

Overcoming Adversity To Succeed In Luxury

Sam Ibgi, 30-year-old British founder and CEO of [Buckingham & Lloyds](#), is a new player in London's luxury real estate sector, providing five-star, fully-serviced accommodation in Kensington and Knightsbridge.

Buckingham & Lloyds' properties offer quality furnishings, high-end amenities and terraces with views over Hyde Park, all a stone's throw from the city's top attractions. But more than that, it is bridging the gap between hotels and apartments. Accommodation boasts the top-quality amenities and services that you would expect from a five-star hotel, as well as the comfort, intimacy and price point of an apartment stay.

Ibgi now plans to take his brand global, laying the groundwork to put at least one building in each of the Tier 1 cities worldwide. "The world is moving very quickly away from people just wanting to own an apartment or stay at a hotel," he explains. "People are traveling much more. Many people can now work from anywhere. We're focused on the 40% of people who are mobile, internationally-minded and equipped with money to spend. And we want to give them a 100% experience, something that is fully equipped, extremely high-quality and that feels like home."

In his early days, the entrepreneur's success was not guaranteed. Born in a notoriously rough neighborhood outside Homerton, Ibgi's childhood was marked by abuse, addiction, arrest and homelessness. "I never really felt like I fit," says Ibgi. "I was branded as wild and lazy, because I was very dyslexic and highly ADHD, neither of which were diagnosed, and I was pushed into the state schooling system where I was told I could never succeed because I couldn't read and write. Addiction and arrest led to me living on the streets and working three jobs at once in the hopes of affording a tiny studio apartment."

One of those jobs—cleaning building sites—changed his life. "I was a cleaner, working on a site from six in the morning to eight in the evening every day, and I finally felt a sense of purpose. This was something physical, something I could do with my hands, and I felt this satisfaction that I could come in and do a job, and see it done well. And then I thought, if I can be good at this, I shouldn't stop here."

Ibgi went to the site manager and asked for additional work. Eventually, he became a jack-of-all-trades, accomplished at the full gamut of construction and development skills, from design to plumbing to electrics, and started his own company. Painting jobs and bathroom remodeling turned into full-house renovations, and then—helped by a flagging recessionary economy—buying houses outright to flip. Today Ibgi owns three real estate and hospitality businesses.

Starting Buckingham & Lloyd's wasn't easy. "My biggest struggle was changing my mindset from a property-developer into a hospitality-oriented operator business. I had never done anything customer-focused, and that was a really big challenge," says Ibgi. "But what we

always did right was to put customers first. If we made a mistake, we always said, yes, you are right, and moved on from there. And that was only successful because of our team.”

The company’s success has stemmed from a mixture of the rigorous belief in work ethic, customer service, and team-building. “I’m there with the vision, but it’s the team who are customer-facing,” says Ibgı. “In every customer-oriented industry, if your staff feel like they don’t have a stake, they won’t give you 100%. Empower your staff with the knowledge to run the business without you – and earn their loyalty so that they never will.”

Success has also come from modern marketing techniques, including working with social media influencers.

“We have had the largest travel Instagram influencers stay in the property in exchange for Instagram stories and content. It didn’t take off immediately—of the first 30 I reached out to, only one initially responded—but once it did, the result was astronomical. Hosting five influencers one month generated over £120,00 of bookings revenue in five days,” he claims.

Ibgı predicts that social media will continue to be a key driver of growth as the company expands overseas, but he preaches the virtues of flexibility. “Whatever your planned path is,” he cautions, “remember that it’s going to change completely. Keep your eye on the end-goal, and you’ll get there, sometimes on a different time frame or in a different way, but if you have a true passion, the end result will come.”

Ibgı’s advice to others? “It doesn’t matter what your background or education is. If you have a dream, simply do it. You’re the only person stopping yourself.

“I still struggle with reading and writing, but that doesn’t stop me. Limits are something that we create, not something imposed on us.”

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