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1w • Edited • 

"You have 135 customers???" I ask. 😲

"No, 135 clients at the agency," he corrects me. "We shut it all down to focus on [Talvin AI](#). We have 3 SaaS customers."

Most people would call that failure. I call it balls.

I got off the call thinking: this is exactly the kind of founder I want to back.

Last week I caught up with [Newan](#), founder of Talvin AI - a Sri Lankan AI startup.

Story ↓

19 years old when he started. Finished his A-Levels exam on a Wednesday. Started his first company on Thursday.

I'm thinking "ok, another kid with big dreams." Then he told me how he got to that 135-client number.

Covid hits. Everything goes digital overnight. He and a few mates start building whatever people will pay for.

Over a few years that turns into a 50 person team with clients in 13-14 countries and projects with startups, enterprises, even government

Impressive. Till they hit a very boring, very painful wall.

They can't hire engineers fast enough. Recruitment becomes the bottleneck. They start losing big projects because they can't staff them.

So they do something most "AI startups" pretend they did.

They build a tool for themselves first.

A voice AI recruiter that:

- 👉 Talks to candidates 24/7
- 👉 Runs proper screening conversations
- 👉 Spits out a shortlist so humans only talk to the best fits

They used Talvin to hire every single engineer for over a year — before they even

had a landing page.

Only after that do they ask: "Ok, if this fixed our problem, who else looks like us?"

So where are they now?

The numbers are small, but the signal is deafening:

- Solid initial ARR from Enterprise Customers including [Anytime Fitness](#), [Mindvalley](#) and [Sampath Bank](#).
- Ranking # 1 for ai recruitment searches on google and chatgpt
- Customer driven roadmap with comprehensive integrations

Here are 3 "Green Flags" that got me fired up:

- 1 Derisked problem-solution fit. Most founders build a product based on a guess. Newan built this because his own hair was on fire.
- 2 No ghosts; ie flashy logos that are just pilots or trials.. Talvin has signed, rolled-out contracts with massive enterprises.
- 3 Newan is running a relentless, founder-led motion. He's not chasing vanity metrics or burning cash on ads.

Why share this?

Two reasons.

First, I want to start making these conversations public. There are founders out there doing thoughtful work that never hits your timeline.

Second, Talvin looks like the kind of company I wish more investors saw early. They are capital efficient, and validated by real enterprise. 🔥

And if you want more of these notes when I meet with founders, like this post and I'll keep sharing them.

 Alex Bertram  and 32 others

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Charmaine Muzyka Exactly! It's the ultimate stress test for a product — i've seen lots of founder go to market using hope and vibes to figure out problem solution fit only to crash and burn.

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Charmaine Muzyka  · 2nd

Fractional Creative Director | Senior-level expertise in design, brand, ...

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Sachee Perera there are no better crash test dummies than your own team!

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**Harrish S** • 1st

Building Sri Lanka's First Automated Expense tracker - Kiwi Money

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Great job **Newan!!** Super impressed with what your doing!! Keep growing!!

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Harrish S 100%! He's definitely one to watch.

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**Newan Vinthusa** • 1st

Founder of Code94 Labs & Talvin AI | Product Strategy & Recruitment-tech...

1w ...

Really appreciate this Sachee - looking forward to building something great together! 🎉

Love · 1 | Reply · 1 reply

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1w ...

Newan Vinthusa to infinity, and beyond! 🚀

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**Charmaine Muzyka** • 2nd

Fractional Creative Director | Senior-level expertise in design, brand, marke...

1w ...

The fact they used it on themselves for a whole year before selling it is so rare! But a genius move.

Love · 2 | Reply

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