



F O R G E

**JUSTINE COUTURE
LONDON**

FORGE EDITION 2



Justine Couture London was first established in 2017 as a fashion design company by Justyna Parzych-Winiarska, very close to Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow. Initially, the focus was on traditional African dresses as well as some vintage outfits. However, soon the company began to specialise on the wedding scene, creating tailor made bridesmaid- and bridal-wear. In 2018, 'Brides' magazine featured a set of bridesmaid dresses made by Justine Couture London in their 'How They Did It' section. Currently, the company makes a variety of styles tailor made to each customer, keeping its focus on the wedding scene.

KEY CHALLENGES & NEEDS

Like many freelancers in the creative industries, Justyna based her business at home. This represented a challenge in terms of capacity. In fact, she did not have enough space for all the necessary equipment (various sewing machines, cutting tables and supplies etc.), nor the storage facilities needed for large wedding dresses.

Justyna's main aspiration was to grow from a small, home-based business to one based in a local studio; therefore, her need for business support has been for expanding her market, focusing her business plan on wedding dress design, better pricing of her services and looking at possibilities to employ others.

USE OF FORGE

Justine Couture London exceeded the minimum of 12 hours of business support, reaching 19 hours in Forge Edition 2, by participating in a range of activities:

- 4 workshops (Value Proposition Design & Brand Positioning, Business Finance Literacy Part 1: Unit Economics, Implementation Capabilities, Business Finance 2: Metrics and Growth Planning)
- 3 hours of 1 to 1 mentoring with James West
- 2 networking events: A Step Up: Funding, Leasing and Licensing, and People People People (recruiting, employing and retaining)

Workshops

Justine Couture London benefited from 4 workshops - Value Proposition Design & Brand Positioning, Business Finance Literacy Part 1: Unit Economics, Implementation Capabilities, Business Finance 2: Metrics and Growth Planning - which provided her with valuable business tools.

She told us, “each workshop was invaluable for me and opened my eyes for my business. I learnt to value myself and what I am creating, so I’m feeling more confident now and have a lot of ideas to put in action. Also the interaction with other participants was great”. Finally, she concluded: “I am pretty aware that Forge is an expensive programme and I won’t have been able to afford it, so, thank you; I am absolutely happy about it”.

1:1 ADVICE SESSIONS

The Business Advisor support was focused on finding a smarter way of working to grow the business and create a sustainable plan to define short, medium and long terms goals. In only 3 hours of business coaching with James West, much work was undertaken around identifying the true costs of services and products, time management as well as an assessment of the local market in venue hire.

Ideas were explored, such as hiring a space just for the fittings, in order to have a more professional environment to accommodate clients.

As a major priority, one session focused on understanding the importance and the use of digital tools to improve efficiency and reduce wasted time, namely an online calendar and digital accounting software. There was time between sessions to reflect and implement the advice and tools, which increased the level of confidence around pricing/developing new services and the search for premises.

The last session was dedicated to financial planning, cashflow forecasting and checking the affordability of plans (i.e. affording the studio rental) and to inform what prices to increase to achieve the plans. Thanks to this advice, Justine Couture London has now gained a better understanding on viable workshop studios, and the search will continue. She has also implemented the advised changes (e.g. online accounting systems, financial planning frameworks) and is already seeing the benefits of them.

KEY BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Using the learning and advice provided on Forge, Justine Couture London reported:

- increasing its monthly turnover by 15%
- expanding its market
- increasing capacity to meet demand
- improved skills and confidence, notably in the following in areas (0 for low levels of skill or confidence, up to 5 for high levels):
 - Cashflow forecasting, up from 0 to 5
 - Community engagement, up from 0 to 5
 - Negotiation, up from 0 to 4

See graph below for more.

