



Welcome to our seventh Snapshot. In this offering we will take a look at:

## Q & A

Talking with Dhafer Berrachid, Founder & CEO of Digital Lending Fintech, Axe Finance

## Recruitment Advisory

What Axe Finance can teach us about building and hiring for sustainable growth in Fintech

### AG

Joining me today for the second James Monroe Q&A is Dhafer Berrachid. Dhafer is founder and CEO of Axe Finance, a business he set up in 2004, having previously enjoyed success with risk vendors, Algorithmics, Fermat and Vermeg. Axe Finance is a market-leading software provider focused on credit risk automation for lenders. Thanks for taking time today, to share your experience with us Dhafer.



### DB

Hi Andrew. Pleased to meet you as well. Thank you for inviting me to this short interview today.

### AG

So we'll jump in straight away. First question. **What do you think has made you and Axe Finance a success?**



### DB

Lots of things but fundamentally the three core principles that are driving this business, which are **focus**, **expertise** and **values**.

Since day one, we have stayed laser focused on our business, which is automating the credit and risk value chain for financial institutions. Over the last 21 years we have built a deep expertise that we can offer to our customers and to the overall ecosystem, such as partners.

We are obsessed with delivering real added value to our clients, not just delivering a piece of software. Oh, it works, then it's fine. No, we are not happy when it just works. We are happy when we see a real and measurable impact for the client.

As a leading cutting edge technology vendor we need to be continuously innovating, we need to always be at the top and setting the highest standards for our clients. Continuous innovation is in the company's DNA.

Our values and mindset extend across the whole company. The culture of the company is really rooted in the commitment of every person to the delivery of excellence. I believe a company must have values, not only marketing slogans, but real values that are anchored and rooted in everybody's daily behaviour and day-to-day professional life.

**AG**

Yes, that's one of the things I've noticed about you as a company. I get a sense of what a company's like by how they recruit and you and your team have very high levels of integrity. You have very clear values and you're looking for those values in the people you hire. I know you have an excellent set of products.

### **Does the product sell itself or do you need a very structured sales approach?**

**DB**

Having a fantastic product and waiting for the market to come to you is certainly not the right approach, even though today we do still get lots of inbound leads.

Having the best product in the world is far from being enough to be successful, so a real sales organisation, I'll call it a "sales machine" is important. Even though we are in the B2B market, we need a structured well organised sales team. This includes not only pure salespeople but also business development, which includes marketing, inside sales or SDR and of course Presales.

You can imagine how complex a sales process can be, how lengthy it can be and how high our clients' expectations are. So, from a sales perspective, we need to be really consistent using all the tools available to us to make us successful. The selling process is comparable to a music band, where everybody has their own piece to play and they all need to be playing in harmony.

**AG**

You need a great band to play a great piece of music.

**DB**

Absolutely, a good drum and a bad guitar player and it's not good. The sales organisation is extremely important in our domain where it's not numbers, but it's quality. It's strategic sales. Sales life cycles are very long, and you need to be very consistent all the way through the process.

**AG**

### **Why did you move the commercial arm of your business to London in 2023? What led to that decision?**

**DB**

Yes, London was a strategic move to support our European expansion. London being a major hub in finance and Fintech. This move gave us access to an excellent pool of talent in London too.

Even though we are still a private company, it gave us access to funds, even though we have not – through our own choice- raised any funds yet. The move has given us visibility to potential investors and talent. We are now enjoying an high profile presence in London with a fully-fledged office and a team addressing the European market.

**AG**

### **Which geographical areas are most receptive to your tech solutions?**

**DB**

Yes, we are seeing a huge interest coming from Central and Eastern Europe. Obviously, our traditional markets being Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa continue to show interest. In Western Europe, we are seeing a replacement market especially on the corporate lending side. With the introduction of new AI technology coupled with our presence in London, we have become very attractive to European participants and European Financial Institutions.

Latin America is the next move and we are addressing it for now from London where our global sales operations are based and we're starting through partners.

**AG**

So, leading on from this **which types of clients have you enjoyed most success with?**

**DB**

Our solution covers all types of lending: retail, corporate SME, limit management, collateral management, loan origination, loan servicing, collection and EWS. So, all the credit life cycle and all the client segments. Based on the region we are in, we have more interest in different areas.

Currently in Europe, we are seeing great potential for corporate lending, collateral management and limit management as well.

Our advanced AI based capabilities is putting us at the top of the market offering with competitions just showing slides and struggling with AI adoption.

We started investing massively in Artificial Intelligence, four years ago and now we are coming with ready to use functionalities that is really appreciated by our clients. Our solution fits all ranges of financial institutions. Where we have seen huge added value is with complex multinational groups. Societe Generale is one of our flagship clients. OTP is a central European group for whom we are implementing across corporate lending. We are dealing across multi-entity, multi-geography, multi-lingual, multi-currency time zones and regulations. Such multinational Banks have to make multi-country risk analysis and decisions for their multinational groups of customers. These complex topics are very well addressed by our solution.

**AG**

Thanks Dhafer. On a different note, **what do you think are the biggest challenges you and your business face today?**

**DB**

I would say the regulatory changes are a big factor especially when they can be different in each geographical location.

The other challenge is the information security that becomes quite a headache for everyone and continuously achieving compliance with this. By the time I finish my sentence, I'm not compliant anymore because new threats are coming up. I'm exaggerating a bit, but that's the reality.

And you need to be very conscious of this and we are ISO 27001 certified as a company. So that's very important and this certification is renewed on a yearly basis. Also, AI and technology innovation in general. Staying ahead of the curve.

We need to invest continuously in these areas. I mean today we are talking cloud, so cloud means a lot in terms of architecture. It's not only hosting our solution on the cloud, which is an easy thing to do but designing it as such.

And redesigning our technology to be cloud native was a big challenge. There is a very specific set of criteria set out before you can call yourself cloud native and we are proud to say that today, we are cloud native, while keeping the flexibility to be hosted on-premises as our clients wish.

**AG**

**and what about delivery?**

**DB**

A lot is done online and automated through what we call CI/CD processes. So that's all automated. We are investing a lot in our internal processes too. So from a delivery perspective, we are not suffering from any time difference.

We are not selling a system for a bank to manage their moveable assets or to manage their buildings. We are selling complex software to banks, who are using our technology to run one of their core businesses. So, we are a mission critical system. Delivery still requires face to face interventions and face to face meetings and workshops. We need to talk, we need to document, we need to exchange about the document. A big part of it can be done through online meetings and quite a good portion needs to be done face to face. In person collaboration is very important.

The good thing is that we have offices in the regions our clients are located: Asia Pacific, Middle East, Europe and Africa. These offices are essential when we need close operational interaction with our customers.

**AG**

Great. Well, thanks for that. And finally, the last question. **What are the effects of PE on Fintech businesses and the Fintech market in general?**

**DB**

Private Equity funds are a part of the ecosystem and they bring lots of benefits. At some point in a company's life, you need PE intervention, and this brings not only funds, but also is an opportunity to address other needs the company has at this time. Often PE involvement will attract better talents, as Senior Execs will know that the business is implementing a tried and tested success plan. It gives them a level of comfort.

Obviously, it depends on which PE it is and what the shareholder agreement is though. Also, how they intervene in the day-to-day because overall they remain investors and they are expecting an ROI. So, they would try to put the right standards in place and sometimes apply quite a lot of pressure. The lifecycle of PE involvement with a Fintech is a journey with a lot of personal alchemy along the way. The PE should be chosen with this in mind. Each PE / Fintech relationship should be tailor-made to each individual situation.

**AG**

Great. Thanks so much Dhafer. This has been a fascinating Q&A.

---

## **Recruitment Advisory:**

### **What Axe Finance Can Teach Us About Building and Hiring for Sustainable Growth in Fintech**

Here are five recruitment takeaways every fintech and B2B tech firm should consider from Axe Finance's journey:

#### **1. Hire for Focus and Depth ... Not Just Brilliance**

Axe Finance has succeeded by staying relentlessly focused on one thing: automating the credit value chain. That kind of discipline only works when your team lives and breathes the same mission. Recruitment here isn't about filling seats, it's about finding people who understand the business inside out and can go deep, not wide.

**Tip: In niche tech sectors, hire for depth of understanding, not just functional skill.**

## 2. Recruit for Values, Not Just Capability

Dhafer's philosophy is clear: culture isn't a poster on the wall. It's lived behaviour. Axe only hires people whose personal values align with their obsession for impact and integrity. The result? A team where excellence isn't optional - it's expected.

**Tip: Introduce values-based interview scoring to reduce mis-hires and improve long-term performance.**

## 3. Build a Sales "Band," Not a One-Man Show

The company's "sales machine" includes not just salespeople, but marketing, presales, and SDRs, each playing their part in harmony. Dhafer likens it to a music band: one weak instrument, and the whole performance suffers.

**Tip: If you're hiring sales talent in fintech, assess team orchestration skills as much as individual flair.**

## 4. Think Global, Hire Local

With offices spanning Europe, Africa, and Asia, Axe has invested in regional hubs to ensure client intimacy and operational agility. Local presence isn't just a checkbox, it's a strategic enabler of face-to-face collaboration and cultural fit.

**Tip: When expanding into new markets, prioritise local leadership hires who can translate global standards into regional success.**

## 5. PE Backing Attracts Talent ... But Requires Careful Navigation

Dhafer sees Private Equity as a double-edged sword: it brings funding and discipline, but also pressure. Done well, PE involvement attracts seasoned execs who recognise that structure, clarity, and growth ambitions are in place.

**Tip: If your client is backed by PE, help them craft a compelling EVP around stability, performance, and leadership opportunity.**

---

Whether you're hiring in **#fintech**, **#regtech**, or complex **#B2B environments**, Axe Finance is a powerful case study in how clear strategic intent, values-led hiring, and operational excellence can drive long-term success.

If you're advising or recruiting for scale-ups, take a leaf from their book: don't just hire for what you need today. Hire for what the business is becoming.

Well, that's all folks! Different style of snapshot this time around. Let us know what you think.

Best wishes,

*Andrew*

Tel: +44(0) 207 788 4783 | Email: [enquiries@jamesmonro.com](mailto:enquiries@jamesmonro.com)  
James Monroe, 68 Lombard St. London EC3V 9LJ.



[jamesmonro.com](http://jamesmonro.com)