

Meet 4 Colorado Tech Companies on the COVID-19 Front Lines

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NurseFly, a Denver startup of 14 full-time employees, is looking to quadruple the size of its company by adding an additional 40 heads this year. It's not the typical hiring trajectory many businesses are seeing as unemployment rises. But VP of Marketing Simon Reynolds said the nursing staffing platform is only growing, with applications jumping to around 400 percent.

CirrusMD is in a similar position. In the early stages of COVID-19 in the U.S., government leaders and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quickly began directing patients to telehealth options. This advice was good news for the virtual care platform, which was founded on the belief that getting care from a doctor should be as easy as texting a friend.

Julie Kopp, VP of product and marketing, said that recent events have inspired new company products like an open registration, chat-first platform and self-assessment tool.

For healthtech research platform MBio Diagnostics, it's the sense of urgency in the work that has changed the most. CEO Chris Myatt hopes the blood tests the team is developing will allow for small spaces with mobile testing teams to identify symptomatic individuals. "Our efforts have shifted to projects that can have a significant impact on the current crisis," Myatt said.



MBio Diagnostics

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Chris Myatt, CEO



One of MBio Diagnostics' employees, who also happens to be an expert quilter, recently made fabric masks for the entire team. That's just one example of how employees are pitching in to pivot from overall healthcare testing solutions to COVID-19-related research that could help identify contagious individuals early and often.

How is your company currently contributing to the COVID-19 efforts?

MBio Diagnostics provides rapid testing solutions. Our patented LightDeck technology translates laboratory assays into on-the-spot tests, which take minutes to run as opposed to days in the lab. Our current work with our commercial partners has grown in scope with the testing needs around COVID-19.

Under a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency-funded effort, we have been developing what are called human host-response biomarker assays. The goal is to identify gravely ill or highly contagious individuals early in the disease cycle, which may be useful during an infectious disease outbreak as well as standard care in clinical settings.

The blood tests we are developing with DARPA will be run on MBio's portable system with disposable cartridges, allowing for use in small spaces with mobile testing teams. DARPA's expanded partnership will help us accelerate FDA clearance for our devices.

What is the greatest challenge COVID-19 has presented to your team, and how are you overcoming it?

There are the obvious challenges of operating in a socially distant way and shifting our efforts to focus on COVID-19 projects. We are being flexible, staggering shifts, increasing workspace perimeters and continuing to practice the recommended good hygiene measures. One of our employees is a master quilter and made fabric masks for our entire team. It's a new way of working, but we are adapting well.

What impact have these events had on your overall business, product or hiring plans?

The impact on our business has been an increased sense of urgency. Our products have not changed but our efforts have shifted from other projects to ones that can have a significant impact on the current crisis. As far as hiring plans, we are currently hiring for several research and engineering positions. Our plans for continued growth have, in some cases, even been accelerated.



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Julie Kopp, VP OF PRODUCT AND MARKETING



If [CirrusMD](#) users are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or simply have concerns, they can complete a brief self-evaluation and access a risk assessment, all before speaking to a licensed physician. According to Kopp, CirrusMD doctors answer texts within seconds, can direct patients to additional care and prescribe medication if needed.

How is your company currently contributing to the COVID-19 efforts?

Our company's vision is that everyone has access to personalized care. We work to ensure we're able to deliver care to patients wherever they are, whatever situation they're in. For COVID-19 specifically, we recently built and launched a self-assessment tool, which health consumers can use directly from the CirrusMD app or the CirrusMD-powered app provided through their health plan.

We've also just created a new solution called ChatFirstMD, an open registration, chat-first platform that's available to states, regions and community organizations. The goal is to provide telemedicine support quickly to selected populations, especially those that are most vulnerable, uninsured or underinsured.

Instead of going to the emergency room, urgent care or doctor's office, individuals can use ChatFirstMD to securely message with doctors in the CirrusMD provider network and get immediate medical advice from the safety of home. Our provider network is armed with updated clinical and CDC guidelines to respond to patients' needs around COVID-19. CirrusMD physicians are licensed to practice across the U.S.

What is the greatest challenge COVID-19 has presented to your team, and how are you overcoming it?

The challenge so many businesses are facing is that the pandemic is evolving quickly and it's difficult to know what will come next. As a telemedicine company, it's always been our goal to be highly scalable. During COVID-19, we've had the opportunity to prove our scalability and the capacity of the platform and physician network.

As patients have seen wait times of hours with other telehealth models such as video- and phone-driven solutions, we've been able to keep connection down to less than a minute. One of the most interesting opportunities that we see emerging as the pandemic subsides is the way telehealth is becoming part of healthcare delivery. The experience patients are having is leading to a wide embrace of the text-first platform.

During COVID-19, we've had the opportunity to prove our scalability."

What impact have these events had on your overall business, product or hiring plans?

In the early stages of COVID-19 in the U.S., government leaders and the CDC quickly began directing patients to telehealth. Their reasons were simple. First, telehealth has the capacity to deliver front-line care. Secondly, people who were experiencing symptoms could get advice from home without going to an ER or urgent care and potentially exposing themselves and others to the virus.

This directive opened new business opportunities for CirrusMD. We've been growing quickly, both with current health plan partners and net new business. With this growth, we're seeing opportunities to bring more employees on board. We'll be hiring and growing our base as we accelerate our product plans with both immediate deliverables and longer-term growth.



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Ben Christensen, CO-FOUNDER



At edtech company [Handshake](#), Head of Talent, Engineering Hetal Shah said the team has developed and published a series of resources to help connect students with employers who are still hiring. They are also hosting regular webinars to assist as their university partners move their career services operations online. Shah and Co-Founder Ben Christensen explain how going remote has affected employees and leadership alike.

How is your company currently contributing to the COVID-19 efforts?

We help college students find jobs and internships. Today, the Handshake community includes 17 million students and young alumni at over 900 universities, including more than 120 minority-serving institutions. We connect up-and-coming talent across all states with nearly 500,000 employers recruiting on Handshake. Handshake is democratizing opportunity and ensuring college students have the support they need to find a great job and kick-off a meaningful career regardless of where they go to school, what they choose as a major and who they know.

What is the greatest challenge COVID-19 has presented to your team, and how are you overcoming it?

Like all businesses, we have had to quickly transition to operate as a 100-percent remote business. Our number one priority during this time has been to ensure the health and well-being of our team and their families. We instituted a mandatory work-from-home policy in March. We also created a short guide for our managers and for individuals on expectations and best practices when working from home.

There's a lot of information, uncertainty and confusion. We play an active role in helping employees make sense of all the information and what this means for them and their families. We are sending regular updates to our team letting

them know about any changes to our policies or any other noteworthy news they may want to be aware of. We have also instituted several team-building initiatives to keep morale high.

What impact have these events had on your overall business, product or hiring plans?

We are in a fortunate position to focus our efforts on ensuring our team’s well-being and helping employers, students and our university partners navigate these uncertain times. We continue to hire for key roles and positions and remain focused on meeting our business objectives.



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Simon Reynolds, VP OF MARKETING



For [NurseFly](#), an increase in the jobs platform usage has led to long-term product evaluation. Team members are working on product updates to make the travel nurse marketplace more fluid and informative. Reynolds said that the software currently allows its 80,000 users to browse and compare jobs across the U.S., access pay rates and research positions in various cities.

How is your company currently contributing to the COVID-19 efforts?

NurseFly is a platform and marketplace helping solve healthcare professional staffing shortages by connecting qualified nurses, therapists and healthcare professionals to urgent, timely work. We help fill jobs 80 percent faster than traditional recruiting efforts.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we have the largest number of open travel nursing positions nationwide. We’ve created a COVID-19 jobs portal to highlight the highest-need positions.

What is the greatest challenge COVID-19 has presented to your team, and how are you overcoming it?

COVID-19 has introduced rapidly changing dynamics, which is helping us evolve our product for the future. There have been dramatic shifts in demand for healthcare professionals around the country. We are learning the impact that this has for our community of healthcare professionals and our agency partners.

We are releasing product updates to help make our marketplace more fluid, which will prove to be an investment that we hope will pay off over the long term.

What impact have these events had on your overall business?

Demand for healthcare professionals on NurseFly’s platform has doubled as we put the call out for more nurses to join the COVID-19 fight. We’ve seen healthcare professionals joining NurseFly in large numbers to try to help. Our applications have jumped nearly 400 percent.

With such platform growth, we consider ourselves extremely fortunate to be ramping up our hiring in the effort to help support our nursing community. As a startup of only 14 full-time employees, we are aiming to quadruple the size of our company by adding an additional 40 heads this year. With a strong focus in Denver, we are expanding our engineering, product, marketing and sales organizations.