

How years of rejection rocketed Sloom founder Rudo Kemp to a sleeping success

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From floor salesperson to budding entrepreneur, meet the founder of South Africa's first and only comfort adjustable mattress brand, Sloom.



Before and during the startup of the proudly South African mattress brand, Sloom, CEO and founder Rudo Kemp heard more than enough no's to keep him from getting out of bed in the morning (pun intended).

Kemp, now 31, was selling beds in retail a couple of years ago when hearing no became as frequent as the word #rona these days. "Rejection becomes your second nature when you work in retail. It makes you ponder how things could be done differently, and you become aware of the industry pains such as the overwhelming amount of choice. So many different beds all with different, but technically the same features," says Kemp.

Kemp's new mission was to engineer one mattress that would eliminate all the stress and time involved in finding the perfect mattress. "I wanted to simplify the mattress buying experience." He devoted himself to learn the intricacies of foam and foam densities by working at a foam factory as plant manager. "Finally, I felt I was ready to take the leap and on my way to the stars - when reality set in."

After quitting his job and taking his provident fund to start Sloom, Kemp had to brace the no word much sooner than anticipated. "Finding suppliers that were willing to manufacture a fraction of their minimum order quantities was nearly impossible. It was more challenging than I could ever imagine developing my idea into a product. On top of that, people are skeptical of embracing a new and disruptive way of doing things when the 'tried and tested' works."

He found manufacturers that would make a zip cover for his mattress, but minimum order quantities meant R1m in the bank to manufacture 1,000. The zip cover is crucial to his design, as the mattress has four distinct comfort layers which can be rearranged to suit your comfort level. (All in the comfort of your own home.) "I certainly didn't have that amount of money at

my disposal, which meant more searching for the right supplier. Hygiene is essential for a mattress, and the zip cover also means you can machine wash it."

"In hindsight, I never thought it would take three years to start making any money. For those three years, my wife (Susan Kemp) was the primary breadwinner in our household." The initial stock he bought sat in Kemp's garage for almost a year.

At the time, Susan was working as a designer at another firm and would moonlight to help establish and groom the corporate identity of Sloom. But Sloom desperately needed a cash injection and Susan agreed to take a loan in her name. At this point it was 'make or break' because Sloom is an online-only mattress brand, and the Rands Rudo took from his Provident Fund was used for building the website and buying the stock, almost no one knew about Sloom.

They used the loan on marketing Sloom with the online press and some Facebook and Google ads. This was the catalyst to get Sloom off the ground.

Four years later, Susan has joined Sloom and Rudo full time. They also just opened a new factory, during the lockdown in Cape Town. "We are incredibly proud that all Sloom products are manufactured in South Africa." This allows them to stay close to the manufacturing process, to ensure top-notch quality and contribute to the local economy and job creation.

With Sloom, customers can try out the mattress for 100 nights at home, risk-free. It allows customers to test and determine whether the mattress is what they're looking for – far better than the 15-minute test you will get in a mattress store. "With Sloom we guarantee comfort, and if a client is not satisfied within their 100-night trial, a free return and pick up will be arranged," said Kemp.

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