

bob.health

Background on BOB.health and the journey to the COVID-19 module

BOB.health is a free-to-NHS supportive online tool. It guides exhausted, time-stretched NHS staff to capture their experience to help NHS colleagues elsewhere in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis. Our instinctive writing engine asks precise questions about a service change. Answering these questions in a couple of sentences builds a picture of a project that's packed full of insight and ideas of value so NHS colleagues elsewhere can learn. The BOB team worked closely with NHS staff and expert storytellers to make a simple-to-use tool, specifically for NHS staff. NHS staff can register to read and share summaries to foster shared learning.

BOB.health was co-founded by Marc Southern and Neil Crump. Both worked on BOB full-time from January 2019, building the concept, the business model and secured investment.

The current team of six, formed in October 2019, were brought in pre-launch to create BOB.health. Set to launch in June 2020, BOB was taking shape as a free-to-NHS online supportive tool that helps NHS staff create, read and share their experience of making improvement happen at the local level by capturing 'impact stories' - unpacking the *how* missing in traditional case studies.

The core concept of BOB is that it prevents NHS staff from having to re-invent the wheel, by learning from the experience of others who have been involved in similar projects elsewhere. This centres around a 'writing engine' developed with NHS staff that makes the otherwise daunting task of storytelling easy, by asking a series of precise questions that draw out insight to create a compelling and authentic read.

Revenue is generated through NHS suppliers profiling the introduction of innovation at the local level with sponsored stories. The typical paying customer will be a pharmaceutical company seeking to demonstrate the optimal use of a medicine or profile their collaborative contribution to optimising local service provision.

All stories, free-of-charge or sponsored, are authored by NHS staff at the frontline. Although a core team of six (a dozen including out-sourced development and freelancers), BOB.health's four-year ambition is single-minded: positively impact the lives of 65 million people and support the NHS to save £1 billion.

Neil Crump, BOB.health co-founder, said: "We were ramping up for a launch at NHS ConfedEXPO, the biggest NHS-focused conference of the year, in Manchester on 10 June. We had a stand booked, events planned, brilliant case studies lined up and raring to explain our offer to the NHS and secure sign-ups. Then COVID-19 came on the horizon. As we saw how things were panning out in Italy, we could see this was going to derail all of our plans and not just our development focus and NHS supplier sales push, but also NHS staff focus - for months and months. Like many of us in the start-up space, we simply don't have the funds to tread water for six months and wait for things to return to a new normal."

The team wondered, would NHS staff value being able to create, learn from, and share the experience of adapting to evolving local service change in response to COVID-19? Would stretched NHS staff, in a crisis situation, even have the bandwidth to think about sharing and learning, on top of responding on the ground to COVID-19? They asked their 21 NHS staff BOB ambassadors who are user testing and informing the site creation - there was an almost unanimous 'yes'. This was an enormous pivot, and it would have to be pulled off quickly, so they wanted to put the question to

even more NHS staff. As the people that really knew and understood the offering, the BOB ambassadors were, of course, more likely to see the full value and say yes!

They pushed out a two-question survey on social media and 24 hours later had their assumption validated. NHS staff in a COVID-19 crisis work overload situation reported:
+ 96% wanted to learn about how people in other localities were responding to COVID-19
+ and incredibly 62% would commit one hour to write up their learnings about responding to COVID-19, despite current pressures and the busy months ahead

So the team compressed 12 weeks' work into three weeks, ready to launch the platform on 15 April. The team worked closely with NHS staff and expert storytellers to make a tool, specifically for NHS staff and the professional bodies that support them, that is simple to use.

BOB.health's tool guides a person through a set of precise questions that can be answered in under 60 minutes. The user simply gives short, one to three sentence answers to relevant questions, skipping entirely or coming back to those that add nice-to-have information to the impact story. BOB's questions draw out answers that build up a well-rounded picture of how a team is responding to COVID-19, shedding light on valuable ideas and insights from their experience that colleagues elsewhere in the NHS will value.

The site is currently available online to start gathering stories from founding creators. BOB.health will support NHS staff to share their experience as they adapt and evolve services over the coming months in response to COVID-19.

Unlike BOB's original model, their COVID-19 refocused supportive tool has no revenue-generating element. As BOB.health will always be free-for-NHS staff, they put out a call to NHS suppliers to help. Some of them have stepped forward with no-strings-attached grants (known as unrestricted grants).

Neil Crump said: "For BOB.health to be of maximum use, NHS staff across the UK need to know about it. The more people who know about this free supportive online tool, the more reach each impact story that staff create will have. As well as reading content, we will actively encourage NHS staff to share impact stories they wrote or found useful within their networks. So we need everyone to tell their friends and family that work in the NHS to take a look and spread the word far and wide. Tell their colleagues, professional bodies and organisation's leadership that BOB is here to help the NHS for free."

Marc Southern, the other half of the co-founding pair said: "We intend to develop the tool adding further functionality, with the continued input of our BOB ambassadors and new NHS staff users that step forward. In just the first 24 hours of going live, three NHS staff have asked to be user testers."

As the country and the NHS enters the long-tail period of returning to a new normal following COVID-19, BOB will reintroduce its original improvement and innovation focus. They will have tested BOB.health's unique model at pace and, if they have met a real need as they wholeheartedly believe they will, they will have a user base of NHS staff that understands its value and will take the supportive learning service forward. Revenue generation will then also revert to, through profiling innovation introduced at a local level that brings maximum benefit to patients and value to the NHS.

Further background reading on BOB.health:

Timeline of BOB from the seed of an idea, developing the concept through to the pivot to focus on COVID-19: <https://blog.bob.health/2020/04/a-glimpse-of-bobhealth-timeline.html>

BOB.health's business model: <https://blog.bob.health/2020/04/how-do-we-keep-bobhealth-free-so-nhs.html>

The importance of values and culture at BOB.health: <https://blog.bob.health/2020/04/why-culture-matters-at-bob.html>

Link to briefing pages for NHS individuals, NHS organisations and professional bodies and NHS suppliers: <https://briefing.bob.health/>

How we keep BOB a safe and secure community:
<https://bob.health/docs/Simple%20storytelling%20and%20sharing.pdf>

For media enquiries contact:

Sophie Thompson / 07912 044567 / Sophie.Thompson@auroracomms.com

Nathan McGlone / 07850 775 669 / Nathan.McGlone@auroracomms.com