JOHN SPILSBURY

E-commerce & Growth Director | DTC, Performance Marketing & AI-enabled Commerce

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Commercially driven E-commerce & Growth Director with 14+ years building and scaling consumer businesses. Grew Bareback Footwear from £200k to £6.3m annual turnover while maintaining a 55% gross margin. Hands-on across performance marketing, CRM, Shopify, customer experience, product launches, marketplaces and AI-enabled automation, with direct reporting to owners. Mountain ultrarunner and Lakeland 50 finisher, bringing resilience, pace and practical problem-solving to growth-focused teams.

31.5x	£570k	10x / 16x	100k
revenue scale £0.2m to £6.3m	annual media spend 70% Meta	lifetime ROAS Meta / Google	CRM subscribers 25% of revenue

CORE EXPERTISE

Growth & trading: DTC growth strategy, commercial planning, pricing, margin, CRO, seasonal and Black Friday launches

Acquisition: Meta Ads, Google PMax/Search/Shopping/Demand Gen/YouTube, TikTok Shop, GMV Max, AWIN

Retention & CX: Klaviyo email/SMS, segmentation, lifecycle flows, Zendesk, customer research, returns reduction

Technology & operations: Shopify, HTML/CSS, AI-built apps and agents, inventory planning, marketplaces, automated reporting

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director | Bareback Footwear

2016-present | Worcester, UK

Most senior marketing and digital decision-maker for a DTC footwear brand; joined following Bareback's acquisition of Top to Tail. Reports directly to the owners and leads growth strategy, digital trading, systems and multichannel execution.

- Scaled annual turnover from **£200k to £6.3m (31.5x)** while maintaining a **55% gross margin** through commercial pricing, supplier negotiation and disciplined channel management.
- Built the paid-media operation from zero to **£570k annual spend**, with approximately 70% deployed through Meta; delivered **10x average lifetime Meta ROAS** and typically maintained at least 6x through weaker seasonal periods.
- Maintained an acquisition model of approximately **£18 nCPA against £180 customer LTV** - a 10:1 LTV-to-CAC ratio - while managing to a blended MER target of 10x.
- Increased annual new-customer acquisition by **376% year on year** and grew the returning-customer rate to **38.6%**, with customers averaging 1.7 orders.
- Built the Klaviyo database from zero to **100,000 subscribers** through segmentation, custom newsletters, post-purchase and win-back journeys; the channel now generates **25% of annual revenue**.
- Managed Google PMax, Search, Shopping, branded, Demand Gen and YouTube campaigns, delivering an average **16x lifetime Google Ads ROAS**.
- Reduced product returns by **30% in four months** by improving product photography and video, coding 360-degree scans into product pages, and introducing size-led fit advice, charts and imagery.
- Turned customer insight into product-line extensions, including the Quebec waterproof ankle and zip ranges for high insteps, and expanded Hudson Storm into ankle, mid-calf and long-boot options; led packaging, positioning and every seasonal or new-product launch.
- Personally sourced, sampled, designed, priced and ordered care products, insoles and socks, creating high-margin accessories at approximately **80% gross margin** and strengthening AOV through bundles and checkout upsells.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

Director | Bareback Footwear | 2016-present

- Built a direct-to-subscriber seconds and samples programme that recovered **£126k+ in cumulative gross revenue** from imperfect stock while reducing waste.
- Self-built AI-assisted Shopify themes, loyalty tools, product finders, customer navigation, technical-SEO and content automations, plus an inventory agent using Claude and first-party data to incorporate lead times and reduce over-ordering and dead stock.
- Automated Zendesk customer-service workflows, cutting handling time by **more than 50%** while improving the quality and consistency of customer responses.
- Launched TikTok Shop and GMV Max, built organic TikTok momentum, automated Pinterest and X research/content/scheduling/reporting, and extended distribution through AWIN, Mirakl, Mountain Warehouse, Shopify Collective and, previously, Joules.
- Led a peak team of **eight** across marketing, warehouse and event operations, including a direct-report social media and marketing manager, plus videographers, photographers and influencers.
- Organised and operated up to **30 trade events per year** and designed a lower-risk wholesale operating model to preserve channel reach while prioritising the faster-growing online business.
- Automated digital reporting for owners, directors and employees, giving teams reliable day-to-day visibility of sales, media and operating performance.

Founder & E-commerce Consultant | John Spilsbury Digital

2018-present | Alongside primary role

Independent consultancy delivering practical growth projects for eight consumer, local and online businesses.

- Delivered hands-on Meta and Google Ads strategy, Shopify web design, CRO, organic performance and multichannel growth for projects ranging from focused local campaigns to larger agency engagements.
- Supported **Zatchels** with Meta strategy, website improvements and growth planning; advised **Ruckus Marketing** on Meta, CRO and Shopify recommendations for larger client projects.
- Managed Meta and Google Ads activity for **Buff Jewellery and Element Jewellery**, translating commercial goals into channel strategy, campaign structure and practical website recommendations.

Founder & Owner | Top to Tail

2012-2016 | Worcestershire, UK

- Founded and grew an equestrian footwear and clothing retailer through shows, events and direct customer selling, gaining first-hand insight into customer needs, fit, product performance and buying behaviour.
- Built the business to acquisition by its principal supplier, **Bareback Footwear**, joining the limited company as Director in 2016 and leading its transition towards digital-first growth.

TECHNICAL TOOLKIT

Commerce: Shopify, custom themes and functionality, HTML/CSS, CRO, product finders, customer navigation

Paid media: Meta Ads, Google Ads, PMax, Search, Shopping, Demand Gen, YouTube, TikTok Shop, GMV Max, AWIN

CRM & service: Klaviyo email/SMS, segmentation, lifecycle automation, custom HTML newsletters, Zendesk

Analytics: GA4, Shopify Analytics, Meta reporting, Google Ads reporting, automated stakeholder dashboards

AI & creative: Claude, GPT, AI agents, Adobe, Canva, Higgsfield, content and technical-SEO automation

Marketplaces: Mirakl, Mountain Warehouse, Shopify Collective and previous Joules marketplace experience

EDUCATION

BA (Hons) Human Geography, 2:2 | Edge Hill University | 2011

INTERESTS

Mountain ultrarunning; Lakeland 50 finisher. Enjoys the discipline, resilience and problem-solving of long days in the mountains.