

# FLEXR, using AI to turn movement-function insights into actions

Creating a startup is always challenging. Founding one during a tech downturn, cost of living crisis and recession seems near impossible. However, with risk comes reward and many of the world's most successful companies were founded during times of economic uncertainty. As part of a series with Antler, Maddyness has interviewed founders hoping to become the entrepreneurial success stories to emerge from this time of crisis. This week, Maddyness spoke to Yasser Tsikhlakis, cofounder of FLEXR.

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## What was the catalyst for launching FLEXR?

I would say that this was multifactorial actually. Firstly, coming together as a team and reaching conviction – to an obsessive level – on the problem we are solving. Secondly, being put in an environment where we needed to work

together under a significant amount of pressure to get buy-in from external investors on the problem we are solving and our proposed solution – this not only helped us accelerate the building of FLEXR but it cemented our relationship as a co-founding team.

## Can you share your elevator pitch?

The way we move (from our mobility to balance) impacts longevity, injury risk, and leads to other musculoskeletal related issues. These issues are costly and impact our society and its organisations, from pricey medical expenses to increased employee sick leave. FLEXR combines AI vision and proprietary neural networks to help these organisations (from insurers to corporates with manual labour) evaluate movement in order to reduce the impact of the associated issues.

## Can you tell our readers about your engagement with Antler?

Antler has played a significant role in the formation of FLEXR. A special shoutout goes to Richard Baillie who is our Antler counterpart and who has been on the FLEXR journey since before FLEXR was FLEXR and we were just Yasser, John, and Ajay. Richard has supported us, been our sounding board, our strategic advisor, and even our therapist at some points and our engagement with him perfectly summarises our engagement with Antler. Of course it's not just Richard but also the entire portfolio team that has contributed to raising FLEXR. At the end of the day FLEXR is in its infancy and as they say, it takes a village.

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[Investing early and investing globally, a profile of Antler](#)

## Tell us about the working culture at

# FLEXR?

We're a very small team that functions as a family. We're friendly and supportive but are also comfortable with challenging each other and holding individuals accountable. Most importantly, we prioritise our human needs above all else. It's easy to get sucked into unhealthy working habits and unsustainable routines when you are building something you deeply care about. So we've made sure that we continuously and consistently prioritise our personal families and our health (including reserved daily workout time – no questions asked).

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

It's tough to pick just one challenge. But if I must choose, and I believe this is particularly challenging for us given the nature of our product, I'd say finding the balance between investing more time and resources in R&D and releasing the product to the market. To prove the value of our product we must first make sure it yields significant results – we get to this by investing time in its development, but to demonstrate its impact we must release it and integrate with clients – the faster we get it to clients the more time we can buy for its development, one is pointless without the other and to get both you need the luxury of time and money (which are two very scarce resources for early stage start-ups). It's kind of a chicken and an egg situation. To overcome this we've identified key clients who we're working closely with, they do the decision making on our behalf. They've been telling us when the product is good enough to unlock value for them and when we need to invest more time in its development. In short, listen to your market and let it guide you.

## What's in store for the future?

As we move towards an even more sedentary lifestyle and our population grows older leading to more musculoskeletal issues and a greater focus on longevity the importance of movement health and its impact on our societies will continue to grow. As such, we're moving fast to build all the necessary capabilities to more accurately evaluate movement limitations and predict their respective consequences. This means we're building our own neural networks that will be the first of their kind in evaluating movement – something which will truly move the needle forward when it comes to reducing the negative impact of poor movement health and musculoskeletal issues on our society.

# How has the cost of living crisis and the tech downturn impacted your experience building FLEXR?

We're currently experiencing the toughest environment for early-stage start-up fundraising. On the one hand, that means that our success to date and capability to fundraise is a significant sign that we're building a robust business, but on the other hand, it's slowed down the pace at which we can grow our product and resources.

# What barriers have you faced in realising your entrepreneurial ambitions? How can we make entrepreneurship more accessible in the UK?

Our product and vision require a significant amount of tech development and capability. To unlock its benefits faster we require more resource and support. In comparison to other markets, namely the US, the UK and European tech ecosystems are still very risk averse which makes it challenging for start-ups like ourselves to garner the necessary funds at early stages to acquire the necessary resource and support. By providing entrepreneurs with bigger votes of confidence (i.e. cheques ☐) at the earliest of stages we'll be able to yield brighter and more impactful innovations and we'll be able to attract the best talent to the ecosystem.

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

Finding a big/significant problem is great, but finding a specific niche within that problem and your ideal customer as soon as possible will give you the focus you need to build and grow fast.

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

Daily routine? No such thing as an early stage founder! I love that though. The diversity of the problems that we have to solve means that I'm continuously needing to adapt and push my boundaries in different realms. Although challenging, I'm trying to live life on a day by day basis. Our ambition as a team is set and our vision is exciting but I'm continuously reminding myself to navigate each day in isolation as a stepping stone to our final destination.

Yasser Tsikhlikakis is the cofounder of FLEXR.

*Antler is one of the world's most active early-stage investors. With 900 portfolio companies in 27 countries, they have a global community of early-stage founders addressing the world's biggest challenges.*

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