



Hap Klopp: The founder of The North Face on his 'exciting' venture in Manchester

The founder of The North Face – one of the world's biggest clothing brands – Hap Klopp speaks to The Manc about his latest venture in Manchester.

BY THE MANC · 23RD DECEMBER 2020 · 5 SHARES · 6 MINUTE READ



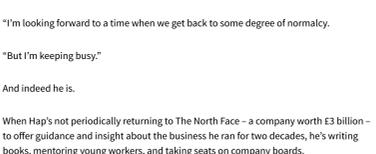
The sun is rising over the city of San Francisco.

It's gone 7am, and for millions in The Golden Gate City, the day is only just beginning. Hap Klopp, however, has already been up for hours.

At 78 years of age, he's still got that 'seize the moment' attitude – the kind that pulses through the veins of every hungry entrepreneur constantly trying to find more hours in the average day.

Since establishing **The North Face** in 1968, Hap has lived the globetrotting lifestyle of the international businessman – carrying his briefcase across time zones for more than fifty years.

Even in 2019, he spent the best part of 180 days a year on the move.



Things are different now, of course. The pandemic has meant Hap – who spent his childhood in the outdoors and later launched a clothing company committed to exploring the wild – has moved around significantly less than he might have liked.

"I've always prided myself as someone who's travelled the world all the time," Hap tells The Manc.

"I'm looking forward to a time when we get back to some degree of normalcy.

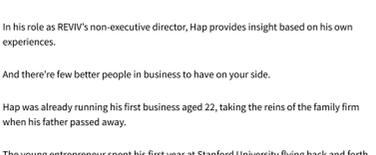
"But I'm keeping busy."

And indeed he is. When Hap's not periodically returning to The North Face – a company worth £3 billion – to offer guidance and insight about the business he ran for two decades, he's writing books, mentoring young workers, and taking seats on company boards.

His work takes him to several continents, but one of the projects Hap's currently most excited about is happening right in Manchester: **REVIV**.

Run by Denton-raised **Sarah Lomas** – who starred in BBC documentary *Manctopia* – REVIV is one of the world's fastest-growing health and wellness businesses, operating from an HQ in St Ann's Square.

Their latest concept is **HELIX** – COVID management software that enables companies to keep staff safe in the workplace like no other system before.



"As someone who's been in business for a long time, the thing that's key is having some certainty," Hap explains.

"Uncertainty is the hardest thing to deal with. And COVID is probably the most uncertain thing that's popped up in quite some time.

"Being able to forecast costs and constantly changing regulations... it's impossible to keep up with that manually.

"But a tool that can manage employees' health, tell you when it's safe to bring people back, and calculate COVID costs – all on a dashboard you can have on your phone? That's really exciting."

After more than half a century as an entrepreneur, Hap's seen just about everything. So, when you've got the business guru "really excited" about something, you're likely onto a winner.

In his role as REVIV's non-executive director, Hap provides insight based on his own experiences.

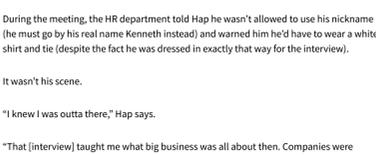
And there're few better people in business to have on your side.

Hap was already running his first business aged 22, taking the reins of the family firm when his father passed away.

The young entrepreneur spent his first year at Stanford University flying back and forth between California and Washington – managing the business in between his exams.

"I negotiated the sale of the company whilst I was getting my MBA," Hap tells us.

"I was able to sell it at the end of my first year."



Hap graduated from Stanford in 1966 with two diplomas and a proven track record of running a business. But he still found opportunities somewhat hard to come by.

"I kinda believed someone would wanna hire me to run a company – I mean, I'd already run a company and had a Stanford MBA... but nobody really did that," he laughs.

"I looked around and thought what I might do is what a lot of entrepreneurs do; go to a big company, learn a little bit, and keep my eyes open for opportunities.

"I had a lot of ideas about how a company should be run, but they didn't fit with the times. I didn't believe in planned obsolescence which was the nature of the day. I believed in sustainability."

One interview Hap attended was with multinational Procter & Gamble.

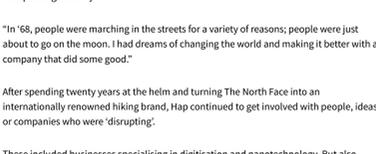
During the meeting, the HR department told Hap he wasn't allowed to use his nickname (he must go by his real name Kenneth instead) and warned him he'd have to wear a white shirt and tie (despite the fact he was dressed in exactly that way for the interview).

It wasn't his scene.

"I knew I was outta there," Hap says.

"That [interview] taught me what big business was all about then. Companies were hiring very selectively, and what I decided is if you can't work for anybody else and have all these ideas that don't fit – you need to start a company of your own.

"You have no idea how big it's going to be, but at least it's going to be one that you love and be proud of."



Hap, having been raised in the great wide outdoors in Spokane, soon stumbled across a concept that struck a chord: The North Face.

The climbing equipment store had been set up by husband and wife Douglas and Susie Tomkins – two would-be entrepreneurs who found love whilst hitchhiking (and later went on to launch Esprit).

Hap knew he could flesh out the idea and turn it into something bigger.

"When you're raised in Spokane, you spend most of your time in the outdoors. You go hiking, climbing, scrambling, skiing... I felt I knew what a good product was. I studied for six months about the outdoor industry and founded The North Face.

"Back then, people were only going a few hundred feet rather than deep into the wilderness, because climbing equipment was so heavy.

"My idea was to disrupt. We took materials that the U.S. military used in the Vietnam War and applied them to camping. We lightened the load by 50% and created a new backpacking industry.

"In '68, people were marching in the streets for a variety of reasons; people were just about to go on the moon. I had dreams of changing the world and making it better with a company that did some good."

After spending twenty years at the helm and turning The North Face into an internationally renowned hiking brand, Hap continued to get involved with people, ideas or companies who were 'disrupting'.

These included businesses specialising in digitisation and nanotechnology. But also health and wellness; which is particularly pertinent in the current climate.

"Finding solutions to one's health and intervening early – that's the future," Hap says.

"That's why REVIV interested me. What really got me excited was some of the initiatives they had – including DNA analysis.

"They were working on this system that showed how different food affected different people.

"If the cost for an app like that was tolerable – then that's a real step towards being active in preserving health and wellness."



With a new, more infectious strain of COVID accelerating in the UK, workplaces are under immense pressure to get it right when it comes to social distancing and taking care of their staff.

And REVIV's latest innovation – **HELIX** – is designed to do exactly that.

"REVIV immediately pivoted when COVID hit," Hap says.

"That's what I liked and similar to what we had in mind at The North Face; this idea of being socially responsible.

"They started offering not-for-profit COVID testing in the UK and US, and started providing information during a time when everyone was starved of it."

As much as Hap enjoys REVIV's repeated attempts to disrupt, there's this other attribute that's keeping him so actively involved in business – long past the point many of his contemporaries might have retired.

"They're doing good for the world," Hap says serenely.

"And that's what's important."

9 Shares | Sign Up for Our Newsletters | Get the latest Manchester news in your inbox. Enter your email | Subscribe

- 1 The March 'Full Super Worm Moon' will peak this weekend - here's how to see it
2 Man gets pay rise for hard work then calls in sick for celebrating too hard
3 An Immersive Alice in Wonderland experience is coming to Manchester
4 Over 40,000 Asda workers win equal pay row with supermarket owner
5 Body cams for ambulance crews piloted in Manchester

Related Posts | Sacha Lord issues '11th hour' warning as entertainment venues face closure without government support | The 64-year-old gritter working all hours to protect the north in winter

FEATURE | The viral photo of Manchester that launched a print shop | FEATURE | Meet the Manc doing a kebab-themed 'Supersize Me' to raise money for his little girl living with nerve tumours

FEATURE | Pet shops, pubs and p*rnography: Tib Street has a wild history | BUSINESS | What long-term challenges do local businesses face?

FEATURE | Buzzin' About: What we did in Greater Manchester this week (02/03) | BUSINESS | Hits Radio and Cash for Kids launch annual 'Mission Christmas' appeal for 2020