



Oxford based clothing brand 'Ducky Zebra' inspires confidence & determination in children with their sustainable, gender-neutral clothing range.

The fashion industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions and nearly 20% of wastewater. In the UK an estimated 350,000 tonnes of clothing ends up in landfill every year. This is not sustainable. Ducky Zebra are passionate about reducing environmental impact and working ethically. They design and produce colourful, organic clothes for children that are kind to the planet and kind to the people that make them. Using certified organic cotton they reduce environmental impact, and have slow, sustainable fashion as one of their core values.

Ducky Zebra's founder, Sally Dear, tells us how the business idea came about "I'm a mum of two and one day my daughter, who was 4 at the time, said to me that she couldn't be a taxi driver when she was older because she was a girl. It stopped me in my tracks., I thought we were doing well at ensuring there were no stereotypes in our household. But, we're not the only influences on our children. I became much more aware of the books she was reading, the games she was playing and the clothes she was wearing. Her clothes were mostly pink, cute and impractical, with messages of kindness and beauty."

Sally continues "I undertook research with over 1,000 parents and carers and from that I discovered there was frustration not only with girls clothes, but also with boys clothes, which are often sludgy in colour, with images of predators and messages of bravery, heroism and confidence. From further research I discovered there were links between this type of messaging and future decisions and choices we make later in life, including subject choices, career path, mental health and behaviours. This is when I decided to quit my full time job in marketing and start up a business creating clothes to help both girls and boys equally, with a focus on inspiring kindness and confidence in all children. We are now coming up to a year since launch and things couldn't be better."

Becoming a force for good in the clothing industry

Sustainable fashion production across the world is growing rapidly. Organic and natural materials are used, working conditions at the factories are fair and the pollution emission is kept as low as possible.



Sally explains how important this was for her from day one. "Sustainability is at the forefront of Ducky Zebra's brand. We use high quality, sustainable fabric and eco packaging. We have generous sizing and our clothes include features like turn-up cuffs to increase longevity. Our unisex clothes are designed to last and pass on to siblings and friends, regardless of the season or gender. And, our factory uses solar energy, they harvest rainwater and use sustainable printing processes. We are really proud to be helping children as well as the planet in what we do at Ducky Zebra."

Support from OxLEP's eScalate programme

OxLEP Business have been supporting Ducky Zebra throughout their journey since launch and Sally describes the relationship and how they have helped her success to date. "I was involved in the 'Meanwhile in Oxfordshire' programme and secured a pop-up shop in the Oxford Covered Market. This exposure came at the perfect time and totally transformed my business during launch. It was through this programme that I heard about OxLEP and was invited to some eScalate workshops. These were specifically for purpose led businesses so I jumped at the chance for free support and attended some workshops. They were a great help to me."

"I got to know the OxLEP team and they kept me up to date on other support opportunities such as the 'Pitch for the Future' competition. This gave small businesses the opportunity to practise their pitches and be in with a chance of winning £1000. So, I took part in that and Ducky Zebra actually won which was amazing. We used the prize money to help raise more awareness of our brand. The competition also gave me more confidence in articulating what we do, the problems we solve, why people should support us, as well as outlining our financials. It was a great experience and really helped refine our messaging."

Another great experience was attending OxLEP's 2-day investment ready training session. We had excellent advice from experts on how to present financial projections for growth, we got in depth information on IP and learnt more about what angel investors would be looking for in a pitch. We were also given the opportunity to practice and refine our pitch in front of a group. One of the things that came out of this was the relationships I built with the other businesses. Although we were all from totally different industries we shared many of the same issues and concerns. I still regularly meet up with some of the people I met there and we continue to support each other."



Being kind is the future

Ducky Zebra are coming up to their first year of trading and it has been a wonderful success story so far. Sally is now looking to the future where Ducky Zebra will continue to innovate in the environmental space, increase product lines, build a wider customer base and also look to add to their internal team.

Sally tells us how she will continue to lean on OxLEP for support as well as the wider community.

“ I didn't realise how valuable OxLEP's local support would be for me. What I really like about them is not only the support that they provide, but the community they've allowed me to become a part of. ”

When you're working on your own this is really valuable. I've also had a lot of support around my own personal confidence and growth. I'm excited for the future, I'm going to continue to focus on kindness and confidence with my clothing range as well as on a personal level in my business relationships. I hope that Ducky Zebra continues to go from strength to strength."

DUCKY ZEBRA

TO PURCHASE DUCKY ZEBRA CLOTHING
PLEASE VISIT THEIR WEBSITE: duckyzebra.com

Find out more about OxLEP's eScalate programme:

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