

Democratising cutting edge mental health support with Alena

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Mandana Ahmadi, CEO and cofounder of Alena about the role of technology in mental wellbeing, the value of connections and making life that bit easier for those managing social anxiety symptoms day-to-day.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Alena was founded with the vision of a future in which cutting edge mental health support is within everyone's reach. We believe everybody should be given an equal chance at life, and science and technology can make that happen. We know from experience how a little help can go a long way - that's why we bring tailored, scientific and technological assistance right to people who need it most. Everyone has something special within them: sometimes they just require some extra support for their potential to be unlocked!

Tell me about the business - what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

At Alena, our mission is to help people improve their lives by inspiring a deeper understanding of the mind. Our first product offers a straightforward way for those struggling with social anxiety to access automated evaluation and treatment without relying on labels or traditional methods. In the coming years, we'll be tackling other mental health conditions as we work towards becoming the leading provider of

label-free behavioural treatments before 2027.

Our ultimate goal is to help people live healthier and more fulfilling lives. Our mission is to give everyone access to cutting-edge, personalised support that has the power to change lives for the better. To make this vision a reality on an international scale, we're automating our entire care pathway for clinical mental health support —allowing people everywhere more time and space to tend to what truly provides mental health.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

It's been so exciting to see the positive response Alena has received since we opened it up for everyone in the UK. Our team is quite small, and as such decided to keep our launch relatively quiet; however, what we've seen with word-of-mouth referrals shows how many people out there struggle with Social Anxiety without even realising it's a problem they face. That recognition from those using Alena really motivates us at every turn - knowing that something like this proves helpful on an individual level makes all our hard work worthwhile!

We're continuously striving towards creating a smoother user experience, more simplicity when accessing necessary resources quickly and effectively... and hopefully making life just that bit easier for those managing social anxiety symptoms day-to-day.

Tell us about the working culture at Alena

At Alena, we have found that culture is at the heart of our team's wellness and success. We choose to care, we challenge the boundaries, we speak up and get it done. We lean on these values to achieve the milestones that are necessary for our success in completing our mission - becoming a label-free provider for mental health disorders by 2027. We're passionate

about building a future in which everyone has access to cutting edge support regarding their mental wellbeing; it drives everything we do here!

How are you funded?

Our latest round of funding was led by Stride VC and followed by Re.Mind VC. Both are dream partners for any visionary startup. We are also blessed to be supported by an incredible group of visionary and impact driven angel investors who believed in Alena when it was just an idea and a vision. They have always been in our corner.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

My biggest challenge has been to balance work and home life. I have two young children, and they are my world. In part, I founded Alena to make the world that I will leave behind a better place for them and any child who will inherit this world from us grownups.

Knowing that I have only a few decades to make this change makes me work hard and long hours, which often means I miss out on spending time with my children. Although it's impossibly hard, knowing that these choices may have an even greater impact on them in their future, which keeps me motivated.

I don't think this is a dilemma that I will ever overcome, but I can see it will become easier as they grow older and more independent.

How does Alena answer an unmet need?

I think people are becoming more conscious of the fact that our mental health is essential for living a healthy and balanced life, not only in

ourselves but also on broader levels. This awareness has been driven by both growing scientific evidence about how important it is to look after our psychological wellbeing as well as an increase in public discussion around these topics.

On top of this, technology advancements have posed a real problem when talking about mental wellness; with its rapid growth creating disruption between us humans and things like work-life balance which can cause stress or other issues such as anxiety or depression.

Technology has made our lives easier, but it's also disrupted how we find purpose in this new environment. To keep up with the pace that technologies create, I believe we need to automate some processes; otherwise natural human abilities will leave us behind as they are too slow for relevance. But free from these pressures we're able to focus more deeply on what truly brings mental health - spending time together, feeling empowered about our lives - augmented by science and technology, and overcoming natural man-made barriers.

What's in store for the future?

We've realised that mental health can be greatly improved by finding ways to facilitate more meaningful connections with others, which is why our next two products are dedicated to providing automated solutions for issues such as anxiety and depression.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Be very careful about your reasons for founding a company. It is those reasons that will be your motivation to keep going when the time is tough, and that will make or break your startup during more challenging

times.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

I wake up very early, and the best part about that is hearing the early birds singing before the city wakes up and the traffic starts. I work about 13 hours on average per day. I spend the rest of my waking time with my children and my husband. In terms of sleep, I don't do too much of it.

I have a few rules that I live by, one of them is that everyday I tell and show my loved ones how important they are to me and how much they mean to me, and how thankful I am that they are in my life.

Mandana Ahmadi is CEO and Co-Founder *Alena*.

Article by Mandana Ahmadi