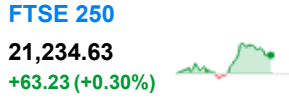


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Dashdash, a platform to create web apps using only spreadsheet skills, nabs \$8M led by Accel

Ingrid Lunden
TechCrunch 16 May 2018



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Sometimes I think of spreadsheets as the dirty secret of IT world today.

Sometimes I think of spreadsheets as the dirty secret of the IT world today. We've seen a huge explosion in the number of productivity tools on the market tailored to help workers with different aspects of doing their job and organising their information, in part to keep them from simply dumping lots of information into Excel or whatever program they happen to use. And yet, spreadsheets are still on the very, very most common pieces of software in use today: Excel alone now has around 1 billion users, and for those who are devotees, spreadsheets are not going to go away soon.

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So it's interesting that there are now startups -- and larger companies like Microsoft -- emerging that are tapping into that, creating new services that still appear like spreadsheets in the front end, while doing something completely in the back.

One of the latest is a startup called dashdash, a startup out of Berlin and Porto that is building a

platform for people, who might to be programmer

but know their way around a spreadsheet, to use

those skills to build, modify and update web apps

The dashdash platform looks and acts like a spreadsheet up front, but in the back, each 'macro' links to a web app computing feature, or a design element, to build something that ultimately will look nothing like a spreadsheet, bypassing all the lines of code that traditionally go into building web apps.

The startup is still in stealth mode, with plans to

launch formally later this year. Today, it's announcing

that it has received \$8 million in seed funding to get

there, with the round being led by Accel, with

participation from Cherry Ventures, Atlantic Labs,

and angel investors including Felix Jahn, founder of

Home24.

Co-founded by serial entrepreneurs Humberto Ayres

Pereira and Torben Schulz -- who had also been co-

founders of food delivery startup EatFirst -- Ayres

Pereira said that the idea came out of their own

observations in work life and the bottleneck of getting

things fixed or modified in a company's apps (both

internal and customer-facing).

"People have a lot of frustration with the IT

department, and their generally access to it," he said

in an interview. "If you are part of an internet

business, it's very hard to get features prioritised in

an app, no matter how small they are. Tech is like a

big train on iron tracks, and it can be hard to steer it

in a different direction."

On the other hand, even among the less technical

staff, there will be proficiency with certain software,

including spreadsheets. "Programming and

spreadsheets already store and transform data,"

Ayers Pereira said. "There are already a lot of people

trying to do more with incumbent spreadsheets, and

[combining that with] non-IT people frustrated at

having no solution for working on apps, we saw an

opportunity to use this to build an elegant platform

the empower people. We can't teach people to

program but we can provide them with the tools to do

the exact same job."

While in stealth mode, he said that early users have

ranged from smaller businesses such as

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pharmacies, to "a multi-billion-dollar internet company." (No names, of course, but it's interesting to me that this problem even exists at large tech businesses.)

Dashdash is not the only company that is tapping this opportunity. The other week, and IoT startup called [Hanhaa](#) launched [a service](#) that would let those using Hanhaa IoT sensors in their networks to monitor and interact with them by way of an Excel spreadsheet -- another tip of the hat to the realisation that those who might need to keep tabs on devices in the network might not be the people who are the engineers and technicians who have set them up.

That, in turn, is part of a bigger effort from Microsoft to catapult Excel from its reputation as a piece of clunky legacy software into something much more dynamic, playing on the company's push into cloud services and Office 365.

In September of 2017, Microsoft gave a developer preview of new "streaming functions" for Excel on Office 365, which lets developers, IT professionals and end users the ability to bring streams of data from a variety of sources such as websites, stock tickers and hardware directly into a cell or cells in an Excel spreadsheet, by way of a custom function. "Because Excel is so widely used and familiar to so many people, the ability to do all kinds of amazing things with that data and without complex integration is now possible," said Ben Summers, a senior product manager for the Office 365 ecosystem team, in a statement to TechCrunch.

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