

Smarter food safety and simplified compliance with Telsen

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Joel Ross, Managing Director at Telsen about being a spin-out from Studio Graphene, food safety and empowering hospitality businesses.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Telsen was born out of a desire to create something truly our own – an opportunity to take the expertise we’ve built over the years and channel it into a product that addresses a specific industry need.

We recently launched Telsen as a standalone brand independently of its parent company, Studio Graphene. Since 2014, Studio Graphene has delivered over 250 digital products for global brands, startups, and scale-ups. The launch of Telsen has marked Studio Graphene’s first spin-out business – a strategic milestone that expands the company’s focus from developing tailored solutions for clients to creating its own IP

The decision to launch Telsen wasn’t about stepping away from what we’ve done before but expanding our horizons. It was a natural progression: we took everything we’d learned from delivering hundreds of digital products for clients and applied that knowledge to a new challenge. With Telsen, we saw an opportunity to solve real-world problems in the hospitality sector, particularly around food safety and operational compliance.

Can you tell us about Telsen – what it is, its mission, the specific needs it addresses for the hospitality industry, and who it's designed to serve?

Telsen is a digital, SaaS platform that automates food safety checks and operational monitoring, specifically for hospitality businesses. At its core, Telsen's mission is to empower hospitality businesses by removing the complexity and time-consuming nature of compliance tasks, enabling them to focus on what they do best: delivering exceptional experiences for their customers.

Food safety is critical but often labour-intensive, with manual processes prone to errors and inefficiency. Telsen leverages IoT sensors and digital workflows to automate temperature monitoring, task scheduling, and reporting, ensuring compliance with minimal effort. Beyond compliance, it provides real-time data and insights that help businesses identify trends, prevent issues, and improve efficiency – for example, by detecting equipment failures before they cause problems.

How has Telsen evolved since its initial concept, and how has it been received by early adopters in the industry?

Initially, we considered multiple industry verticals for Telsen, but quickly realised that narrowing our focus to food safety and asset compliance was the fastest path to achieving a commercially viable product. This decision was a key turning point that allowed us to gain traction and refine our product for a clearly defined audience – hospitality businesses.

Earlier this year we signed our first major client, catering firm *Fooditude*,

which marked a huge milestone for us. Their feedback so far has been strong, with it already having a tangible positive impact on streamlining their food safety practices.

We pay close attention to all feedback from users, however, and are using it to inform developments based on user needs and ideas.

Tell us about the working culture at Telsen

At Telsen, our working culture is defined by a strong emphasis on resilience, innovation, and collaboration.

During our early experimental phase, we embraced a culture of being open to trying different approaches, which improved our adaptability and our agility in response to any challenges thrown our way.

And while we prioritise being agile, we make sure quality never suffers, remaining committed to delivering polished, industry-leading products.

Every team member is always encouraged to bring both problems and solutions to the table, helping to create a sense of ownership and foster creative thinking. Equally important to how we work is transparent communication, as we believe that clarity is kindness and honesty builds trust.

Above all, we are customer-centric, with many of our best ideas originating directly from customer feedback, so our work remains relevant and impactful.

How are you funded?

We've been incubated from digital product agency *Studio Graphene*, which allowed us to bootstrap without external funding. This was a

chance to take our learnings from the agency and put it into practice, but with added pressure because we wanted to get it right!

But also from day one, we focused on a revenue-first mentality, building a product customers would pay for, rather than relying on investor capital. Then as we've grown, we've reinvested this revenue into scaling the team and technology.

Beyond direct funding, we've used partnerships to gain credibility and access resources that have accelerated our understanding of the space and overall growth.

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

As a startup with limited resources, prioritising work with the greatest impact has been key to building momentum. Admittedly along the way, I've realised that I can sometimes be the blocker in processes, which has taught me to lean on my team and trust them to deliver. Staying strategic - constantly reassessing where my time is best spent - has been important in overcoming challenges and keeping the business moving forward.

As we've grown, balancing rapid product development with maintaining quality has been an ongoing challenge, which we're investing heavily in automation and scalable processes.

Entering a new industry was another thing, in particular navigating regulatory complexity. Food safety regulations vary widely by region, so we've made sure to build a flexible product that can adapt to different standards.

How does Telsen answer an unmet need?

There are few industries busier than hospitality, and it's one that's thoroughly customer-centric, so naturally businesses want to focus their effort and energy there.

With that, Telsen makes food safety, a traditionally time-consuming task wrapped up in stringent regulations, so much more automated and streamlined. Simply put, it gives hospitality businesses one less thing to worry about as they do their best work for their customers.

What's in store for the future?

So, there's big things ahead. We're ultimately aiming to become the ideal solution for the food safety industry, establishing ourselves as a vital tool for operators in the hospitality space.

Our immediate focus includes expanding beyond the UK - particularly into the Middle East and the U.S. This October, we showcased our innovations at the Hospitality Tech Expo, setting the stage for Telsen V2 in early 2025.

The 'V2' update will bring enhanced checklists and workflows based on customer feedback, along with smarter reporting and analytics to make sure managers receive actionable insights without the clutter.

We're really excited about what's to come!

What advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Be patient and focus on trust. Building a successful business takes time. Whether it's gaining your first customers, forming partnerships, or scaling your product, trust doesn't happen overnight. Take the time to listen then

consistently deliver value.

That means trust your team, which you can do by surrounding yourself with the right people who, with your leadership, trust and respect, will do what they do best.

And when you need it, seek expertise; you're not the first person on this journey, and there's a lot that can be learned from key market players. For instance, working with experienced partners like David Hart and Safer Food Scores has been instrumental in our success.

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

I'm an early riser and use my mornings to set the tone for the day. I'm at my happiest when I'm hitting the mats for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, which helps me clear my head and energises me for the day.

In terms of rules, a big one is looking for opportunities in every situation. An abundance mindset helps me focus on what's possible, not what's missing, which is crucial when leading a growing business.

The other one is building and prioritising strong relationships. My work is centred on forming meaningful, long-term partnerships. Whether with team members or customers, it's a firm belief of mine that investing in people who share your values is the foundation to long term success.

Joel Ross is the Managing Director at *Telsen*.



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