

Meet Otta and find relevant roles at the most exciting startups

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Sam Franklin, CEO and cofounder of Otta making the search for a job exciting, not stressful, and the importance of curation, value, purpose, and salary transparency.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Otta is all about offering candidates a better way to find a job. We started the company because people told us job-search was soul-crushing.

Whether it's using machine learning technology to help candidates match their skills with a great role, or giving candidates a chance to express what they're looking for from a company when it comes to values and flexibility. We help candidates to express that they're more than just a CV.

To realise this, we handpick the most exciting, innovative and fast-moving companies, from startups to tech giants such as Deliveroo and Depop. We offer only the best opportunities to our job seekers, crawling the internet for live roles, which we then improve, and publish.

Ultimately, our aim is to help people find a job that gives them purpose and make the job search process a more enjoyable experience. We've done this by pushing for better salary transparency, vetting for responsiveness of the employer and giving candidates insight into what it's actually like to work there.

How does Otta answer an unmet need?

During my previous role, I would always ask the candidates I interviewed about their job search. They would tell me about balancing 40+ hours a week at work whilst looking for a job, with searches often throwing up irrelevant jobs and recruiters pushing unsuitable roles.

Work is obviously a huge part of your life, and so job search should feel exciting, not incredibly stressful.

What really struck me was that people would tell me they felt like a second-class citizen as a candidate, treated poorly by companies. Along with my cofounders, Xav and Theo, I saw that there was an opportunity to build a product and experience that puts the candidates' needs first. Everyone else was leaning towards the companies to help them fill a vacancy, and we were leaning towards the candidates.

What makes Otta different?

Otta has left behind the world of basic job boards and archaic tools which make job searching a soul-crushing experience. Finding a new job shouldn't feel transactional. For many people, a new job represents a fresh start and therefore it should be an exciting and rewarding experience.

Our platform is designed to transform the application process. Candidates on Otta only see a highly curated selection of the most relevant and recent job opportunities for them. These companies are vetted by us, with only the best roles at the fastest-growing companies making the cut.

We've designed the platform to be intuitive and easy to navigate, so candidates can find and apply to roles that align with what they're looking for. Instead of managing the application across over a dozen tabs,

candidates on Otta can search for, apply and track their application in one place.

Unlike other job search platforms, we also give our candidates the power to incorporate their values into their job search. They can filter jobs by flexible working practices and benefits and can see the values at the heart of their operations. All of these unique tools are designed to give candidates the best shot at finding their next dream job.

You advocate for salary transparency, can you explain what this is, why it is a key goal of the company and what next steps are for campaigning for it?

When we talk about salary transparency, we are talking about the practice of openly sharing salary information with candidates throughout the job search process. This includes providing salary ranges for open positions and disclosing salary information during job interviews.

Salary transparency is a huge step forward to achieving equality in the workplace. Our data shows that women on Otta have a 15% lower minimum salary preference than men and that people of colour set a 20% lower minimum salary preference compared to white people.

This disparity is something we see across all roles, and at every level of experience. Unfortunately, when you look at women of colour, the gap is even bigger.

Putting transparent salary ranges on job adverts is a powerful and effective way to tackle this inequality, with studies showing that people are more likely to ask for fair pay when the salary is transparent.

So by focusing on this specific aspect of job search, Otta has a real opportunity to positively influence people's lives and careers beyond their job search.

In addition, it saves candidates time. The amount of time people spend applying for jobs with an unknown salary, only to find out further down the line that it was a waste of their time because the base remuneration doesn't match their needs or expectations. This way, expectations on both sides are managed from the start.

What is the working culture like at Otta?

We have set out to build a work environment structured around six company values

- candidates first
- there for each other
- we challenge because we care
- what's the return?
- what would it take to learn faster?
- what could exceptional look like?

and have sought to attract and hire individuals who are excited and motivated by them.

Our values act as shared guidelines for how we behave and the ways we work. They help us to solve challenging problems, answer tricky questions and act in the best interests of the business. As employees and colleagues, they also describe the behaviours we expect from each other, as well as what you can expect from others.

We are also constantly looking to set a standard in the industry for good company culture, offering new ways to nurture a positive environment for

our employees. This includes our trial of a 9-day fortnight across the company.

Whether it's an extra day spent with family/friends, making time for a new hobby, or decompressing before the weekend, we've seen a really positive impact on our teams and it aligns with our mission to make Otta a great place to work for great people.

How has the business evolved since the launch in 2019?

We set out four years ago to make looking for a new job search less soul-crushing, and since then there have been over 100 million views of jobs by signed-in users. Like any startup, we have learned on the go, experimenting with new technologies and constantly looking for ways to improve our candidates' experience.

Naturally, we're led by an evolving marketplace and ensure we respond to this accordingly. For example, since COVID, we've seen the proliferation of flexible working and 'work from anywhere' policies, and candidates are increasingly drawn to businesses that are actively helping the planet. All this search data is used to optimise our platform and ensure that not only are we working with the right companies, but that we're providing candidates with the information they need to make the right decision on the next step in their careers.

As a business, we have also pushed how we think about getting work done at Otta. Implementing our 9-day fortnight trial has drastically changed how the business operates. It's still early days on evaluating whether a shorter work week is allowing us to meet our business goals, but I'm excited to see what the future holds!

How are you funded?

We have raised over \$25M to date, which includes a Series A led by Tiger Global after initial backing by LocalGlobe and Riding Unicorn.

While we're free for candidates, we also offer employers the option of a premium service, which we call 'Otta Pro'. This allows companies to boost their jobs, source candidates for hard-to-hire roles, and gather insights and data to improve the performance of ads. This allows companies to be more competitive when searching for the best candidates on our platform. Ultimately we help paying companies make more hires on Otta.

What's in store for the future?

Over the last year, Otta has demonstrated that the recruitment sector is ripe for disruption. With the climate emergency and social justice at the top of people's minds, we have a huge opportunity to connect a generation of thoughtful job seekers with mission-driven companies.

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

The fundamental key to success in this industry is simple; if you have the best candidates, the best employees will ultimately follow. So, we need to keep the best candidates engaged, and coming back to us every time they're looking for a job, and at whatever stage their search is.

We've had to work hard to ensure our product is a step above the rest (e.g. LinkedIn). The way we approach this is to actually speak to job seekers, understand what it is they're looking for and how the market is treating them. We can then ensure we're addressing these issues and provide a service that pushes the entire industry to do better.

What's the one piece of advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

I think a lot of entrepreneurs find a space where they see an opportunity and come up with an idea, and then they sprint at it. However, to be a positive force for change in the long-run, the best piece of advice I would give founders (or would-be founders) is to think really deeply about whether you're passionate about the cause and the mission. Building a startup is tough, and caring deeply about the mission is what gets you through.

When Otta first started, my other cofounders and I became careers coaches. This helped us develop powerful insights into the challenges faced by candidates. And it got us hooked. It energised our mission and provided us with the drive to really have an impact in their sector.

What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Right now I'm prioritising exercise and sport in the morning. Either I go to the gym or play squash before starting the day. That means whatever comes my way with work, I start the day feeling energised and know I've had a good amount of me-time.

Other than that, my day rarely follows a routine. Some days I'm finishing at 6pm like everyone else, some days I'm having to work into the evening.

One rule I like to live by is asking myself "Is it going to be a chapter or a footnote?" whenever something goes wrong. The idea is that when you're writing your memoirs when you're 80, there'll be a lot of things that felt really important at the time but will end up being footnotes. I like to use

this tool as a way to ensure I stay level-headed and maintain perspective.

Sam Franklin is the CEO and cofounder of Otta.

Article by Sam Franklin