

The need:

Did you know that London is the 15th most expensive city in the world to live in? That the average Londoner spends up to 61% of their income on rent? And that London is the most costly city in Europe for cultural activities?

It can be extremely difficult to make the most out of what this amazing – but eye-wateringly expensive – city has to offer. And that's where Cheapskate comes in.

About us:

Cheapskate London is the ultimate guide to the capital's best free events – from films, gigs and comedy nights, to talks, exhibitions and quirky one-off happenings. Every Monday morning, thousands of culturally curious Londoners receive a free, carefully curated selection of the upcoming week's best free events, as well as a weekly free-to-enter competition. Cheapskate now has almost 10,000 subscribers, with the number of sign-ups growing every single day.

There are several publications which provide information about London-based events (e.g. Time Out, Londonist, The Nudge and Secret London), however, no other publication exclusively provides information about FREE events. This means Cheapskate is unique in helping all Londoners get the most out of this amazing city – no matter what their income is.

Our adaptability:

When the pandemic struck the UK, it put an immediate end to all events – free or otherwise. But we adapted quickly, switching Cheapskate's focus to the best free virtual events. During this time, thousands of locked-down Londoners started relying on our email and Instagram content to give their weeks variety and meaning. One emailed us to say: "Thank you for helping me stay positive with these great ideas".

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, initiatives like Cheapskate will only become more essential for people looking to enjoy themselves in the capital. We hope that as Cheapskate grows, we can expand the model to other cities, helping more people make the most out of where they are living, no matter what they earn.

What stage we are at:

Even though Cheapskate is still a side hustle, we have achieved a lot since our launch in May 2019. Highlights include:

- Working on paid advertising partnerships with brands like the Donmar Warehouse, Gresham College, MoreYoga and galdem.
- Partnering with Brixton Life Drawing to co-host pay-what-you-can virtual life drawing classes, raising hundreds of pounds for charity.
- Partnering with Thrive LDN, the Mayor of London's mental health movement, to provide content during Loneliness Awareness Week (I also sat on a panel for an event aiming to tackle loneliness among young Londoners).

- Engaging with Londoners through our Instagram page, which has more than 5,000 subscribers (all gained organically, with no paid social).
- Being featured by several publications, including the Guardian, the Evening Standard, the Metro (I wrote a weekly “best virtual events” column for the site), BBC News and BBC Radio London (I appear regularly as an “expert commentator”).
- Featuring dozens of inspirational Londoners on our blog, including food writer Jonathan Nunn, former galdem editor Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff and writer Tiffany Philippou.

But what we are most proud of is connecting thousands of Londoners with incredible free events every week. And, as we’ve grown our subscriber count to almost 10,000, we’ve continued to put our incredibly loyal audience front and centre, making sure any advertising is relevant and targeted. Our faithful community is Cheapskate’s greatest asset, as demonstrated by our consistently high open and click-through rates (at 43%, our open-rate is more than double the industry average).

This is what some of our subscribers have said about Cheapskate:

“Such a brilliant idea; a real asset for Londoners.”

“Always full of amazing tips.”

“Terrific – love the range of events.”

Where we want to go next:

My co-founder and I both work full-time jobs, so everything we’ve achieved so far with Cheapskate has been in our spare time – most evenings and every weekend. We’ve managed to reach almost 10,000 subscribers without spending any money on advertising and primarily through word of mouth. But to really get to the next level – to reach thousands more people and turn Cheapskate from a side hustle into a sustainable business – we need a significant cash injection right now.

Winning the Georgina Henry Award would be completely transformational for us. We’d use the money to invest in targeted digital marketing to reach more people who would love our newsletter, as well as in SEO, to make Cheapskate appear higher up when people google “free events in London”. It would also pay for a year of MailChimp, a far superior newsletter platform compared with our current one (SendinBlue).

All this will help us increase our subscriber count, which in turn will help us attract more partnerships with bigger brands. This will help us secure the future of Cheapskate and, as a consequence, help make London a more accessible and inclusive place. Thank you.