



Venture - Project Happy Note

Institution - London School of Economics

Social science discipline -
Business & management Studies, Behavioural Science

Sector - Creative Economy

Route-to-market - Start-up

**Re-connecting
through the gift
of surprise**

*Project Happy
Note*

Anthea Kolitsas

Role - Founder

Degree - MSc Global Management, London School of Economics and Politics, 2016

Anthea grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada but came to London, UK, to do her degree at LSE. In 2019 she took a leap from the education sector into the world of entrepreneurship. She is passionate to humanise how we support and communicate with our loved ones through their toughest days.

Contact - anthea@projecthappynote.com



A start-up tackling loneliness through a personalised gifting service, at a time when people are on the verge of emotional burnout



Burnout affected 595,000 people in the UK in 2018 (BBC, 2020), and affects nearly half of UK healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the current climate, more and more people are affected by this serious disease, from both the pressure of adapting to the virtual world and the restricted access to family and friends.

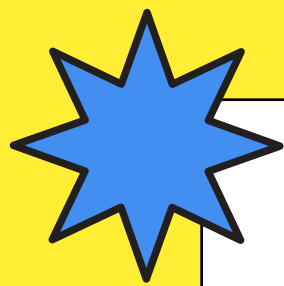


One identified preventative measure is to find happiness in bursts of surprise; to re-frame people's perspective on life and discover the beauty in interacting with others through joy and laughter. Driven by this behavioural science concept, Project Happy Note's (PHN) mission is to revolutionize the way people connect and reconnect with one another, especially during difficult times. Using carefully curated written notes and gifts to encourage a sense of community and communication, the start-up aims to help ease stress and improve social interactions.

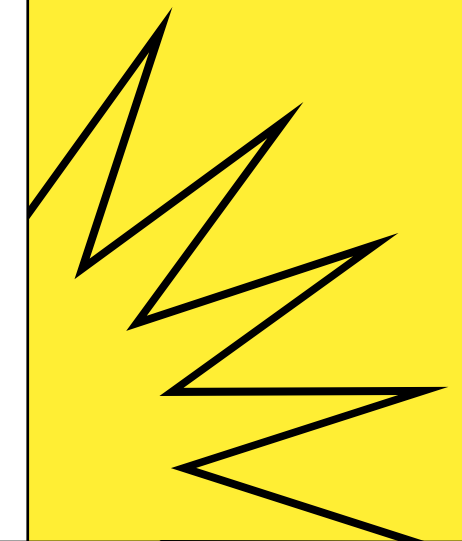
The idea for the venture was first conceived following founder, Anthea Kolitsas' mother's cancer diagnosis. Thousands of miles apart, and wanting to send her mother a gift, Anthea could not find an appropriate, thoughtful gift online. Anthea found from her research that gifts either remind the recipient of their struggle or encouraged them to 'fight' their illness. She innovatively created a unique 18-day gift experience for her mother – from painting classes to dinner dates. Inspired by her parents' positive reactions, PHN, was born.

The initial business model was a 3-month gift subscription, where individuals received a series of gifts, helping to create a positive habit 'loop' for people facing difficult times. However, in response to the new social challenges brought on by the pandemic, PHN evolved to a one off 'pick me up' model. Gift givers participate in a small quiz, selecting the most appropriate category which reflects the difficult time their recipient is going through (i.e. an illness/grief/loneliness). From this, a bespoke card with an animal with symbolic meaning is generated, along with the option of an accompanied bag of sweets.





The one off 'pick me up' enables the giver to show the receiver that they acknowledge what is happening to them, create a starting point for a fun conversation and distracts the receiver from their personal difficulties. This new model not only helps to ease daily stresses but improve social interactions and make timeless experiences. Adding these human elements, which so many people miss during the COVID-19 crisis, has been integral to the evolution of PHN. At the core of the business is creating positive surprises to create social impact.



Project Happy Note addresses SDG 3, Health and Wellbeing by offering tailor-made support to people who are lonely and going through adverse situations, helping them to communicate. Using sociology concepts (one of the social sciences), including the study of social interactions and the impact this has on others, has been crucial to the development of the start-up. Social and behavioural science methods are embedded into each product for instance the knowledge that the element of surprise evokes curiosity in people, which inspires a sense of positivity. The start-up is also measuring their social impact by working with social scientists from various UK institutions to help facilitate interviews with both givers and receivers, to ensure they are achieving their social mission.



I didn't expect my daughter's reaction, her gift came at a stressful period. Had I not sent it I wouldn't have known she was as unwell as she was.



Customer testimonial

THE I M P A C T

Created a pop-up boutique in Carnaby street which connected thousands of customers and resulted in products shipped to over 27 countries.



Provided gifts to caregivers for the ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) Association, which had a positive social impact on the ALS community.



Widened products through partnerships with Papermate , Jealous Sweets, and Cancer Lads enabling PHN to expand the business and be catapulted to the next level.

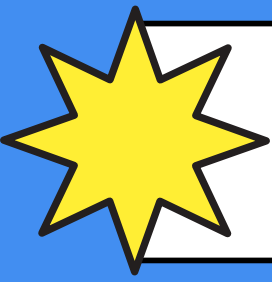
The start-up journey

LSE provided Anthea with opportunities to learn about international business practice and etiquette both locally and abroad. She credits LSE Generate, LSE Management and the LSE Alumni Network as providing the launchpad for the business, helping to develop her business idea and accelerate its progress. LSE connected Anthea with influential people through networking events and with the tools and resources to help steer her in the right direction and believes that using your University networks is key to developing a new business.

She received two excellent mentors from LSE Generate and executive coaching on her MSc Global Management programme at LSE, won the Santander Foundership in 2019 plus funding through the LSE accelerator programme, which helped to kickstart the business. The University community at LSE has been particularly important during the pandemic, in helping to drive the venture on, motivating Anthea and providing key marketing opportunities to continue the business.

Anthea's Key Learnings & Advice -

- ◆ Perseverance ; there are low days but continue to look forward and don't be dejected by a negative response. Always remember why you started!
- ◆ If you have a crystalised why, it enables you to shape vision.
- ◆ The start-up world is like doing a tango, two steps forward, two steps back.
- ◆ Entrepreneurship can be lonely, always ask for help people are not mind readers.
- ◆ Not everybody is going to like your business but that is ok.
- ◆ Self care, always build in some you time as the start up journey can be all consuming The answer 'no' builds resilience.



What's next for Project Happy Note?

The key focus is to continue with their unique one-off gift business model to help maintain connection during the current environment. Exploring expanding this model further, Anthea has been liaising with several corporate organisations regarding sending gifts to employees, to help boost morale and reduce burnout

This business-to-business model will be an expansion to their existing business-to-consumer offering and have a larger social impact.

Additionally, the company aims to increase their number of partners and include more products as part of the gift offering, building the business further.

