



Aspiring Social Enterprise case study: The Inner Peace People

Our social enterprise journey so far

First off, I'm going to start with the name of our social enterprise, The Inner Peace People C.I.C. Inner peace is very important to us all and I thought it would be an inclusive name to anyone connected, without giving a label to our users.

We focus on offering an alternative form of café where the ethos is about promoting good mental wellbeing. Having personal experience of a mental breakdown two years ago, I discovered there was hardly anywhere that was non-clinical to visit and speak to likeminded people. I created a friendly and tranquil atmosphere for people to open up about their mental health with people with similar experiences. We make our ambiance tranquil by stimulating the five senses as much as possible by using waterfalls, dimmed lighting, sounds of nature, relaxing scents and great tasting refreshments.

Our customer journey is especially important because our aim is to offer a safe space and a place to reflect. We are passionate about recovery as much as prevention; we want people to leave the café feeling refreshed and well equipped to deal with life's challenges. Preventing suicide is our main goal.

I also think when it comes to social entrepreneurs, it's like being part of a family. I have been to many organisations and meetings and you can always tell the difference between companies operating purely for profit and ones that are not. I have found people very willing to help and share and feel I have found my tribe! I am incredibly surprised that social enterprise is not spoken about more, but I do hope that the world will be full of them in years to come. This time last year, I had no clue what a social enterprise was, but I went away, had free consultations and was questioned on my business model... at times it was draining but at the same time it was all for the best. If you want change you have to make it!

Why we applied for the Aspiring Social Enterprise accreditation

The main reason I decided to apply for the Aspiring Social Enterprise accreditation is because I wanted to ensure I set up my social enterprise to remain for the long term. In our first year of trading I wanted to ensure we stuck to good practice and remained sustainable by trading products and services instead of being reliant on grants and funding.

After doing research into the perks of the accreditation, I decided that it would provide peace of mind knowing that moving forward we live up to social enterprise instead of just calling ourselves one and not really doing what we set out to do.

Find out more about becoming an Aspiring Social Enterprise:

<https://www.socialenterprisemark.org.uk/aspiring-social-enterprise-accreditation/>



It's good to be singing from the same hymn sheet and to have support from the team at Social Enterprise Mark CIC is reassuring, especially in this climate.

Our experience of the application process

I found the application process to be a good one. I initially applied for the accreditation when our organisation was set up as a company ltd by guarantee but was advised to think about our legal structure because I had to meet a specific criterion.

I went away and after lots of consideration I set up as a C.I.C. ltd by guarantee. I liked the honesty of the application process and felt that I was on to good things when filling out the application form.

Throughout the process, I found the correspondence was exceptionally good and helped me to build trust.

Support received during the process

When applying for the accreditation I stayed in contact with Rachel Fell, from when I initially enquired right through to applying for and achieving the accreditation. We discussed the legal structures and then I went away to research what would be best for my social enterprise.

Because of the decisions on legal structure, it took longer than I expected to register the company, but as soon as I had registered with the CIC Regulator, I was ready within three months. I am glad I took my time on this. When I had set up my legal structure the application process was fairly quick.

The assessment feedback received has helped me think about more ways to trade, which is important to being sustainable in the long term.

Achieving the Social Enterprise Mark

It's important for us to achieve the Social Enterprise Mark because you can say you are one thing and be another. I want to keep up good practice and to grow, and the image of my social enterprise is especially important. I think when people see the Social Enterprise Mark logo, it gives credibility and builds trust.

Realistically I want to achieve the Mark within the next 3 years.

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