

Meet YEO, Next-generation secure, private messaging for "Your Eyes Only"

As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to cofounder & CEO of YEO Messaging about control of content, data sovereignty, privacy and confidentiality

Temps de lecture : minute

25 July 2024

In 2009 I had seen how teens were using messaging and social media for dating and starting to send compromising photos. I had an idea for a messaging application that would delete every message within 10 seconds of viewing; however, I was in the middle of selling my business to Sumitomo Chemical which meant I was locked in. Then Snapchat came in 2012.

I continued to Angel invest for a while before deciding in 2017 to go for it with a new idea. This was YEO "your eye only". I realised that computing power in our mobile handsets was sufficient to drive the front camera so we could confirm identity before displaying content. Luca Rognoni and I immediately designed the flow and the patents before we went further.

I then called Sarah, my daughter, as she had her own brand and design agency with her partner, Keith Bone. I needed their guidance on social positioning, design and marketing, Sarah agreed to join and YEO was born.

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

YEO is about control of content, data sovereignty, privacy and confidentiality. Everything that today's social media takes away from us all. We have patented the art of "continuous" identification, so we can identify the human viewing at all times. We first applied this technology to messaging so the sender protects the content and maintains control. We deliver content and communications to humans, not devices.

Our goal is to assist businesses and society to become safe online, to repatriate the values of privacy, confidentiality, respect and security. YEO can be used to confirm presence, authenticate identity and control content. In a world where fraud, phishing and cyber crime is everywhere, YEO offers an unprecedented level of protection and assurance.

Today, we are working with regulated business, social media applications, digital content providers and finance groups. YEO continued presence has applications for delivery and access control.

Sarah has orchestrated an incredible social media marketing program. Through this, we have created awareness and won many accolades. We are now attending industry shows which also help to spread the word. As we roll out with International partners, we expect to see increased demand. In the UK we are keeping close with Ofcom as our continued presence "YEO" Mode SDK enables application providers to continuously check age, protecting children from adult sites and most importantly preventing adults from nefarious activity on children's sites.

When YEO becomes synonymous with online safety, we will meet our goal.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We came up with the idea in 2017 and worked to perfect the intuitive use of continuous face recognition within applications that are used daily. Since then we have developed a ubiquitous communication system operational across mobile and desktop products. Like most businesses we have pivoted, we have worked with social media and insurance companies to provide proof of concept across their vertical applications. Since November 2023, we have started to sell the product and now have SaaS contracts that forecast YEO to be used with over 500 million users within the next five years.

Tell us about the working culture at YEO Messaging

We are a remote company with an inclusive matrix organisation, we work together as a team and will continue to evolve the culture to ensure we have an emphatic, collaborative organisation where success, result and failure are team driven. We want the best, but team is important and if members prefer individualism then they are not for YEO.

How are you funded?

We self-funded initially and once we had the patent issued we welcomed friends and family, then SEIS and EIS funding via UK private investors and more recently added International investors.

What has been your biggest challenge so far

and how have you overcome this?

Assembling a technology development team in a highly competitive market where talent is often poached. We now outsource on a project basis and maintain a small lead team internally.

How does YEO Messaging answer an unmet need?

The world needs privacy on an on-going basis, biometrics are widely used for password replacement but continuous use requires continuous authentication, YEO provides for this.

What's in store for the future?

More use cases, more advanced techniques for liveness detection, more unique vectors from a multitude of unique human biometrics. YEO Messaging will add YEO Money as an in-app payment and banking facility within the messaging.

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

Be prepared, its a marathon not a sprint. Listen to your market and develop pain killers, not vitamins. The world will buy a solution or a cure, however an enhancement needs to be very special to gain market and change behaviour.

And finally, a more personal question! What's

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

Moderation is the key to a healthy life to be a good leader and build a successful business, fitness and health are key for both body and mind. I eat well, ensure that I have a balanced diet, hydrate throughout the day, more recently taking hydrogenated water, use 14-hour fasting four days a week, play competitive sports such as tennis and now padel twice a week for 90 minutes. The combative aspects of these racquet sports enable the mind to totally switch from your business thoughts. In the evenings a more sedentary walk with my wife and the dog, and at the weekend I spend quality time with my family or gardening for time to think. I tend to read industry or market pieces rather than novels, although I always have a good book on the go. Music is key to life and I love listening to an eclectic mix of classics alongside up-and-coming music.

Alan E J Jones is the cofounder & CEO of *YEO Messaging*.



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