1. Origins

Overstory's roots can be traced back to a competition in 2018 where co-founders Indra den Bakker and Anniek Schouten looked for a way to use machine learning to detect deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. They did well in the competition, so 20tree.ai (Overstory's previous name) was born in Lisbon, where they lived at the time. Indra's background was in computational intelligence, working on advertising technology. Anniek's was in international business consulting. Both wanted to devote their skills to tackling our climate crisis, so this seemed like the perfect way. They soon decided to move back to the Netherlands, where they are from, and a third co-founder, Roelof Pieters, joined the team. The first paying customers were forestry companies and NGOs and soon it became clear that utilities also have a real need to better understand, at scale, the risks posed by vegetation. In 2020, the company decided to focus on serving utilities in order to help them avoid power outages and wildfires.

2. The Team

We couldn't be more excited about the 17-person team that we've assembled. The size of the team has doubled in the last year and is growing rapidly. Diversity is hugely important at Overstory. We have seven nationalities represented, including the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, France, Russia, the US and Indonesia. 35% of the team identifies as female, 24% are non-white and four out of the six people on the leadership are either female or non-white. Like many companies, the pandemic forced us to become very good at remote work, very quickly. Our headquarters is in Amsterdam, and the majority of our team lives in the Netherlands, but we also have people in Lisbon, Milan, London and New York. We're getting good at playing Charades with each other over Zoom!

3. A passion

Our mission is to help solve our climate crisis by providing real-time intelligence about the planet's vegetation. We do this by using machine learning on satellite imagery in order to prevent wildfires and power outages. Some on the team are super passionate about satellite technology, some about data science, some about energy and some about building great software products. But the one passion that everyone at Overstory shares is...trees. We love them and they inspire us. At our weekly team meeting on Friday afternoons, a different team member picks a new tree to teach everyone about. When we hit certain milestones as a business, we plant trees to contribute to what we call the Overstory forest.

4. A 2030 wish

Our wish for 2030 is that we, as a global community, have made significant progress in tackling our climate crisis. It's unreasonable to think that we will be "out of the woods" in nine years but we hope that we are on a much better trajectory than we are now. Trees and plants are at the heart of both climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. By 2030, we want to see all of Earth's natural resources mapped, and millions more decision-makers with access to real-time insights about how their decisions intersect with nature. Without this, we can't solve our climate crisis.