Turn your daily reading into career-shaping opportunities with Mindstone

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Joshua Wohle, CEO of Mindstone about turning reading into opportunities, dynamic skill profiles and LLMs.

Temps de lecture : minute

1 November 2023

Mindstone is an AI coach that turns learning from articles, podcasts, and videos into opportunities and skills employers recognise. We combine the best of Duolingo - points gained based on skills acquired - and the best of LinkedIn, a skill profile quantifying your abilities.

What was the catalyst for launching the product?

I began investing in education seven years ago and joined Emerge Education, now Europe's premier early-stage edtech VC, as a Venture Partner. This role gave me access to insights from fellow founders and investors, and shaped my perspective on the industry's direction. I got the lightbulb moment after reading "How We Learn" by Benedict Carey, which showed the gap between the science of learning and its application in our educational system.

On top of that, even when you do know how to learn - and you somehow acquire the right skills, it's not enough. Two people with the same level of skill, one with a degree from a top tier university, one without, don't get access to the same opportunities in life. This was very personal. At 12, I

learned how to code. I then founded my first company at 16 writing code, yet I still pursued a computer science degree at 22 because I was scared someone, somewhere was going to tell me I couldn't do something because I didn't have a piece of paper. I founded Mindstone to change this.

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

Mindstone is an AI coach transforming daily learning from articles, podcasts, and videos into concrete skills recognised by employers. For individuals, it's a personal guide that supports productive learning habits and tracks progress. For managers, it aligns company targets to learning objectives, monitors team progress, and promotes team development without being locked in into a standard one-size-fits-all learning and development management system.

This end result is a universal, dynamic skill profile, visualising people's learning trajectory and offering tangible proof of their knowledge to employers. Whether the goal is to pursue a new role, aim for a promotion, or upskill a team, Mindstone makes learning transparent, measurable, and actually professionally rewarding.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

Two years ago, we introduced a concept called Playlists, positioning it as the "Spotify for learning". But with AI's advancements, the idea of linear learning quickly became outdated. So we transitioned to a model of delivering personalised content, ensuring the right piece of content reaches the right person at the right time.

The other evolution is that AI has progressed much faster than we anticipated - it's basically advanced our roadmap by three years. We're now using Large Language Models (LLMs) for skill identification, evidence point quantification, question generation, and even coaching.

What is your favourite thing about being a founder?

The potential for impact.

Which founders or businesses do you see as being the most inspirational?

Elon Musk - I think he's very flawed but still hugely inspirational in terms of what he's been able to do from a business and innovation perspective. Satya Nadella also inspires me, especially given how he revitalised a conglomerate many had written off a decade ago.

Outside of business, I really admire Barack Obama, particularly for his eloquence and ability to speak clearly and draw a link between emotion and rationality.

Which other figures in your life inspire you?

Dylan Collins, my co-founder and former CEO at SuperAwesome (the previous company I founded, which was sold to Epic Games), who was the first person I worked with who worked harder than I did. Melinda, my current Chief Product Officer, is also very inspiring - her skills and approach are really complementary to mine.

What has been your biggest business fail?

During my university years, I spent nine months on a product named Targetz. It was a real-time, location-based community marketplace - we used all the buzzwords at our disposal. We had a working model but we went too broad and we declined an investment offer that today would be seen as incredibly generous. This plus some strategic missteps and external factors - like the founding team getting other, more stable jobs at the end of their degrees - meant that we never launched it, even though it had lots of potential. I regret it to this day and I've learned to always go to the end of an initiative ever since.

What are the things you're really good at as a leader?

I lead by example, investing emotionally and committing fully. I'm also an interesting blend of tech, product, business, and sales expertise, which allows me to oversee different business facets and bring all of it together when needed.

Which areas do you need to improve on?

Managing people and emotions. I sometimes appear slightly detached, even when I genuinely care about someone and their concerns. This disconnect can create challenges in my interactions with people, and I need to get better at showing feelings and empathy.

What's in store for the future of the business?

By Q4, we're planning to unveil "Mindstone for Business", which will allow L&D departments at medium and large businesses to align company

targets with individual learning objectives.

Longer term, if we are right in our thesis, the importance of reskilling and upskilling will increase hugely due to AI. It will become the most critical area of development for anyone (and any business) in the world, and people's ability to learn will be what will differentiate them in the workforce.

Our vision is to offer a platform that helps individuals learn and quantifiably showcase their skills to potential employers in an unbiased way, bypassing traditional gatekeepers like universities. At the same time, we want to equip businesses with the tools they require to face the accelerating pace of change by upskiling, reskilling and aligning their teams as efficiently as possible. I think that if we are successful at this, we could become a platform most people in the world would use throughout their lives.

What advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

Balance ambition with realism. Pursuing monumental goals and hypergrowth while maintaining a strict work-life balance is simply not possible. Be honest about your objectives and understand you will need to make some trade-offs if you want to reach and scale. If that's not what you want, that's OK too - you just need to redefine your growth objectives accordingly.

The second piece of advice is something I have applied myself: only contemplate quitting when the company is doing really well. This will help dissociate personal feelings from the actual state of affairs, and ensure you're not making decisions based on temporary challenges. If you quit something, you need to do it because it's not the right thing for you, not because it's tough at that particular moment.

And finally, a more personal question! We like to ask everyone we interview about their daily routine and the rules they live by. Is it up at 4am for yoga, or something a little more traditional?

Sometimes life gets in the way, but I try to stick to this routine on most weekdays: I start my day at 6:30 am, not because the exact time matters, but because consistency has been proven to be really important for optimising sleep quantity and quality.

From 6:30 to 7:15 am, I'm on my exercise bike, catching up on emails, Mindstone user interviews, articles, Apple News, and educational videos. By 7:30 am, I've taken a cold shower (I started it in 2020 and never looked back) and eat breakfast with my wife while watching an episode from a series we both like.

By 8 am, I'm deep into work: sometimes discussing tasks with my assistant or reviewing Mindstone metrics. My official workday usually kicks off around 8:45 or 9:00 am. Outside of day to day business, I usually do the following: use Mindstone as an actual user, learn about building a company, watch a lunchtime Masterclass session, take a 20 minute nap, and factor in some physical activity. 6.30 to 7.15pm is for admin and prepping for the next day. That includes updating my daily learning log, reflecting on my day - which often answers the question: "What would I do differently if I could redo this day?", and planning for what's ahead. Before bedtime, I spend about an hour engaged in long-term learning reading, have dinner while watching Netflix, and unwind with a bit of fiction. By 22:45, it's lights out.

Joshua Wohle is the CEO of _Mindstone_.

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