Announcing the first Focal finalist for W23, Kestrix, facilitating the built environment's transition to net zero

Ahead of the Focal W23 Demo Day on the 12th October, we spoke to one of the finalists, Lucy Lyons, CEO and cofounder of Kestrix, about buildings heat loss, energy efficiency and net zero progress.

What was the catalyst for launching Kestrix?

We launched _Kestrix_ to facilitate the built environment's transition to net zero.

Matt is an engineer who grew up with his parents renovating homes around him. Yet when going to retrofit his own home, could not figure out for the life of him what to do first and thought "wouldn't it be nice if I could just view an image of my house and spot the heat leaks?".

Lucy used to work in carbon accounting and saw a linked problem in her corporate clients – whilst they could calculate that heating buildings were a huge part of the problem, pathways for implementation were more murky.

Kestrix was launched to give large housing providers, energy utilities, and local governments a clear sense of where their buildings stand on energy efficiency, and a list of actions to improve that efficiency, driving net zero progress.

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

Kestrix is building the Google Maps of heat loss to automate energy surveys at scale; using mass thermal image capture (with drones) and AI, we build annotated 3D heat loss models of buildings. Around these, we are building SaaS tools which inform the planning, pricing, and verification of retrofits for cities at a time.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We've always been the Google Maps of heat loss. The main difference from launch is probably that back then, we thought we would have to build an army of thermal drones to collect data. Turns out there are already a ton of aerial thermographers out there, ready to fly; what the industry lacks is analytics tools to make something of that data. So that's what we're focussing on building at Kestrix – software that, when blended with thermal images our partners capture, visualises and interprets thermal images for retrofit action.

Tell us about the working culture at Kestrix

One of our values is curiosity and I really see the team leaning into that. FTE-wise, we are 4 engineers and 2 commercial people, but there is a lot of cross-pollination – commercial is very keyed into tech and product, and tech is very interested in understanding customers' evolving needs, pain points, etc. (even ML engineers whose job is not to product manage).

One of our engineers pitched Kestrix so well at an

event recently that got invited to come speak to an audience about the business, which she will do. We're all very invested in the mission.

How are you funded?

We were awarded a £240K *InnovateUK* grant this spring. Off the back of that we raised a 500K pre-seed round, with participation from angels (like *Charles Delingpole* of *Comply Advantage* or *Phillip Chambers* of *Peakon*), as well as *Carbon13* (our first supporters) and *Notion Capital*.

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

Growing the team from 2 to 6 in one go was a bit of a shock to the system – suddenly, 3x alignment and internal meetings were required, which comes with some growing pains. We're normalising by getting the team together for events (we went bowling a few weeks ago), lunches in the office, and having periodic company all-hands meetings.

How does Kestrix answer an unmet need?

To reach net zero by 2050, *90 million homes* must be retrofitted globally every year. But the companies footing the bill for retrofit, such as housing providers, local governments, or energy retailers don't know where to start, because no

centralised, adequate system exists for measuring how buildings lose heat and what should be done to fix them. Kestrix is on a mission to scale retrofit with data. Through mass thermal image capture and AI, Kestrix gives full visibility on how building stock leaks – helping optimise retrofit planning and pricing and verify retrofit outcomes.

What's in store for the future?

We're looking forward very soon to expanding our customer base beyond housing providers, servicing energy retailers and local governments. Additionally, we have our eyes on the US, German, and Italian markets.

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

Find a burning unmet need in the market – ideally a problem that's costing people a lot of money.

Once you do, go all in – but don't over romanticise the process. Be sure to preserve your hobbies and relationships outside of work along the way because you will need them when things get tough and you need some space.

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

I will be honest and say I struggle a bit with a daily routine – I am constantly travelling and sleeping in different places, and no 2 days look the same (tips are welcome, my DMs are open!). I try my best to get out for a run every day, and try to give myself at least an hour between shutting my laptop and going to sleep to chill out. Linking to the above, a rule I live by is to try to preserve "non-work Lucy" – the person I was before all of this craziness – by investing time in my close friendships, family relationships, and hobbies.

Lucy Lyons is the CEO and cofounder of _Kestrix_.

Kestrix is one of the finalists at the Focal W23 Demo. Register _here_ to follow on the 12th October.

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