Sona

PRESS KIT

Listen & move forward.

Sona8 runs AI voice interviews with everyone in an organisation, by phone or in the browser, in their own language, and shows leaders the themes and the sentences behind them.

BACKED BY
Y Combinator, Fall 2026

BASED IN
San Francisco

PRESS CONTACT
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18 November 2026

IN BRIEF

About Sona8, ready to copy.

SHORT, 56 WORDS

Sona8 runs AI voice interviews with everyone in an organisation. Each person talks to an AI interviewer by phone or in the browser, in their own language, for 10 to 20 minutes. Leaders read the themes and the sentences behind them. Sona8 is based in San Francisco and is part of Y Combinator's Fall 2026 batch.

LONG, 117 WORDS

Sona8 runs AI voice interviews with everyone in an organisation. Each person talks to an AI interviewer by phone or in the browser, in their own language, for 10 to 20 minutes, and the interviewer follows up on what they say. Leaders see how many people said what and the words they used, and ask again after they act. Anton Hantel, Madeleine Malmsten and Thilo Tamme founded Sona8. The idea came on a BCG transformation project in Hamburg, where a team interviews a few dozen people to learn how a change is landing. Sona8 is based in San Francisco, is part of Y Combinator's Fall 2026 batch and tests its method with researchers at TUM and MIT.

DEUTSCH, 47 WÖRTER

Sona8 führt KI-Sprachinterviews mit allen Menschen einer Organisation. Jede Person spricht 10 bis 20 Minuten mit einem KI-Interviewer, am Telefon oder im Browser, in der eigenen Sprache. Führungskräfte lesen die Themen und die Sätze dahinter. Sona8 sitzt in San Francisco und gehört zum Fall-2026-Batch von Y Combinator.

The name is Sona8: one word, a capital S and the figure 8. The claim is "Listen & move forward." and is never reworded or translated.

FACTS

The facts, each with its source.

FACT	DETAIL	SOURCE
Company	Sona8 Inc., a Delaware corporation, based in San Francisco.	Imprint
Founders	Anton Hantel (CEO), Madeleine Malmsten (CTO) and Thilo Tamme (CPO).	About Sona8
Backed by	Y Combinator, Fall 2026 batch.	Y Combinator company page
Product	AI voice interviews with everyone in an organisation, by phone or in the browser, in each person's own language, 10 to 20 minutes each.	How it works
Works with	20+ organisations in Germany, Austria, the Nordics and the US. Case teams at one of the three largest strategy consultancies use Sona8 for stakeholder interviews and diagnostics.	Sona8 for consulting teams
Client example	87.5% participation in one deployment. 400 interviews found 35 AI use cases and 13 barriers.	AI transformation
Research	Seven papers accepted at ECIS, SMS and HICSS in 2026, written with researchers at TUM and MIT.	Research
Security and privacy	GDPR compliant. SOC 2 and ISO 27001 compliant.	Trust Center
Claim	Listen & move forward. It is never reworded or translated.	Brand

How interview data is handled

The interviewer says it is an AI in its first sentence. Anyone can skip a question or stop at any time.

Nobody is scored, and no decision about a single person comes out of an interview.

Results appear only for groups of five people or more.

Names, email addresses and phone numbers are removed from a transcript before it reaches a language model.

Sona8 does not store interview audio and does not use customer data to train AI models.

Sources: Data policy, Are AI voice interviews anonymous?.

BACKGROUND

Where Sona8 comes from and how it works.

At BCG, Anton Hantel worked on large transformation projects, where a team interviews a few dozen people to learn how a change is landing. On one of them, in Hamburg, he and Thilo Tamme asked why an AI could not interview everyone.

Anton built Sona8 alongside his MBA at MIT and left the MBA once the first pilots needed all his time. Thilo had worked at BCG X, BCG Digital Ventures and BCG, and researched conversational AI at the Technical University of Munich.

Madeleine Malmsten is the third founder and the CTO. Before Sona8 she was Principal Engineer at McKinsey and founding engineer at ChillServices, a climate tech company.

Sona8 is based in San Francisco and is part of Y Combinator's Fall 2026 batch.

How it works

01 A team sets the question.

The team writes one main question and shares the documents behind it. Sona8 reads them before the first interview.

02 Sona8 interviews the people.

Each person talks to the AI interviewer for 10 to 20 minutes, by phone or in the browser, in their own language. If they want, they can share their screen or camera to show what they mean.

03 Every answer is sorted into themes.

Ten agents code each statement, and a theme counts when six of them agree. Leaders see how many people said what, the words they used, and each workflow step by step. Nobody is rated.

04 The team asks again.

Teams ask the results a follow-up in Claude, ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot. After they change something, they ask the same question again.

Source: sona8.com/how-it-works.

PEOPLE

The founders and the team.

Anton Hantel

Founder and CEO, previously MIT, BCG

Anton Hantel is a founder and the CEO of Sona8. At BCG he worked on large transformation projects, where a team interviews a few dozen people to learn how a change is landing. On one of them, in Hamburg, he and Thilo Tamme asked why an AI could not interview everyone. He built Sona8 alongside his MBA at MIT and left the MBA once the first pilots needed all his time.

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sona8.com/anton

Thilo Tamme

Founder and CPO, previously TUM, BCG X

Thilo Tamme is a founder and the CPO of Sona8. He worked at BCG X, BCG Digital Ventures and BCG, and researched conversational AI at the Technical University of Munich. On a BCG project in Hamburg, he and Anton Hantel had the idea for Sona8. He leads the research and works with works councils and HR teams.

linkedin.com/in/ttamme
sona8.com/thilo

Madeleine Malmsten

Founder and CTO, previously McKinsey

Madeleine Malmsten is a founder and the CTO of Sona8. Before joining the Sona8 team, she was Principal Engineer at McKinsey, where she was part of their business building practice helping enterprise companies spin off new initiatives. She's a hands-on software engineer and was previously founding engineer at ChillServices, a climate tech company that makes supermarket cooling more energy efficient.

linkedin.com/in/mmalmsten
sona8.com/madeleine

Team

Jakob Schepers

Founding Engineer, previously TUM, Volkswagen

Jakob Schepers is the founding engineer at Sona8 and builds the platform, from the architecture to the deployment. He works on the interviewer, the reports, single sign-on, the API and the connection to AI assistants such as Claude. Before Sona8 he built software in Volkswagen's IT as a dual student, and he is studying for an M.Sc. in Informatics at the Technical University of Munich.

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Photos for print come from the press contact on request.

Niklas Schneider

Founding Account Executive, previously University of Maastricht, ITONICS

Niklas Schneider is the founding account executive at Sona8. Organisations that book a demo usually talk to him first. Before Sona8 he worked at ITONICS and Tenera, and he studied at the University of Maastricht.

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RESEARCH AND STORY IDEAS

What is published, and what could be written next.

Research

Sona8 tests the method with researchers at TUM and MIT and publishes the results. 350 students at TUM and MIT gave over ten times the feedback of earlier runs of the same courses.

Accepted at three conferences

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION SYSTEMS

AI-Native Qualitative Interviews at Scale: Leveraging Conversational Agents for Organisational Research

An Experiment on the Effects of Conversational AI Assessments on Delayed Knowledge Retention

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SOCIETY CONFERENCE

AI-Mediated Employee Voice and Performance: Disentangling Informational and Affective Pathways

Voice-Based AI Feedback in Higher Education: A Field Study on Quality and Actionability

HAWAII INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SYSTEM SCIENCES

Persona and Persuasive Framing in AI Voice Agents: A 2×2 Field Experiment

Whose Voice Survives the Summary? A Voice-Retention Audit of LLM Employee Listening

Positive Ratings, Hidden Concerns: Employee Voice Disclosure in AI-Mediated Organizational Listening

Source: sona8.com/research.

Story ideas

Asking everyone. On a large change project, a team interviews a few dozen people. With an AI interviewer, a company can hear every person in days.

What people tell an AI interviewer. Some people tell the interviewer things they have never told anyone before. One of the papers accepted at HICSS, "Positive Ratings, Hidden Concerns", studies what people disclose in these interviews.

Interviews in a company with a works council. In Germany a works council has a say in tools like this. The purpose, the questions and the groups are agreed before anyone is invited, and the council gets the results at the same time as management.

From a consulting project in Hamburg to Y Combinator. The idea came on a BCG transformation project in Hamburg. The company is now based in San Francisco and part of Y Combinator's Fall 2026 batch.

What AI agents need to know first. The interviews map each workflow step by step, down to the steps an AI agent could take over: the groundwork for an AI rollout.

IN THE PRESS

17 articles in 16 outlets, in English and German.

DATE	OUTLET	ARTICLE	KIND
25 Oct 2026	**Menlo Times**	How to Listen to Your Entire Organisation at Scale Anton Hantel on how to listen to a whole organisation, on the Menlo Times YouTube channel. Menlo Times is a technology and startup publication.	Video interview English
20 Oct 2026	**SOTA2**	Sona8: Interview Your Whole Company in Days A profile of Sona8 with two worked examples, one in plants and one in retail. SOTA2 is a directory that ranks AI products by task and industry.	Company profile English
20 Oct 2026	**Wirtschaftsmacher**	Anton Hantel: Die KI-Telefonate, die Konzernen Veränderung messbar machen A profile of Anton Hantel and of how the idea for Sona8 came from a consulting project in Hamburg. Wirtschaftsmacher is a German-language business magazine.	Founder profile German
19 Oct 2026	**deutsche-startups.de**	Deutsche Wurzeln, amerikanisches Tempo Anton Hantel on building the company in San Francisco and on what German rules on data protection and co-determination did for the product. deutsche-startups.de is a German news site on startups and venture capital, based in Cologne.	Interview German
19 Oct 2026	**EU Startups News**	German Startup Sona8 Reimagines Employee Surveys With AI-Powered Phone Calls A report on the founders' move from Germany to San Francisco and into Y Combinator. EU Startups News is a European startup news site.	News English
13 Oct 2026	**Menlo Times**	Y Combinator Launches of the Week The week's Y Combinator launches, with Sona8 first on the list. Menlo Times is a technology and startup publication.	Launch list English
12 Oct 2026	**TechYorker**	Employee AI Use and Voice Agents: What a Small Field Study Found An article on a field study of how people use AI at work, run with AI voice interviews. It names Thilo Tamme and Anton Hantel among the authors and does not mention Sona8. TechYorker is a technology news site.	Research English
10 Oct 2026	**Fondo**	Sona8 uses voice agents to uncover how employees actually work A profile of the company and its founders, with the newer screen and camera sharing. Fondo does bookkeeping and tax for startups, and this is its blog.	Company profile English

Newest first. Every headline links to the article.

IN THE PRESS, CONTINUED

DATE	OUTLET	ARTICLE	KIND
6 Oct 2026	**InforCapital**	AI Voice Agents Map Workflows for Enterprise Automation A news item on Sona8 joining Y Combinator, with a summary of the product. InforCapital is a news site on deals and investors.	News English
5 Oct 2026	**Wisevoter**	Sona8 Joined Y Combinator Accelerator Program A short news item on Sona8 joining Y Combinator. Wisevoter is a US online news site with local editions.	News English
5 Oct 2026	**Trending Topics**	Sona8: Former Consultants Get Into Y Combinator With A.I. Interviews The report on Sona8 joining Y Combinator: how the product works and who is on the team. Also published in German. Trending Topics is a news site on startups and technology, based in Vienna.	News English
5 Oct 2026	**We Are San Francisco**	San Francisco Startup Sona8 Joined Y Combinator A local news item on Sona8 joining Y Combinator. We Are San Francisco is a local online news site.	News English
1 Oct 2026	**StartupValley**	Voice Agents im Einsatz: Wie Sona8 Mitarbeiterwissen für Transformationsprojekte nutzt A long interview with Anton Hantel on the problem he saw in consulting and on how an interview runs. StartupValley is a German startup magazine.	Interview German
29 Sep 2026	**MIDO Health**	Sona8 macht Mitarbeiterwissen für Transformationsteams auswertbar A profile of how the interviews turn into process maps and lists of problems in order of priority, and of the three founders. MIDO Health is a German magazine on digital health.	Company profile German
28 Sep 2026	**Gründerkurier**	KI befragt Mitarbeitende: Was Sona8 anders macht A short explanation of how the interviews and the analysis work, and of how the team treats data protection. Gründerkurier is a German news site for founders.	Explainer German
28 Sep 2026	**Startbase**	Sona8: Was Unternehmen über sich selbst nicht wissen A portrait of the product and the team in Startbase's series on Germans in the Valley. Also published in English. Startbase is a German startup platform with an online magazine.	Portrait German
25 Sep 2026	**The AI Journal**	What employees tell a voice agent about how they use AI A feature on what people told Sona8's interviewer about how they use AI at work, and on how the company began. The AI Journal is an online publication on AI in business, based in London.	Feature English

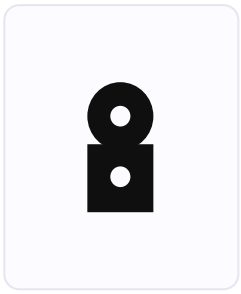
The list as it stands today, with every article, is at sona8.com/press.

BRAND AND CONTACT

Logo, name and who to write to.







Using the brand

The name is Sona8: one word, a capital S and the figure 8.

The claim is "Listen & move forward." and is never reworded or translated.

One colour at a time: Black on light surfaces, White on Black or Dark Purple, Purple sparingly on white.

White	Light Grey	Highlight	Dark Purple	Black
#FFFFFF	#FCFBFF	#9677FF	#211F54	#0F0F0F

Logo files in SVG and PNG, in black, white and purple: sona8.com/design/logo.

Press contact

Thilo Tamme

Founder and CPO

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Interviews in English or German. Photos for print on request.

This kit, the articles and the logo files are at sona8.com/press.