

Checkfirst raises \$1.5M pre-seed to apply AI to remote inspections and audits

Mike Butcher 6:02 AM PDT · May 8, 2024

We've all seen them. The inspector with a clipboard, walking around a building, ticking off the last time the fire extinguishers were checked, or if all the lights are working. They work in the TICC (Testing, Inspection, Certification and Compliance) space, and they literally tick boxes. And while the job may seem simple enough to do physically, it's a whole different ball game when it needs to be done remotely.

Founder Ben Lambert realized just that, when after moving to Portugal, his wife's property inspection business needed to be run remotely. "It was no longer easy to check inspections on-site and get reliable information. A final report could take weeks to come through," he told me. Plus, actually scheduling the inspections turned out to be at least as large a problem.

Seeing an opportunity, Lambert founded an AI-powered workflow tools startup, Checkfirst, that, in addition to allowing for remote inspections, enables businesses to schedule inspectors based on geographical location and qualifications. This results in less travel, a lower environmental footprint, and the workers end up happier as well. The company has now raised a pre-seed \$1.5 million led by Lisbon-based, early-stage venture firm, Olisipo Way, and Hiero VC (a solo GP firm). Notion Capital, and angel investors from companies like Source Point, Busuu, Swogo and FacelT also participated.

“As [the product] developed, we saw that the biggest problem wasn’t necessarily the data capture alone, but where companies earn or lose money was in the scheduling. It’s timely, as AI is perfect for scheduling tasks,” he said.

“The biggest problem in the industry is scheduling, and the cool thing is, with AI, you can schedule really easily,” he told me. “Say an inspector is in London but needs to be in Munich to audit a building. With AI, you can understand what they’re doing and put it all together. We’re creating a scheduling tool for all these big companies. It’s not just about meeting compliance; it’s also scheduling. Then the compliance tool allows them to collect data easily to meet the regulatory standards.”

It turns out that the TICC industry is moving people around the world all the time, explained Lambert.

“For example, an inspector could be in London today, but the company will send someone from Munich to London, because they don’t really understand they already have a guy in London. If an inspector then flies from Munich to London, they lose all of their margin immediately. With our tools, the guy the company was going to send in from Munich now doesn’t need to come to London. That saves the company thousands of euros, if not more.”

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Lambert said they “initially used a mix of open source and commercial AI models”, and are now building their own “based on proprietary data for image recognition and scheduling”.

In terms of competitors, Checkfirst is going up against some large incumbents in the compliance space, such as Intact Systems, Lumiform, Safety Culture (a unicorn) and Happy Co (focuses on property management).

The difference with Checkfirst, says Lambert, is that it is an API-first solution and uses AI for image recognition and automation, churning out report summaries, and scheduling.

The startup is working with several clients on proof-of-concepts, one which has 30,000 customers, the company claims.

The co-founding team includes Lambert, CPO Oyvind Henriksen (who started Poq Studio) and CTO Rami Elsayy. Lambert was formerly with Nexmo and Agora.