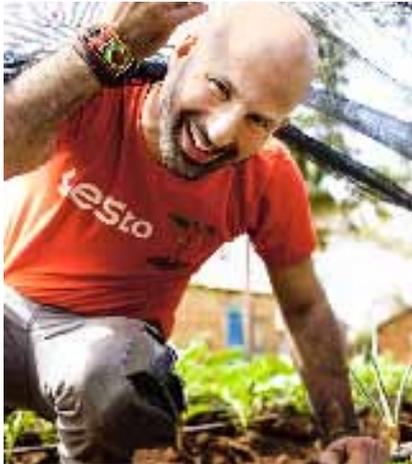


YES MAN

When he started the natural beauty brand Yes To in 2006, Ido Leffler flew around the world for 226 days straight. Eight years on and the man in orange is not even close to slowing down. He shares what keeps him motivated.



For anyone starting a business from scratch, the importance of networking cannot be underestimated. Australian Ido Leffler, co-founder of beauty empire Yes To, says the reason he gets on a plane every day to conduct face-to-face meetings is because it works.

“I find true business gets done when you break bread, have a few drinks together and really get to know the other person. I believe only then can you truly get your message across,” says Leffler. “That’s hard to do over an email.”

Admitting the approach is a little old school, Leffler says nothing compares to meeting in person. “You build a certain level of trust with someone when you sit across from them and get to know them — then the business part is easy.”

A love of flying also helps. “The novelty of it doesn’t wear off. When I get on a long-haul flight, recline my seat and watch a movie, I still think it’s awesome. I’m a kid in a candy store,” he says, laughing.

It’s this infectious exuberance for life that has catapulted Leffler’s business, Yes To Carrots (now with extended lines Yes To Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Blueberries and Grapefruit), to become the second largest natural beauty brand in the United States. Now based in San Francisco, the company

“Being comfortable standing out has been one of the most important drives to my success so far,” says Leffler. “I was born in Israel, but grew up in the leafy, northern suburbs of Sydney. So coming from an immigrant family — we spoke Hebrew at home — I learnt it was OK to be different. And when my dad’s property business went bust in the 1990s, we lost everything. I remember sitting in the car when Dad told us we had to sell up, move out of our home and leave our school. My immediate reaction was, as a family, we would get through it together; we were a unit.”

Leffler helped contribute by working various jobs, but his favourite gig was at Psycho Chicken. “I loved that place so much I’d go back there even to this day. I loved the fact our customers valued it; they would line up for our food. The Greek family who owned it truly cared about every detail — the floors were so clean you could eat off them — and every little thing was considered. It was run by people who gave a damn; they managed that shop like it was a Michelin star restaurant. Yeah, it was a charcoal chicken shop, but it taught me no matter what you do, be proud of it.”

When he started Yes To, Leffler wore the colour orange to be noticed, and it’s a symbol that’s endured. “Now I wear something orange every single working



Turn the page to read Ido’s guide to Minneapolis.

BUSINESS GETS DONE WHEN YOU BREAK BREAD... THAT’S HARD TO DO OVER EMAIL.

turns over an estimated \$60 million annually and is stocked in more than 28,000 stores globally. Leffler and his business partner, Lance Kalish, have accomplished this in just eight years. It’s dizzying success given the fiercely competitive beauty industry.

Leffler credits his phenomenal good run to three pivotal factors: his parents’ near bankruptcy, growing up as an immigrant, and working at the crazily named Psycho Chicken in Roseville, Sydney.

day to remind me of the beginning, when it was just me and Lance packing boxes and running around trying to get this business off the ground. It reminds me not to get above myself,” he says.

“Although I have a beautiful house in San Francisco, go snowboarding in Switzerland and have dined with the Queen of Jordan, I remind myself it could all go away and not to take any of it for granted. I wake up every day with a clear purpose — you get one shot at life, so work hard.” ▶

