Founder Focus: Lessons from the Scale-Up

Building a successful business is rarely a straight line.

At a recent CMS Scotland EquIP Collective panel discussion on founder resilience, founder Refilwe Digoamaje (Ulimi Larona), Trish McClay (Barclays Eagle Labs), Claire Partridge (Scottish Enterprise), and CMS specialists Sam Holmes and Alastair McNaughton shared their perspectives on the realities of scaling a business. Together, they explored the challenges founders face on the journey from idea to growth, from building the right team and protecting innovation to securing funding and navigating Scotland's start-up ecosystem.

Strong Teams Drive Growth

One of the clearest messages from the discussion was the importance of building the right team. Founders rarely possess every skill required to scale a business, making complementary expertise and shared values critical to long-term success.

While technical knowledge and commercial acumen matter, resilience, adaptability and a willingness to seek support can be equally important. The businesses best placed to overcome setbacks are often those built on strong partnerships and aligned ambitions.

Protecting What Makes You Different

Intellectual property is frequently one of a start-up's most valuable assets, yet it is often overlooked in the early stages of growth.

The panel stressed the importance of identifying and protecting intellectual property from the outset. Whether it is proprietary technology, content, processes or brand assets, ensuring ownership sits with the business can help avoid complications later, particularly as investment opportunities emerge.

Making the Most of the Ecosystem

Scotland benefits from a strong network of support organisations, investors, communities and mentors. However, founders should view these networks as more than sources of funding or advice.

External partners can play a valuable role in testing assumptions, challenging business models and helping founders refine their propositions. Customer research, market validation and learning from others should be ongoing activities throughout the growth journey.

Investment Readiness Matters

Securing investment requires more than a compelling idea. Investors expect founders to understand their business inside out, communicate a clear strategy and demonstrate readiness for scrutiny.

Preparation, organisation and realistic planning remain essential. Founders were encouraged to challenge assumptions early, stay close to market demand and ensure they are prepared well before funding conversations begin.

Key Takeaway

The discussion highlighted a consistent theme: successful growth depends on strong foundations. Building the right team, protecting innovation, engaging with the wider ecosystem and preparing early for future funding opportunities can all help businesses navigate the journey from start-up to scale-up with greater confidence

Join us for our next equIP Collective event, Glasgow to Global: Expanding into International Markets on 11 September at our CMS Glasgow Office – register **here**

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Any questions?
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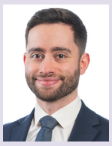

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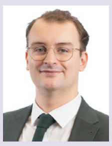

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