

Scoop



L: Roy Bernheim R: Allan Perrotet

Underlines speaks to co-founders (Roy Bernheim & Allan Perrotet) of the men's underwear brand with a difference: T-Bô Bodywear, which employs co-creation with its 'community' and whose slogan is 'I AM BECAUSE OF YOU'.

How did your brand start?

T-Bô Bodywear started almost exactly two years ago based on our own dissatisfaction with existing products on the market. There seemed to be only very comfortable and high-quality underwear that did not appeal to us style-wise, and vice-versa. We couldn't find any underwear that combined the function and style we wanted. We started asking questions, many questions to many people, and quickly realised that we were not the only ones who felt this way.

Where do you look for design inspiration?

Our community is the designer. Every single member of our 120,000+ community is invited to share his ideas, and once we get enough feedback, we propose renderings to our community which then votes on new products that should go into production. This approach of bottom-up product development through a constructive dialogue is called co-creation. Co-creation is at the heart of T-Bô and the main ingredient that has helped us create superior products and a community around the brand.

We, for example, consistently heard men complain about the back labels. Of course, every underwear brand is required to affix such a label to each garment. Customers generally are unhappy about the scratchiness of the labels with strong fabrics and printed labels look unsexy after a few washes. Together with the community we developed a special, paper-like fabric that allows customers to easily tear off the label.

What are the highlights of your collection?

One highlight is certainly our newly developed fabric blend of bamboo viscose and birch tree micromodal for the new premium range. It gives you all the support, which is especially important for sports, without giving you a stifled feeling, combines functionality and fashion. Another great benefit of this fabric is that it keeps you cool in summer and warm in winter.

We've even been asked multiple times whether we could use this fabric for other product lines that also require a super comfy feel, breathability and moisture absorption. That's why we developed our undershirt range. Now we are co-creating the next product line with the community. Additionally, we've been getting plenty of great comments from people who have discovered our hidden personal notes in the Must-Have products. We want to give our products a personal touch.

Where is your brand sold (geographically)?

Our community includes over 130,000 men from all around the world. We seek men who want to make the most out of themselves, their peers and their environment. He can be at any stage of his life and from anywhere and everywhere. A T-Bô man is a man who has a proactive spirit willing to contribute for the

greater good. We have sold our products and fulfilled orders to over 65,000 community members in over 120 countries around the world. Our main focus so far has been English-speaking countries, including the UK, and our home market Switzerland.

Describe the person who wears your designs: what is their style?

The man who is part of our community and wears our brand is a respectful and caring one. He has a good sense of style and health. Our community is made up of men who have an active lifestyle and who want to make the most of themselves and others around them. A T-Bô man is a man who has a proactive spirit willing to contribute for the greater good.

In terms of interest, T-Bô wearers will generally be men who are active in their daily professional activities and/or sports. That's also why we make sure that our products support the wearer during all those activities.

A Typical Week...in your life

That's the toughest question of the interview!:) it'd be easier to describe our ideal week than our typical week.)

Our weeks are driven by the goals we set. No two weeks have been the same since we started. We do have our fixed points like our weekly meetings where we each review the past week and set our personal goals for the coming week and we stick to these religiously.

After work we all do some kind of physical activity, and have social activities within the team and community. For example, we hosted a fitness session at a gym with a fitness label where we invited our community to join free of charge and test our new collection.

Your proudest moment to date?

Every time we see how our community members engage with each other in the constructive way they do and whenever we get those amazing reviews in our inbox, it makes us very happy. That's what makes us get up in the mornings. Our proudest moment was when we received our first order from a selected retail partner. This might sound paradoxical since our main sales channel is online but getting validated by industry experts in terms of our product quality, brand image and story, was proof for us that we are doing something right.

Your worst move so far?

We learnt a valuable lesson last summer when we decided to outsource part of our marketing activities to an agency. As we are a small team, we know that we can't do everything ourselves. We did a lot of due diligence and thought that we had found a good partner. It turned out that they completely underperformed compared to us, to a point where the agency admitted that they couldn't do a better job and recommended us to continue by ourselves. As a result, we had to immediately insource all of the work the agency was supposed to do on our behalf as well as do everything we had planned to do ourselves. These were busy months for us. *The lesson learnt: choose wisely what you do yourself and what you outsource.*

What do you hope to achieve?

In the UK, we are looking for a brand expansion and distribution partner that shares the same DNA. We see the UK as a key market, where men care about what they wear and are open to trying out new brands. That's why we see good traction from the UK and now want to expand there in a bigger way, ideally with a local partner.

Globally speaking, our goal with T-Bô is to show that open, honest and constructive dialogue leads to innovation, better results and a better planet in general. We want to show that a lot of positive energy is set free, when people can feel that they are being listened to. Anyone can thrive only because of the people

around them - the same is true for brands. That's what our slogan stands for "I AM BECAUSE OF YOU".

We have achieved our goals in many aspects however we do want to expand it even further. We want to build trust and initiate conversation, and allow men to participate in common projects and goals. We will continue to invite men to jointly co-create the environmentally friendly ranges of T-Bô's new collection. This collaborative approach has yielded a successful outcome and has proven first-hand that better results can be achieved when people are given the opportunity to communicate globally in over 120 countries across borders. A feeling of purpose and self-worth can be generated when one feels part of a movement such as co-creating sustainable products that push the boundary of today's fashion supply chain. We acknowledge that the fashion industry has not been kind to the earth. This is a problem that strikes us to the core.

We have taken a radically different approach by letting the consumers inform us upfront what they want and how many products they need. T-Bô has found success by utilising a bottom up strategy in product development and production. Our competitive advantage is the fact that since 2017 we have not, and will not present any product for public consumption without putting it through trials within our community and requesting for pre-orders. As mentioned previously, throughout this process, we are constantly researching methods to lessen any negative impact on the planet.

We are now developing a proprietary tech tool to bring our brand values to life even more and which will make new product development faster and even more innovative.

Your previous life

AP: During my undergraduate degree I worked in the quality management sector which helped me a lot to organise the company. At that same period I started a bespoke suit label. I learnt a lot about textile and garment design but my biggest gain was realising how important it is to get feedback from your customers to improve their experience with the brand.

RB: I moved to Asia after having studied and worked in London for 4 years. Being based in Bangkok for 4 years, I headed up the Own Brands division of a large international market expansion services provider with a focus on APAC. There, I started to learn finding reliable manufacturing partners, entering markets with a fresh brand and the dynamics of omnichannel.

What do you read and whom do you follow in social media?

AP: I read a lot of books about online marketing, customer experience, branding and growth hacking. The book I am currently reading is called "How Brands Grow. What marketers don't know by Byron Sharp". On social media I mostly join fb group related to online marketing to see what's trending on social media.

RB: Other than business books, I like to read a mix of history and science books and books about human behaviour. I follow anything on social media that has to do with being on- and underwater. I also follow the brand NAKD on social media - I think they do an amazing job!

Time out?

We just spent a week in Cape Town together, which is a great place for working and having some time out. It's an ideal spot for us since Allan can go for runs and hikes on rugged terrain and Roy can go kitesurfing and freediving in the bay area.

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