

Evvaro - Effortless digital health integration

As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Dr. Thuria Wenbar, cofounder & CEO of Evvaro about fixing the NHS, digitally enhanced services and the importance of resilience.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Evvaro is a licensed, AI-powered healthcare platform that provides instant medical access, diagnosis and next-day prescriptions to cover 40% of conditions covered by the family doctor. Users can access Evvaro directly or through Evvaro's partner brands, who can integrate Evvaro into their websites with a single line of code.

What was the catalyst for launching the product?

I was a doctor working in A&E and my husband, Oskar, as a pharmacist, and we both saw patients' pain and frustrations first-hand.

I would regularly come home from my A&E shifts and complain that patients came to A&E and waited 8-12 hours overnight for something as simple as their asthma inhaler or diabetic meds. I have been coding since I was 7, I'd built and sold a few websites, and I could see everything should be run like an algorithm. Healthcare, ultimately, with all of its data is just a really massive decision tree supported by a lot of human emotion and warmth. Oskar, my husband, became sick and tired of hearing me complain and told me we should do something about it. So, we started on the delusional plan to try to fix the NHS. The catalyst was really seeing

the desperation patients felt and knowing we could do better.

Why are you doing what you're doing?

I'm driven by the desire to improve healthcare access. It's cheesy and a little cliché but I know we can make a huge impact. The future of healthcare is digitally enhanced services. We simply don't have enough clinicians, globally, to support every patient on a 1-to-1 basis. We have to find ways to leverage technology safely. As a clinician lead team, we're doing that. The majority of our leadership have worked in the NHS and have seen the inefficiencies in the current system; we're all obsessed by the idea of making something better. I believe we will create a better solution that addresses the challenges patients face in getting timely treatment and medication and all the wrap-around support.

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?

We've created an online platform where patients can order prescription medication directly. Our aim is to improve healthcare access by bypassing traditional bottlenecks like GP appointments and pharmacy visits. We work with a range of customers, including high-profile clients like Lovehoney and Patches. Our USP is really about convenience and accessibility, especially for non-urgent health issues and treatments that might be restricted in traditional NHS pathways.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We've come a long way from our bootstrapped beginnings.

We started with an ugly website offering just 18 treatments. These were the same treatments for minor health conditions that drove people to wait in A&E overnight. We signed a lease for a 2,000 sq. ft warehouse (when we first started I thought it was absurdly huge, most NHS brick and mortar pharmacies are tiny rooms and their teams accomplish so much in such a small space). Oskar sorted everything out for our pharmacy licences. We slowly started with 3 employees. Somehow we had got 9 orders on our first day of going live - a testament to the desperations patients were feeling back in 2018.

Since then, in 6 years, we've expanded our treatment range to 400 medications covering 80 conditions. We've moved to a 12,000 sq. ft pharmacy. We're supporting 600,000 patients and have recently closed a 10,000,000 patient contract. We've expanded from just providing services through our flagship D2C brand to running a platform and running the digital health arm for several different brands over the internet. We've also returned to profitability after the expansion following our seed investment round.

What has been your biggest business fail?

I wouldn't call it a fail, but our biggest challenge was definitely the "valley of death" period in December 2019. We technically couldn't make payroll for the end of January. I ended up doing 25 A&E night shifts between the Christmas period and mid-January to personally cover payroll. It was tough, but it taught us resilience.

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

I have a few strengths and I know when to lean on them. I personally like challenges and I'm good at problem solving. I have lots of interests

outside of just healthcare which means I can bring insights from coding, maths, video games, construction etc and apply experiences from other aspects of life to the problems that we experience as a company. I'm also not afraid to get my hands dirty - when we needed to expand our office quickly during COVID, I hired 3 labourers and worked with them to build the initial frame, then I finished up the plastering and painting over a few weekends. I would like to highlight, for the sake of being balanced, that I also have a lot of flaws. I have a tendency to prioritise speed of action, I talk too much, I'm obsessive about the world I'm building towards.

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

Based on our experience, I'd say perseverance is key. Be prepared to do whatever it takes to keep your business afloat during tough times. Also, don't underestimate the power of willpower - it's amazing what you can achieve when you're determined.

What is your favourite thing about being a founder?

I really like my job. It's hard to pin down just one favourite thing. One of the many things that I love is the fact that Oskar and I have dreamed up a future of healthcare and we built it into existence. When we started, and Oskar and I quit our stable NHS jobs, everyone said we were mad. But here we are, making a meaningful impact. I feel so proud of the team I've built, now I get to see the vision being executed by the talented people we both work with. Each member, from someone who packs medication in boxes to someone who's in charge of our AI systems, knows what we're building towards and they're all suggesting ideas and helping shape the future of healthcare. We're making a meaningful difference with the aim to impact the lives of 4.6 billion individuals.

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

Not a founder, but I usually say my mum. My mum is me but 100x more intense. She raised 4 kids in a council flat, managed the school run, cooking, laundry, her PLAB medical conversion exams, her hospital work and then the MRCGP General Practice specialty exams. She was the sort of woman who would be stirring a pot of soup, would open the kitchen cupboard, the door would fall off and she'd just screw it back on right there and then, returning to the food.

I'd also say possibly John Collison, one of the co-founders and president of Stripe. I met him while setting up payments for our platform. We had issues with the red tape and the stripe risk team. At the time (according to Google) Stripe was worth \$100B, John was probably worth \$10B, and Stripe was 11-ish years old. We met at 7pm outside Big Ben, it was winter and dark, and John was carrying a microwaveable shepherd's pie from the supermarket. After our meeting he went back to do more work. That was the moment that I realised the life I was signing up to as a founder. The hustle and hard work isn't going to stop. The reward for solving problems and growing is going to be the ability to solve even bigger and more challenging problems. I'm actually quite excited about that.

Which areas do you need to improve on?

Everything. I have a long list and personal KPIs. I'm happy to report back in a year's time.

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

Evaro is moving away from transactional interactions with patients to

building a relationship. We're no longer just selling a medication product - we're offering a service that covers medicated treatments utilising all the data (including those from wearables) to deliver a truly personalised holistic care platform.

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?

I have no real routine. I can leave the office at 7pm or 3am. I can go to bed at midnight or not go to bed at all. One thing that I try to do at least once per day is read Feedly, a news aggregator. I spend around 2 hours on it per day. I map news articles, posts from Medium, and discussions in Hacker News to my obsidian second brain.

Dr. Thuria Wenbar is the cofounder & CEO of Evaro.



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