

Tailored for success



Company: Alexandra Wood Bespoke Tailoring

Innovative business model type: Hire and Suit Maintenance

Sector: Clothing

Company size: Micro

Product or service: Luxury suit hire from a bespoke tailor

Key Facts

- Based in the UK, Alexandra Wood Bespoke Tailoring creates bespoke suits to enhance men's image.
- The company was voted 'Best Groomswear retailer' by You and Your Wedding magazine.
- The company identified a gap in the market for hiring luxury menswear for special events and business functions.
- REBus helped conduct market research to explore customer interest and develop the business case for hirewear.
- Alexandra Wood has now opened a hire showroom and an online store as well as selling through luxury British suppliers.
- The organisation has taken on four assistants, rolled out hirewear and collaborated with other businesses to benefit the customer.

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Introduction

Alexandra Wood Bespoke Tailoring creates custom made suits for men to enhance their image and provide a luxury service from design, to use and beyond. Clients come from all over the world to experience a friendly, personal service that helps them find their own personal style. Each customer leaves with a quality, classic suit, with a modern twist.

The company has built the business model on a boutique intimate experience and has nearly doubled in size and turnover since working on the REBus project.

REBM for bespoke suit hire

Managing Director, Alexandra Wood, was conscious that customers had no option for sourcing a high quality tailored suits for events such as a business event or wedding.

As an example, grooms often buy a suit for their wedding day, they then need to hire outfits for the wedding party. Typically, there were few options to hire high quality tailored suits. This was also true for unique business events.

Alexandra Wood, therefore, set out to create a hire wear range which was not available anywhere else, and offered customers the chance to hire luxurious, Savile Row suits.

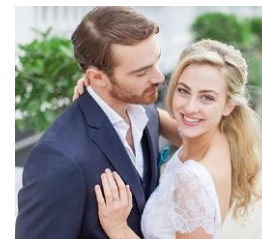
Wedding suits, lounge suits, black tie hire, cravats and accessories were made available to hire for a four-day period.

Durability

Alexandra's tailored fit suits are clothes conceived designed and produced with a high level of craftsmanship and manufacturing skill. Some of the hire wear range is mohair wool a high-twist and naturally stain resistant fabric. The hire wear range is designed with reinforced seams and a durable lining.

Fabric selection is the most important criterion for bespoke suits: not only does it define the look and feel of the suit, but also how it will perform and last over time. The best fabrics for suits will come in 100% worsted wool, with firmly twisted fine yarns made from long-stapled wool.

Wool is extremely versatile and can be spun in very fine and silky threads, providing lightweight, smooth fabrics with a rich body. It is also naturally stain-resistant, warm and moisture-absorbing. Wool is a strong, resilient material. 100% woollen suits are, therefore, made to last longer and can be passed on or worn by multiple users, whilst retaining their shape, look and feel. At the end of their lifetime, as wool is biodegradable and easily recyclable, these 100% woollen suits can be recycled for fibre recovery.



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What would success look like?

Alexandra was looking for another way for customers to build a service that helps men look good without the waste and expense or luxury for day; a way for customers to feel confident and positive about their own image.

Challenges

In addition to juggling day-to-day business matters, the main consideration when launching the new service was how and where to undertake consultations with clients.

Savile Row did not feel appropriate for hire customers and, although home visits took place at first, it quickly became apparent that this was not a cost or time effective way to work.

The result was the launch of a new shop based in Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire, an online shop and collaboration with suppliers. It has become apparent customers are willing to hire luxury suits.

Why REBus?

"I had always been keen on the idea of hirewear offering a complimentary service. We had lots of enquiries, but nowhere offered hire wear to match the quality of their suit. WRAP introduced me to the idea of longevity, which made me think about a complimentary service the bespoke business model."

Alexandra Wood, Managing Director, Alexandra Wood Tailors

REBus support

REBus supported the development of the business model idea, market research, the business case and helping to understand that the proposition was genuinely viable.

"REBus assistance with market research was invaluable. The financials were really useful to enable me to understand costs, utilisation rate and the feasibility of taking on the new shop."

Alexandra Wood, Managing Director, Alexandra Wood Tailors



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Pilot

Alexandra Wood opened her Bishops Stortford store as part of the pilot, as well as collaborating with another tailor (Nooshin) to offer a complimentary service to women. Alexandra also offers an alteration service and a wider selection of durable and luxurious suits, including the hirewear ranges from the store

Running a REBus pilot provided Alexandra with customer feedback on elements such as pricing. A small number of clients were chosen to take part and each was allocated several suits.

Alexandra initially experimented with a bundled suit and shirt business hire wear range. However, the demand from customers was to purchase rather than hire for this range. In addition, the trial allowed Alexandra to make choices around areas such as:

- Which designs to select.
- Whether to keep a full range in stock or opt for a made to order model.
- Where to launch the shop.
- Collaborative opportunities.

Key drivers to success

- Understanding the market and customer.
- Perseverance.
- Knowing that the commercial case works.
- Marketing it effectively.

Results

- Alexandra has launched the new hire service in-store and online, as well as taking on four assistants to help with co-ordination.
- Customers are likely to purchase durable luxurious products that last over fast fashion and are using the hire wear service.
- The wedding press has embraced the idea with positive editorial coverage.
- The service has collaborated to offer a bespoke tailored service to women, also incorporating an alteration or relining service to bring items back to life.

Lessons learned

The pilot has been a success and Alexandra is confident that she would follow the same path again. She is clear that without REBus support, the project would have appeared too risky and may never have happened.

The key lessons in making the new service work smoothly revolved around developing a strong business case, piloting and developing a service that supports the customer beyond the leaving the store.

Advice to others

“Explore different avenues, and just do it! I would have never have thought I would have opened another store, an online channel and been recognised through awards and ITV.”

Alexandra Wood, Managing Director, Alexandra Wood Tailors

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Case studies were generated as a result of pilots carried out for REBus by WRAP or RWS and the named organisations from 2013 to 2016.

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