Meet Credentially, streamlining the pre-employment process in healthcare

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Dr Kit Latham, cofounder and CEO at Credentially about the long waits and poor communication experienced while working as an A&E doctor and using tech to build a practical tool to streamline the pre-employment checks and verifications.

During my time working as an A&E doctor in a London hospital, I became aware of the huge financial and time burden that routine admin tasks were placing on healthcare teams. Staff were incredibly busy, and paper-based bureaucracy was eating up hours that could have been spent on much more valuable activity. I noticed that the onboarding and verification process for new staff members was a particular pain point: hours were wasted processing documents, chasing references and cross-checking qualification databases. I could see the knock-on impacts of this – workloads piled up, staff were waiting weeks before being given the green light to work, and all the time waiting lists were growing. So, in collaboration with a team of tech and workforce experts, I built _Credentially_ as a practical tool to help streamline the pre-employment process in healthcare.

Tell me about the business?

On average it takes 60 days from when a healthcare staff member is recruited by a staffing provider or hospital to when they're allowed to work on the wards. After the job offer is sent, HR teams and employees spend weeks carrying out pre-employment checks. This process is known as credentialing or verification – the references and qualifications of staff must be checked and chased, safety checks carried out, healthcare databases updated and cross referenced: all before the practical onboarding work even begins!

Often during this time, applicants drop out or find work elsewhere due to long waits and poor communication. The risk of losing top talent is high, so this process is a real pain point for staffing suppliers and healthcare providers. Credentially is a digital platform that automates these pre-employment and verification processes – reducing the time needed to complete them to an average of just 5 days. Removing this burden from administrative teams – and from the new staff members – frees up their time for other pressing tasks, and – importantly – for patient care. In doing so, this alleviates the pressure on the workforce quickly and helps to tackle spiraling patient waitlists.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

One of the first catalysts to platform evolution came soon after our launch, as we stepped in to support the national pandemic response.

In the spring of 2020, NHS England launched their temporary COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Service (CCAS) to cope with the unprecedented demand for healthcare services and the staff shortages.

After volunteering our team and the Credentially platform to assist any NHS provider struggling to quickly onboard an emergency workforce, we were asked by NHS England to assist existing NHS systems. This involved building an established web interface, DBS tool, along with calendar and booking systems. This was a huge challenge for us that forced us to adapt quickly, deliver under pressure and fire test our platform. However, this was a prime opportunity for us to be able to strengthen our platform, ensure integrations were seamless and improve features. As a result, I'm proud to say within 3 weeks we enabled CCAS to quickly increase their ability to process candidates from 50 to over 1000 per week – a 1900% increase. This meant that the organisation was better equipped to meet the demand for healthcare staff and respond to the pandemic.

This process really reinforced how important it was for us to build a user-friendly platform. Not only to make the administrative process as smooth as possible for HR teams, but also to keep new hires engaged and informed to reduce the churn rate during the onboarding process. To do this we are continuously iterating our user facing dashboards to incorporate feedback following discussions with our partners, teams and clinicians that use Credentially day-to-day.

We are always listening to feedback from our users in order to improve the platform features. For example, in response to a customer request, we built an automatic update feature into Credentially, so that any changes to the regulations that ensure healthcare providers employ fit and qualified staff can be instantly applied to the system. This means that the organisations using Credentially can guarantee full compliance to CQC (Care Quality Commision) standards at any time. The CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England that ensures that these services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, and high-quality care.

How are you funded?

We raised our seed round of $1M in February 2021. This raise was led by Pembroke VCT and supported by Hambro Perks. This follows our pre-seed round in 2016 where we raised $120K through Techstars.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

I'd say one of the biggest but most important challenges we've overcome is integrating the Credentially platform with major healthcare databases including the DBS, GMC and NMC (these list all doctors and nurses that are registered to practice in the UK). Technology integration is an integral part of modern day healthcare, by leveraging the collaboration between services and enabling seamless access, we can provide better and more joined-up patient care.

Ensuring the Credentially platform could 'talk to' these major databases was critical. It was a huge challenge for our team that demanded countless hours of problem solving and coding – but these integrations are now an invaluable feature of Credentially.

How does Credentially answer an unmet need?

The healthcare workforce shortage is at an <u>all time high</u>. With patient waitlists having reached a record <u>7 million patients</u>, and the onset of winter likely to increase pressures, there is an urgency to address these challenges at the roots. By automating the pre-employment process and removing unnecessary admin burden, it makes it faster, cheaper and easier for healthcare staff to book onto their first shifts. With new healthcare staff being able to join the workforce more rapidly, pressure is eased on the workforce. This means that more patients can be treated everyday in a sustainable way, and patient safety is improved.

What's in store for the future?

We want to see the complete eradication of paper-based, manual admin chores in the UK healthcare system.

To date we support the pre-employment processes for over 22,000 clinicians, and our goal is to grow this number year-on-year. We have a fantastic pipeline of new client partnerships through to early 2023 that I'm really excited about, and I'm looking forward to seeing these deliver efficiencies and improve system-wide outcomes over the coming months.

What one piece of advice would you give to future founders?

Speak to your customers from the very beginning of the development process, and always be prepared to evolve. Iteration is vital for early stage startups: as a founder you may have an idea that you love, but at the end of the day if it doesn't meet the needs of your target customer then you're going to have a hard time persuading them to try your solution. Also, the composition of your team and the people you surround yourself with is extremely important. Diversity of experience, talent and background is valuable – don't just hire people who are similar to you! They say that the first five people you hire are responsible for setting the culture of the organisation: bear this in mind when making those early recruitment choices.

Dr Kit Latham, cofounder and CEO at *<u>Credentially.</u>*