

Fledgling gin company in high spirits

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FANCY A DROP: The Rogue Society, from left: Richard Bourke, Daniel McLaughlin and Mark Neal.







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Artisan gin company Rogue Society plans to break through the misconceptions and perceived "stiffness" surrounding the old English favourite.

Rogue Society founders Daniel McLaughlin, Mark Neal and Richard Bourke have been working on developing their drink and the bottle for the past three years and believe they have finally got it right.

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The gin was sold in a bar for the first time last month and is now available in about 20 bars in Auckland. McLaughlin says Wellington is next, followed by Christchurch, Queenstown and eventually liquor retailers. Bottles retail at about \$80.

Each of the trio have a different relationship with the alcohol but a common goal to tap in to the global resurgence of gin pushed them to start Rogue Society.

McLaughlin talked to Fairfax Media about the ups and downs of Rogue Society's journey so far.

Why did you start your own business?

I'm fanatical about gin and had a severe case of "gin grief". I felt gin was widely misunderstood and was sick of people giving it a hard time. I was also interested in creating a business that could compete on the world stage while staying true to its origin.

What have been the biggest obstacles to starting up?

Finding the right suppliers who could understand what we were trying to develop and gathering like-minded people to bring this to life. Finding capital to build the business properly was difficult and we have funded everything from our own pockets, which makes every dollar you part with a personal experience.

Name one thing you've learnt in your business journey so far?

You can't sell a secret. Talk to everyone along the way and someone might just offer you some gold advice or offer to help.

What are your business and personal goals?

Our short-term business goals are to be in 100 premises by six months, be selling 100 cases a month by six months, have a New Zealand distributor in place in eight months, enter the Australian market and make inroads into the Chinese market by the end of the year and add two new products within a year.

Personally, to keep an open mind, continue to learn and grow and keep a work-life balance.

Do you have any tips for budding entrepreneurs?

If it was easy, everyone would do it. Anything that's worth doing takes dedication and commitment. There will be a lot of stumbling blocks along the way but you need to stick to your game plan. Do your homework, question yourself, talk to industry experts and know your competition.

What have you sacrificed to be an entrepreneur?

It's definitely not a nine-to-five career. I find it difficult to switch off and not think about Rogue Society.

Are you prepared for failure?

When you've spent so long working to develop something, so many ups and downs and sleepless nights along the way, failure doesn't come into my mindset, but I want to learn from the speed bumps we've hit along the way.

Who is your "business guru", or who do you admire, and why?


I admire New Zealand businesspeople who have successfully competed on the world stage. Some names that spring to mind are entrepreneur Derek Handley, founder of social-media marketing technology Wildfire Victoria Ransom, Icebreaker founder Jeremy Moon, Xero founder Rod Drury and big respect for the Stolen Rum boys.

What do you do in your downtime?

What down time? Spend time with my wife and my new baby boy. He's just started dropping smiles and laughs, which is amazing.

I also always check out the newest bars and restaurants.

Ad Feedback



And I'm a bit of a DIY disaster. I have many incomplete projects around the house but there are never enough hours in the day.