggest supporter? My co-founder, we keep each other motivated. If one of us has had a bad day, the other is there to keep the team spirits up.

How do you care for each other's wellbeing at work? Every morning before we start the day, we make a pot of coffee and have some chit chat, this makes it easier to gauge how everyone in the team is feeling, and what support they may need for the day ahead.

How do you start your day? I either go to the gym or walk to work, some exercise and fresh air helps clear my mind ready for the day ahead.

What do you do for fun after a busy week? I have two young kids so I'm normally facilitating their fun rather than having my own!

What's your best tip for achieving a good work/life balance? Trust and flexibility, its more about working together to reach the company goals than hours worked.

What would you say is the secret to success? People - having a great team that are motivated to work towards the same goal.

Is there anything on your business bucket list? I'd love for our business to achieve B Corp Status in future.

How would you like to be remembered? For creating a happy, rewarding and productive place to work.