

MSDUK Accelerator

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

Our Principles

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.



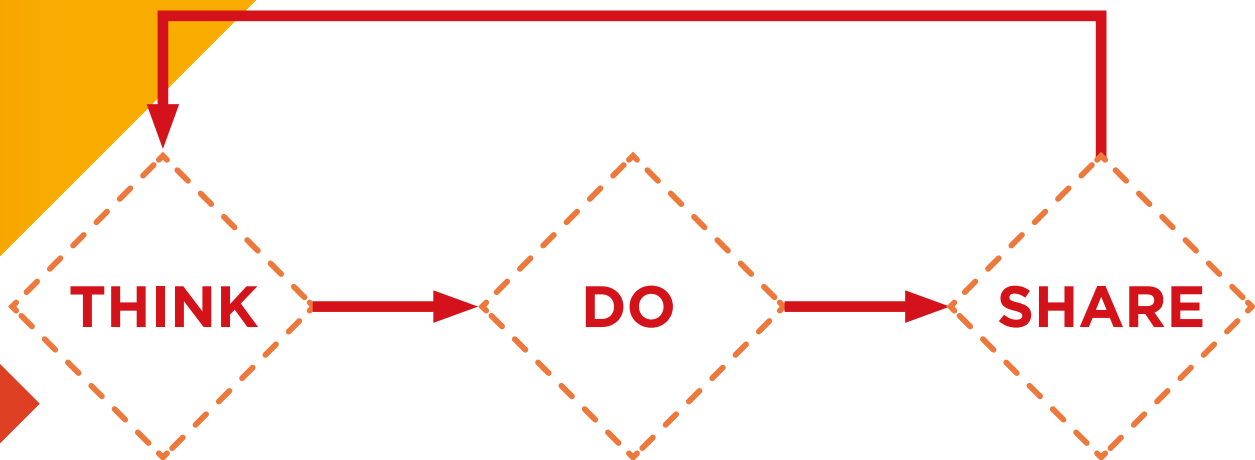
"Through the MSDUK Accelerator, we take immense pride in championing the ethnic minority entrepreneurs, equipping them with the tools, resources, and connections needed to break barriers, redefine success, and paving the way for a future of equitable opportunities and entrepreneurial success."

Karolina Jagodzinska,
Senior Manager for Innovation Hub, MSDUK

Key Dates

This four-month programme will run five modules, each consisting of THINK, DO and SHARE weeks.

- ▶ Module 1: Customer Discovery and Validation
 - ▶ Module 2: Product Development/Scaling Services
 - ▶ Module 3: Growth Marketing
 - ▶ Module 4: Sales and Communication
 - ▶ Module 5: Pitching
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Week 1 - THINK

Learn from our expert module facilitators

Engage in educational masterclasses and activities with facilitators

Week 2 - DO

Complete tasks set by facilitators

Gain additional insights through guest workshops and EMB insights

Get 1-2-1 support from facilitators during office hours

Week 3 - SHARE

Organise 1-2-1s with experts in residence and mentors

Reflect on the past three weeks with the cohort during Feedback Fridays

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, JCDcaux, 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.

Demo Day

Once the programme finishes, founders will have a chance to submit their pitch decks to present at one of MSDUK's flagship events, Business Opportunity Day (BOD). The strongest presentations will be chosen to present to our industry and community partners, corporate members, and other SME leaders.

What is Business Opportunity Day?

Business Opportunity Day is one of our flagship events bringing our corporate, partner, and business networks together. This event will not only give you the chance to meet many buyers from our corporate network but will also provide you an opportunity to meet with our partners and fellow entrepreneurs.



How do we choose the strongest pitches?

To take part in the MSDUK Accelerator Demo Day founders will need to, not only submit a strong pitch deck, but also show commitment and engagement in the programme.

Pitch decks will be evaluated on a few elements including solution presentation, traction, validation, understanding of customers' needs and others.

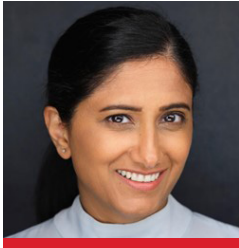
Apart from that, founders will need to meet the following criteria:

- ▶ Complete four out of five tasks for MSDUK Accelerator modules
 - ▶ Attend 70% of the compulsory sessions
 - ▶ Submit a strong B2B sales pitch proposal before the submission deadline
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WHO DO WE SUPPORT? ▲



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

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: 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.



Make your application stand out

Problem

Clearly define the problem your venture addresses. Many businesses focus on issues based on assumptions rather than genuine needs of the market. A strong response should precisely identify the demographic facing the problem, including age ranges, demographics, and professions. Quantify the scale of the problem by indicating the number of affected individuals. Great answers will go beyond by demonstrating that individuals are actively seeking alternatives or experiencing difficulties in their current methods of problem resolution.

Solution

Present your solution and highlight the primary value it brings to your customers. Many start-ups fail due to creating offerings that lack market demand. A strong response should outline how your solution tackles the problem at a high level. An exceptional answer will provide concrete evidence of how your solution effectively addresses the specific issue you're targeting.

Target Customer

Identify your target audience and elaborate on the research or interactions you've conducted to enhance your understanding of them. Clarify the methods used to gain insights into your customers' preferences and needs. This question aims to gauge your level of customer-centricity and the extent to which you've invested in comprehending your target demographic.

Business Model

Provide a clear description of your business model and how your venture generates revenue. While entrepreneurs commonly outline their business models, a strong response should delve into the specifics of your key unit economics. Assess whether you've comprehensively calculated costs to ensure profitable margins. Additionally, demonstrate your grasp of the availability and feasibility of resources needed to meet product demands, including materials and services.

Traction

Traction is a key indicator of your ability to execute, and examples could range from creating an MVP, building a community, amassing an email waiting list, receiving awards, gaining press coverage, or securing investments. Highlight significant milestones attained thus far, such as paying customers, profits, funding rounds, and operational accomplishments. While substantial traction is not required at this stage, it demonstrates that your product or service is resonating positively with customers. Keep in mind that this program aims to challenge your strategic thinking while creating opportunities for further traction.

B2B Fit

The MSDUK Accelerator specifically caters to ethnic minority businesses with a B2B focus, so it's crucial to determine if your business fits within this framework. Define the type of corporate company that aligns with your interests and would serve as an ideal client or pilot partner. Consider the organization that best complements your business goals. Clarify your reasons for selecting this specific type of corporate, outlining how it aligns with your business strategy and objectives. It's important to note that comprehensive answers are not expected, as the program is designed to offer insights and guidance on effectively navigating corporate procurement processes.

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