

# Additional Case Studies

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## Chapter 2

### The New Cycling Safety Entrepreneurs

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#### Hövding

Industrial design students, Anna Haupt and Terese Alstin launched Hövding, an airbag-based cycle helmet in Sweden in 2014.

As students they had decided to try and solve the problem of unattractive bicycle helmets, which they felt deterred many people from cycling. They wanted to design something that people would actually like to wear.

The pair based their Masters' theses on the product innovation, which took over seven years of research and development to develop into a commercially viable product. They set up their own company to develop and promote the helmet. They are now NASDAQ listed, with around 30 people working for them and they have sold over 50,000 units. The product retails for 299 Euros with a choice of covers.

The company has a clearly stated mission:

‘At Hövding, we consider cyclists to be everyday heroes and we see it as our mission to keep them safe. We are very proud of the fact that Hövding over the years have helped protect more than 800 cyclists in accidents. Because we believe the world will become a better place if more people choose the bicycle – for inner city environment, health and climate reasons.’

While developing Hövding, Anna and Terese were repeatedly told by experts that what they wanted to do was impossible: that it was impossible to use airbag technology in this way; that it would be impossible to understand cyclists' movements and identify accidents in split seconds; and that it would be impossible to get the product approved and certified.

Their perseverance means that they have created something genuinely innovative and have acquired several global patents which could be applicable to other sports and activities.

An unintended consequence of their desire to design a more attractive cycle helmet is that they have also succeeded in designing a helmet that is considerably safer than standard models. Tests carried out at Stanford University in the United States in 2016 found that the Hövding provides up to 8 times better protection than standard cycle helmets.

## Blaze

Emily Brooke started her company Blaze, to make urban cycling products in 2013. The keystone product of this UK-based company is the ‘Laserlight’, a mountable LED light with a laser that projects the symbol of a bicycle five to six metres ahead of a cyclist to counteract the issue of collisions due to blind spots.

The idea came to Emily when she was cycling in a busy city centre. She felt vulnerable cycling behind vans and lorries, with drivers who could not see her when she was in their blind spot. If those vehicles suddenly turn left without seeing cyclists, the results can be fatal.

Emily was also an early user of crowdfunding to raise funds for her idea. ‘I was one of the first UK-based businesses to attempt raising funds through Kickstarter,’ Brooke said, ‘The goal was to raise £25,000 in one month. But I managed to raise it all in under five days.’

Blaze was Brooke’s final year project in 2011 while she was studying design at Brighton University, but it became her full time business in September 2012. Emily secured a patent to protect her invention.

Now she has five people working out of a Shoreditch-based office and exciting plans for her future including six products in development. The Laserlight retails at £125.

The company’s ambition is outlined in its mission statement:

‘To be the global urban cycling brand, known for leadership in innovation, technology and design.

We want to enable urban cycling by making it smarter, safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

We believe more people cycling improves the cities of the future, by making the roads safer, more efficient and our world healthier.’

Blaze has had funding support from two seed venture rounds, the first coming from a small angel investor, friends, and family and a most recent investment of £500,000 from the

Branson family and Index ventures. Emily was also one of the first entrepreneurs to be included in an accelerator called Entrepreneur First, a UK-based tech accelerator.

### Sources

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