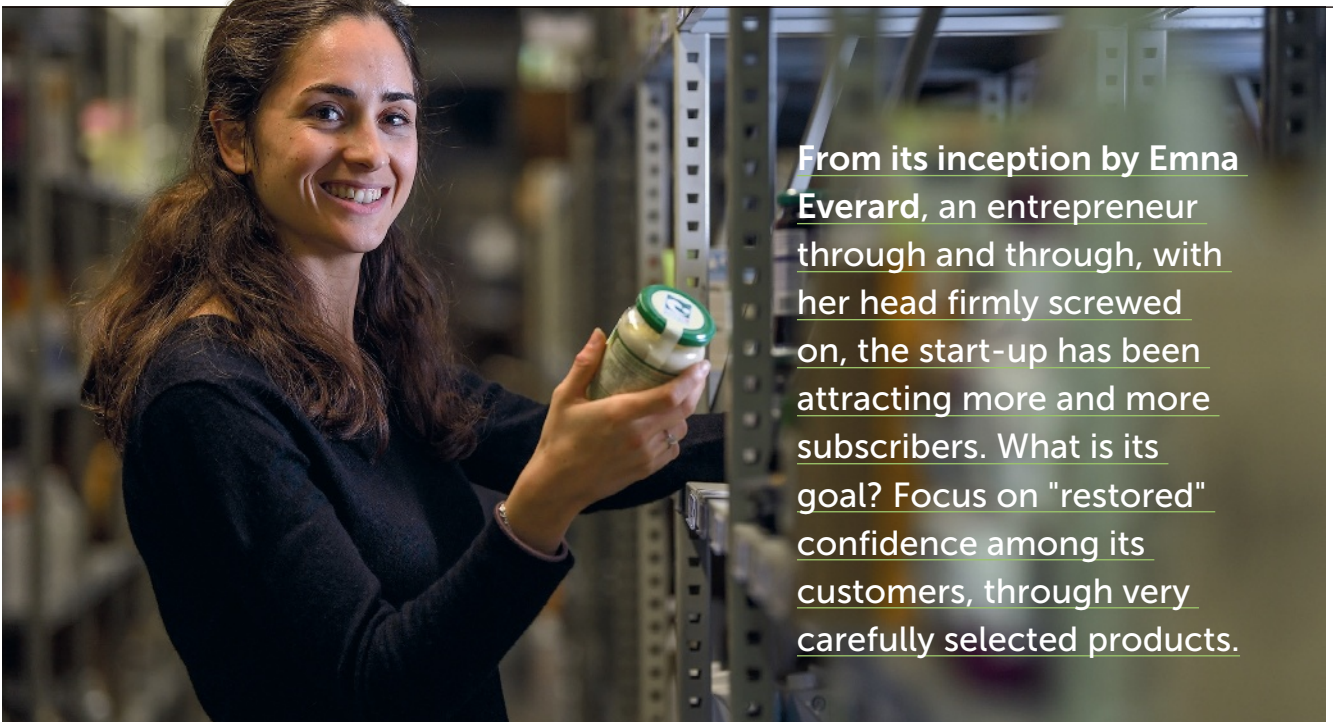


EMNA EVERARD

Kazidomi

Healthy food for everyone



From its inception by Emna Everard, an entrepreneur through and through, with her head firmly screwed on, the start-up has been attracting more and more subscribers. What is its goal? Focus on "restored" confidence among its customers, through very carefully selected products.

"Entrepreneurial spirit", are you there?

Clear about where she wants to go, Emna Everard is of the opinion that the entrepreneurial ecosystem is well-resourced, provided that you move and grasp your opportunities.

"Fate determined that I was born in a favourable environment: my family encouraged me to go down this road. And there was someone else who gave me a lot of support: Olivier Witmeur, Director of Solvay Entrepreneurs. He helped me to open certain doors. I also approached Hub.brussels, and then Réseau Entreprendre, where I rubbed shoulders with inspiring business leaders and shared my experiences, difficulties and fears with them. That was a real boon!"

Emna says so herself: her initial idea wasn't brilliant. She had to work hard, be persuasive and show talent and humility. Extrovert and optimistic by nature, she believes strongly in her own values, without ever forgetting the role played by two of her mentors. "First of all, my uncle Éric. A fighter, a self-made man, who became a successful businessman, owing mainly to his personality and boldness. Then, Harold Mechelynck, co-founder of Ogone and coach at Réseau Entreprendre. His journey is incredible and I learnt a great deal from his advice and his humility."

The daughter of two doctors, everything urged Emna Everard to follow in their footsteps. "The rebel in me decided otherwise (laughs)!"

► After finishing their studies many young people cut their teeth in a large corporate organisation or go off travelling. But not you! In September 2016, barely two months after graduating, you founded Kazidomi, which comes from the Latin "just like at home", with Alain Étienne (Ingest 2014). You seem to have entrepreneurship in your blood!

And yet my parents are both doctors and wanted me to follow in their footsteps. The rebel in me decided otherwise (laughs)... In fact, I've always been immersed in an entrepreneurial environment, mainly thanks to my uncle (Éric Everard, founder among other ventures of the Artexis Group, one of the leading trade fair organisers in Belgium – Ed.). At a very young age I absorbed these influences to imagine my future. The upshot was that at the age of 18 I was already dreaming of setting up a start-up with a 'health' angle!

at any time



Healthy and personalised

► So the choice of SBS-EM was not made lightly...

That seemed to me to be the perfect way to reach my goal. It was an opportunity to acquire sound and varied knowledge, since you have the chance to study many different areas. Law, accountancy, finance, etc. – all those courses helped me to form an overall view of the business world. Even if you then have to dig in and gain real-life experience, it gives you an excellent foundation for embarking on an entrepreneurial adventure.

► Five years of studies: a mindful experience?

You could say that! I tried to make the most of every opportunity that came my way: as a member of the Solvay Student Consulting Club, for example, or by taking part in Share Solidarity Water. Every experience fuelled my plans, to the extent that I wrote my business plan during my dissertation. The idea was to offer 'reusable' water bottles...

“ DURING MY STUDIES EVERY EXPERIENCE FUELLED MY PLANS... ”

► What was Kazidomi like originally?

Everything started from something I observed: eating healthily and choosing products which adhere to a personal diet or respect food intolerances is no easy matter. Kazidomi presented itself as a chain of physical shops where you can buy with your eyes shut: the products are very carefully selected by doctors and nutritionists, and arranged in such a way as to make choosing them easy. A healthy and personalised supermarket...

► The principle remains the same, but you've opted for online shopping...

The advantages of a web-based platform seemed to me to be clear: lower launch costs, but also infinitely more scalable. To be ready to face the challenge of digital, I then trained in e-commerce and e-marketing at Solvay Entrepreneurs.

The threshold of 10,000 customers

► How did the first few months of Kazidomi's business go?

The challenge was to sell! At first it was hopeless. One week without any sales, then the next when only those close to you buy something. Yet there was traffic... So I took the bull by the horns and contacted all the visitors to find out why they hadn't placed an order. There were two main reasons: one, it was too expensive, and two... they didn't have any dietary problems! In other words, by targeting an audience with food intolerances or following a special diet, I had unwittingly narrowed the field.

► You then decided to "switch things up".

The first step was to re-focus the message and stop talking about diets and intolerances. But the question of price had to be resolved... This was something that kept younger customers away. Lowering prices ran the risk of annoying my suppliers, so I worked on a subscription system instead. The customer pays an annual fixed fee of €100 and can get discounts, between 20% and 50% over the whole range. What was the result? Apart from the cash revenue, this enabled us to gain a loyal clientele – a crucial mechanism in a very competitive sector, where gaining →

► Ingest 2016

► Co-founder and CEO of Kazidomi

Inside Kazidomi

September 2016

Start-up created by Emna Everard and Alain Étienne, thanks to financial contributions from family and friends.

Early 2017

By "switching up" its business model, Kazidomi attracts a sizeable investor: Éric Everard, Emna's uncle and a successful businessman. €50,000 for IT development and the first employees.

Late 2017

A mark of credibility which convinces Finance.brussels to put its hand in its pocket: a loan of €75,000 for buying goods.

March 2018

Attracted by the early good results of the start-up, other business angels join the venture: €350,000 on the table and an injection of smart money...

March 2019

One year later, the same investors put in more, €400,000. In all, €750,000 injected in private equity: a sum which means that the founders do not have to dilute their capital too much.

“OUR CUSTOMERS MUST BE ABLE TO CONTINUE BUYING WITH THEIR EYES SHUT”



new customers is costly. This change in the business model was a turning point and, little by little, things started to liven up...

► Have you found your place in the market?

Our position is not yet a solid one but it's definitely cooler. Even though there are many challenges on the horizon, we are responding to a real need among consumers. We have close to 10,000 customers, 85% of whom are subscribers. This number should triple within two years. Furthermore, our product range (3,000 items – Ed.) is also going to increase, but we will always put quality before quantity: our customers have to continue to be able to buy with their eyes shut.

A balancing act

► From the staff point of view, you have also grown rapidly.

Between the 'office' team and logistics, there are around twenty of us. But a good entrepreneur is not necessarily a good manager... With Alain (co-founder Alain Étienne, Ingest 2014 – Ed.), we've been trained on-the-job. After a complicated first phase, we've learnt from our teething problems and have found the right balance.

► What are the main challenges for Kazidomi?

First and foremost, logistics. The volume of sales is constantly increasing, which enables us to negotiate more effectively with our suppliers, but we always have to be able to keep up in terms of storage. We started by outsourcing the whole process. Then we took over a 200 m² space, before moving on to our current warehouse with a capacity of around 2,000 m². It's a key challenge,



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Pictures: Reporters

If you'd like to suggest an alumnus or alumna or present your project in this section, write to us at sbs-em@elixis.be.

and requires us to adapt constantly: developing our computer systems, taking on staff, optimising our processes. That's a balancing act too!

► You're not thinking of stopping there then?

We've chosen growth over profitability: there's still room to grow larger! Beyond the major challenge of logistics, our ambition is to extend our activities to the north of the country and internationally. Currently, 65% of our sales are already being made abroad.

► Do you have any other initiatives in mind?

Yes! To develop our own line of products. Taking into account the discounts we offer, this will make it possible to obtain a larger margin on prices. We're still a long way from the finish line, but we have the confidence of our investors (see Inside Kazidomi sidebar) and of our subscribers. Not to mention the fact that our teams are motivated and talented... It's an exciting adventure! ■

5 TIPS for budding entrepreneurs

1/ Dare

"At all times! Dare to step outside your comfort zone and move forward even if not everything is perfect. Be brave, ready to face closed doors. Leave your fears to one side, particularly that of failing."

2/ Innovate

"The business is working today but there's no guarantee that this will still be the case tomorrow. This is why you have to constantly challenge yourself."

3/ Persevere

"There will always be obstacles. Things will sometimes be difficult but you mustn't give up... ever!"

4/ Surround yourself with a team

"This is essential. It requires you to step out of your bubble, listen, develop the ability to learn from others, but also to agree to change."

5/ Show empathy

"My bedside reading? 'How to win friends and influence people' by Dale Carnegie. A classic for forging healthy relationships and understanding other people better."