

Syed Abrar Buddy App

THE VENTURE:

Buddy is a digital application used by medical / therapy professionals in treating patients. Buddy uses text messages to encourage patients with mental health issues to record their thoughts, feelings and moods, creating a record of their time between treatments. Without Buddy, therapists and GPs have to rely on the paper diary kept by patients between appointments, which is often incomplete. As well as recording activities and moods – allowing the patient and their therapist to review progress together – Buddy can prompt users to take positive actions, supporting them in dealing with their issues.

By using text messages, Buddy is incredibly simple to use and is accessible to anybody with a mobile phone. Buddy's mission is to create a simple solution using digital technology that encourages collaboration between patient and therapist.

Buddy was created by Sidekick Studios, a company supporting numerous projects bringing technology to bear on social problems. Buddy is purchased by healthcare providers and provided to users free of charge.

THE IMPACT:

Therapists / GPs have a much richer insight into their client's life between meetings, making it easier for them to be effective in their treatment.

Time is created in therapy sessions to focus on goals and behaviour change, rather than trying to remember events over the past few weeks. **81%** of Clinicians report that Buddy has saved them time in session, with **48%** stating '5 Minutes saved', **27%** stating '10 Minutes saved' and **6%** reporting '15+ Minutes saved'.

Reminders help to reduce Did Not Attends (DNAs). A study in one Trust showed that for every pound spent on Buddy, **£6** was saved on reduced DNAs. If extrapolated across their services it leads to overall savings of **£313,000** over one year.

Behavioural prompts – 'Behavioural Activation Tools' – help clients to make positive changes in their lives.

THE ENTREPRENEUR:



Syed Abrar comes from a background in telecoms, recruitment and finance. He had the technical ability and sales experience to get Buddy up and running in a short amount of time, and has been learning a lot from his first round of investment.

"I could always sell the idea to people, but I was at a starting point of zero on the investment side," he says. *"I've learned how to hit the right buttons and persuade people they want to invest."*

LEGAL STATUS

Company Limited by Shares

FOUNDED

2011 / Syed Abrar

WHY?

Mental health issues cost the NHS in excess of £1bn each year. Buddy uses simple, everyday technology to make the process of treating mental illness easier and more effective.

KEY STATISTICS:

Total number of employees:



Last 12 months turnover:



Total co-investment attracted:



Number of users:



Percentage of clinicians who save at least 5 minutes on each appointment using Buddy:



Percentage of Buddy Users completing their therapy:



BIG VENTURE CHALLENGE CASE STUDY

Syed Abrar / Buddy App

THE JOURNEY:

Buddy has got up and running remarkably quickly. Support from Deloitte Social Innovation Pioneers scheme in the early stages allowed issues around information governance and server side security to be resolved, meaning the product meets NHS requirements. The app first went live in August 2012, a matter of months before the Venture become an UnLtd Award Winner. At this point the company had four clients and was starting to grow. Syed found an investor very quickly and secured match funding from UnLtd in the first round of investment, in June 2013.

Unfortunately, Buddy's quick progress was stalled towards the end of 2013 as mismatched expectations eventually led to a key investor pulling out of the deal. Another investor was found, and as of April 2014 the deal is on the verge of being finalised, with an

impressive **£300k** in addition to the **£100k** match funding from UnLtd. The process has been very time-consuming, for a while diverting valuable time and resources away from the core activity of the business.

Buddy is now in a strong position, with a much more detailed understanding of investment, and a promising pipeline of work with a range of NHS Trusts. Each of the ten NHS Trusts that have purchased Buddy to date have re-signed annual contracts and purchased additional licences. Moreover, clinician buy-in has been increasing due to the #creatingnoise campaign, and the Venture has been improving client relationships by sharing case studies and data, improving reporting and sending out newsletters. Together these measures help to maximise the social impact of Buddy as far as possible.

THE FUTURE:

Buddy currently is targeted at clinicians in mental health settings, but in the longer term it has a much wider application in other areas of health. Syed explains, **"We've made it completely customisable. It will be easy to expand it into other areas, wherever lifestyle choices have an impact on people's health."** The recent round of investment will allow Buddy to expand the team and continue to win over new clients in both the NHS and private sector healthcare.

UNLTD'S SUPPORT APPROACH:

The Big Venture Challenge has been important for providing individual support to Syed as he navigates new terrain in growing his first business.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

UnLtd put in £100k match funding to the £300k raised from other investors

NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

- Legal assistance from ClearlySo for securing the investment deal
- Introductions to help Syed with improving public speaking skills
- Introductions to people who are now on the Advisory Board of the company

Reduction in DNAs:

15%

Improvement in national IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) measure:

12%

KEY MILESTONES:

