
Ursa Major Raises Capital to Fund 'Everyday Explorer' Beauty Expansion

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By [Allison Collins](#) on September 30, 2019



📷 Ursa Major products.

Ursa Major, a line of non-gendered, natural, un-fussy, skin-care products, has raised \$5 million to fund its next stage of growth.

The Waterbury, Vt.-based company was founded by Emily Doyle and Oliver Sweatman in 2011. The couple had worked in the beauty industry in New York and bonded over the shared desire to move to Vermont, which ultimately led to the concept behind Ursa Major.

“We kind of bonded over this idea of moving north to Vermont to simplify, get closer to the outdoors and start a new business,” Sweatman said. “We were having a hard time finding natural products that felt elevated and effective and also that were truly clean,” he noted.

So, the couple founded Ursa Major with the idea to have a tight skin-care range for people like themselves, calling the core customer the “everyday explorer.” The group has an escape-the-city mentality, and about 90 percent of the brand’s customers live in urban environments.

“They’re sort of on their path to finding their North Star in a way, in terms of living and working hard in the city in their 20s and 30s, and doing that balance thing, where you’re trying to figure out what you’re good at, what your career is going to be, but at the same time trying to have a life as well,” Sweatman said.

Over the past eight years, Doyle and Sweatman built out an 18 stockkeeping-unit product assortment, sold through clean beauty retailers like Credo and Follain, as well as Ursa Major’s own web site and Amazon. “A lot of our male customers replenish on Amazon, and it’s taken some of the pressure off of having to grow our wholesale business too quickly,” Sweatman said.

Products are also sold as an amenity at certain hotels, Y7 yoga studios and Equinox Precision Run.

The lineup includes things like Hoppin’ Fresh Deodorant, which has become a bestseller at \$18; Go Easy Shampoo and Conditioner, \$28 each; and recent launch Vital Spring Face Lotion, \$46. The idea is to have effective, premium-priced skin care but not to add complication into the mix.

“We’re not mandating these fussy 10-step routines that you have to follow in perfect order to get perfect skin. We’re kind of saying, ‘we’ve got these awesome everyday essentials. Grab what works for you, and go,’” Sweatman said.

“Fundamentally, it’s how we use the product,” he continued. “Em and I, 80 percent of the products in the bathroom we share.”

While the duo try to avoid complication in the product assortment, is it part of their formulations. “We’re not going with five or six ingredient formulas, these are more like 30 or 40 or 50 ingredient formulas — we found we had to do that to get a product we like and an aroma profile we like,” Sweatman said.

Ursa Major’s next product launch will be a spray deodorant, Doyle said, and the brand is looking into making an eye cream. “When it comes to the product development pipeline, we want to keep the line really curated and make sure we’re never putting anything out there that would be really fussy or high maintenance or hard to use or overly expensive,” she said.

With the new influx of capital, which was raised from Fenwick Brands, Finn Capital Partners and other investors, Ursa Major plans to expand marketing and sales efforts with key hires, and build up its direct-to-consumer team. The business will also focus on brand building with content, partnerships, sampling and social media, while supporting existing retail partners, Sweatman said.

Ursa Major has been growing at more than 60 percent per year for several years, and industry sources said it will likely reach between \$8 million and \$9 million in net sales for 2019.