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SUMMARY

I am an operator, entrepreneur and engineer who builds new lines of business from zero, turns around under-performing ones, has a Customer discovery process proven over 25 years, and personally ships production software. Founded two venture studios and 8 startups (7 profitable, 3 exits). As an Amazon L7 Entrepreneur-in-Residence, took a new custom-merchandise business from PRFAQ through funding process on a $1BN opportunity. Created AT&T Digital One Rate as a $1.5BN in 90 days ($41BN exit), restored growth to a $57M Experian division, and led Yesmail to its first profitable year ever and a sale to InfoUSA ($30MM exit). Harvard MBA and Purdue engineer.

My superpower is finding product-market fit and scalable, repeatable business models. I founded MCDM Holdings, one of the first startup studios in the U.S. Our startups were in direct-to-consumer (DTC) marketing, adtech, marketing tech, e-commerce, consumer data, machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI). Collectively, these startups generated a 1,460x cash-over-cash return with $5K of invested capital. I formalized the studio model by founding InsightStudios, a second startup studio, with a small team of supportive investors, building startups in consumer data, in-real-life social, transportation and education. As a team, we identified meaningful Customer problems, solved them with technology and built scalable businesses around them. Through the ups and downs of the startup journey, I've developed an intuitive ability to understand what Customers want and provide it in a compelling product or service that generates profitable growth.

In addition to my startup adventures, I'm an experienced product visionary and product leader with a proven track record of innovation success at five Fortune 500 companies, including Amazon, Experian, AT&T Wireless, P&G and Yesmail. Most recently, I worked as a Senior Leader in Amazon's e-commerce business, where I led the creation and launch of a new business to address a multi-billion-dollar B2B market opportunity. I created a new $1.5 billion business in just 90 days at AT&T Wireless and helped transform the wireless industry into what it is today. I helped turn around Yesmail, the first publicly traded email marketing company, by developing breakthrough products, achieving profitability for the first time in company history and successfully selling the business to InfoUSA in 18 months, creating $30 million in incremental enterprise value with no additional capital. I turned around a $57 million division at Experian in less than 10 months by creating new engines of growth that enabled our Customers to reach new levels of data integration across the enterprise. I started my career as an engineer in product development at Procter & Gamble, a formative experience where I learned how to get insights from Customers and turn them into innovative products and business models.

My background combines startup experience with a proven track record of growing business units within large companies. My obsession with Customers and ability to develop innovative business models that scale help make me an effective leader and innovator.

Strengths: 0→1 business building · P&L ownership and turnarounds · product strategy and Working Backwards / PRFAQ · go-to-market and customer acquisition (LTV/CAC) · data and AI-enabled products · cross-functional leadership in large organizations.

EXPERIENCE

InsightStudios, LLC | Venture studio · Seattle, Miami — *Founder & CEO*, 2020 – Present

- Founded InsightStudios to build handcrafted startups from scratch using a proprietary method for finding product-market fit called Insight-Driven Iteration. Raised $750K in seed capital to develop our first startups.
- **Datalove** — developed a consumer data platform for enhanced targeting around life events on social media paid ads (2020–21). An AI-based ad targeting platform built on life-event and behavioral data, Datalove achieved $10K in MRR in its first three months but was shuttered when we discovered we needed more behavioral data from a native social media platform in order to scale into a significant business.
- **ComeWith** — consumer social product, a cure for loneliness; grew to 30K users and 20K in-person meetups across 60 cities (2021–2024).
  - Launched in Miami on May 1, 2021, as cities were opening up from the pandemic, and grew at an average monthly growth rate of 107%.
  - Launched 60 cities in 90 days and created over 550 in-real-life experiences that brought people together to make friends and cultivate meaningful relationships.
  - Found a scalable, repeatable business model using organic channels and a $15-per-month subscription plan for our membership clubs.
  - Shuttered the business when we discovered it would take too long to scale and could not meet the studio's internal financial goals. This was validated a few months later when we noticed a similar business took 12 years to achieve $1MM in ARR.
- **FounderDojo** — an education, mentorship and SaaS business helping educated professionals find product-market fit (2024–present); a pre-accelerator startup school that teaches Founders how to build successful startups. Generated $15K in SaaS revenue in first three months. Still operating as a hobby and give back to the founder community.
- **Joyride** — a new kind of rideshare platform where drivers can keep 100% of the fares (2025–2026), focused on giving control back to Drivers so they can make more money and build their own business.
  - Achieved profitability in its first three months by focusing on Drivers who are being unfairly exploited by Uber and Lyft and on Riders who are disgusted by abusive monopolies.

  - As we began scaling the business, we evaluated Tesla's FSD v12.3.3, .4 and .5 and concluded Tesla had achieved artificial general intelligence (AGI) and was close to achieving full autonomy. We concluded Tesla's robotaxis would solve the Driver pay problem by eliminating the Driver altogether and disrupt the rideshare market in a way that would make it nearly impossible for non-autonomous rideshare platforms to compete. Also, there are significant insurance barriers in this market that prevented us from launching a full platform. Based on this analysis, we shuttered Joyride to pursue other opportunities.
- **Current portfolio** — Personally built and shipped eight new products in first six months of 2026. https://davelinhardt.com/portfolio/. Today, InsightStudios serves as a platform to develop new ideas, including cValue.ai, an artificial intelligence and machine learning (ML) platform for optimizing LTV/CAC ratios; Freethought, a content publishing and monetization platform; and FounderDojo.

Amazon | Seattle, WA — *Senior L7 Leader & Entrepreneur-in-Residence*, 2019 – 2020

- Authored the PRFAQ and business plan under Amazon's Working Backwards process to execute a plan targeting $350M revenue at 35% contribution margin, including a cost-effective go-to-market strategy and plan.
- Identified and scoped a new line of business in custom / on-demand merchandise for corporate bulk buyers ($82B market); my primary responsibility was to develop a strategy and launch plan for entering this market by leveraging Amazon's on-demand apparel manufacturing capabilities.
- Identified the most attractive market segment, conducted in-depth Customer research to understand unmet needs, identified problems to be solved and jobs to be done, and developed product requirements designed to earn Customer trust.
- Built a four-person startup launch team, secured funding and developed the first version of our product.

MCDM Holdings, Inc | Venture studio · Chicago — *Founder & CEO*, 2003 – 2019

- Founded a venture studio that created four startups across ad tech, mar tech, consumer data, e-commerce, and SaaS; all startups were profitable (100%) and three generated exits (75%).
- Founded one of the first startup studios in Chicago in 2003. Our startups generated a 1,460x cash-over-cash return.
- **e360insight** (exit) — AI-driven predictive email and affiliate platform sending 500M+ emails per month, one of the largest email marketing platforms for performance-based ad networks; profitable within three months; sold to strategic buyer (2003–2008).
  - e360insight was a predictive email marketing company; we could predict offer click-through rates at the individual level.
  - Developed a lead generation platform for retail, continuity, financial services and insurance markets; developed a best-in-class online marketing optimization solution for lowering acquisition costs in email marketing.
  - Grew 202% per year with 48 months of consecutive profitability.
  - Successful exit: sold the business to strategic buyer.
- **BargainDepot** (exit) — e-commerce home goods and fashion retailer; profitable in month one, bootstrapped to $3M revenue; sold to strategic buyer (2003–2008).
  - BargainDepot.net was a discount e-commerce company similar to Overstock.com.
  - Built a profitable, vertically integrated online marketing business with only $5K in startup capital and grew it to $3.0 million revenue in four years.
  - Developed proprietary products under the SportsLoyal.com and Fienza.com brand names.
  - Started by using drop-ship providers to sell fashion accessories and officially licensed sports merchandise to find initial product-market fit with consumers.
  - After initial validation, developed a fully operational pick-pack-and-ship warehouse in Wheeling, IL, to fulfill orders from our website.
  - Since there was no off-the-shelf e-commerce software package at the time, we built our own applications: all of the software required to run the business, from online catalog, shopping cart and secure credit card processing to order management, customer service, inventory management and cash management.
  - Our inventory turns were an incredible 2x per month, a performance level that was unheard of in the industry.
  - Successful exit: sold the business to strategic buyer.
- **Acquisition Science** (A16E.com) (exit) — consumer database of 300M+ records for data enhancement and omnichannel analytics; profitable every month for 17 years (2004–2021).
  - Acquisition Science was a data company that specialized in compiled online consumer omnichannel data. We created a massive consumer database that was an industry first. Our data was used to connect online and offline data sources for data enhancement, predictive analytics and advanced targeting in online marketing applications.
  - Our customers included Acxiom, Experian, AccuData, Fresh Address and several other data and database management companies that connected omnichannel data sources into comprehensive consumer data solutions.
  - Successful exit: merged the assets with Datalove, another data startup. Shuttered business during covid due to declining demand.
- **LegitLead** — lead-scoring platform for the education sector; profitable (2013–2016).
  - LegitLead was a lead-scoring SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) business designed to predict inquiry conversion rates from form to paying student in the for-profit education industry.
  - Developed a predictive analytics application based on consumer big data from customer and third-party data sources and breakthrough data science technology and algorithms.
  - Demonstrated a 5x improvement in lead conversion efficiency versus Targus, the leading lead-scoring service provider and a $4 billion public company.

  - Established a 14x premium price versus standard lead validation and lead fraud solutions.
  - Completed a successful pilot test with DeVry University and demonstrated a 40 to 60% reduction in customer acquisition cost.
  - Expanded the platform within DeVry's business and added Carrington College as our second customer in the first year.
  - Achieved profitability at $500K in first-year revenue at 85% gross margin. Shut down business for personal reasons (divorce).
- **Life Phase Media** — a life-event data company. The mission of the company was to create and compile behavioral data on consumers who were experiencing significant life-event changes to predict purchase intent and behavior.
  - Our first consumer-facing franchise was uBaby.com, a social media site for new mothers.
  - Developed an innovative real-time lead generation advertising model designed to help moms transition into motherhood and to help consumer packaged goods companies connect with new moms in a non-intrusive but helpful way.
  - The first business model hypothesis proved challenging in the presence of low-cost lead providers that were manufacturing and selling fraudulent leads in the new-mom marketplace.
  - I shuttered the project as we pivoted to an innovation consultancy to build a new business with Epic Advertising, a leading online ad network.
- **Epic Advertising Innovation Outpost** — the Innovation Outpost is a professional services offering designed to develop and scale new, disruptive business models that are adjacent to an established business. Unlike consulting firms, the Outpost uses entrepreneurs who have experience building startups from scratch. We focus on new opportunities that are outside of the core business model and in areas where management bandwidth and focus do not currently exist.
  - Epic Advertising was a $100 million performance-based online advertising network in NYC owned by TA Associates, a private-equity firm. The CEO hired me to build a new line of business that monetized the behavioral data flowing through the advertising click and signup tracking application.
  - Developed a go-to-market strategy for the new data business, obtained CEO and board approval, and implemented the strategy to build a $10 million business. This new line of business was designed to create a new engine of growth and expand the exit multiple and enterprise valuation of Epic upon exit.
- **FounderSensei.com** (San Francisco & Chicago) — rated the #1 lean startup school in the world by UP Global.
  - Created a startup school to teach entrepreneurs how to build profitable startups from scratch as a giveback to the startup community, focused on business model validation, getting traction with customers, finding product-market fit and scaling the company using repeatable and profitable customer acquisition methods.
  - Our product lineup included The Founder's Workbench, a self-serve learning platform where aspiring entrepreneurs can learn how to build successful startups.
- **Disruptive Innovation Services** (Chicago, IL) — taught established businesses how to innovate like startups.
  - We provided a suite of professional services designed to help established businesses transform their cultures from slow and stodgy to fast and innovative.
  - Our products included a Three-Day Startup Bootcamp, a 90-Day Startup Accelerator and the Innovation Outpost, a fully outsourced startup team focused on a sponsored theme.
  - Closed six deals with enterprise customers in the first 10 months, including Procter & Gamble, John Deere, American Family Insurance, Guaranteed Rate, CUNA Mutual and SC Johnson.

Yesmail, Inc. (exit) | Chicago, IL — *Senior Vice President, Data Services*, 2001 – 2003

- **Challenge:** Turn around a fledgling email marketing company and make it profitable for the first time in its history.
- **Strategy, Business Plan & Operations:** Primarily responsible for improving operating margins and achieving profitability for a $15MM operating division. Provided overall strategic direction for the customer acquisition business, including the creation and implementation of growth strategies for revenue and margin improvement.
- **Strategic Marketing Plan:** Transformed the strategy and positioning of the company from email list management to an innovative omnichannel consumer-data company; successfully positioned the company as a leader in the online consumer and B2B direct marketing data industry.
- **New Product Development & Marketing:** Developed and launched new and innovative products, including Yesmail B2B Network, Yesmail Append, Enhanced Segment Profiling, customized prospect database solutions and vertical response models.
- **Partnership Management:** Managed and grew the Yesmail data network of online publishers who were monetizing their data through the Yesmail platform; acquired five new data partners, resulting in 30 million new consumer records.
- **New Product Growth Engine:** Within the first 12 months, new products contributed 45% of total revenue and 60% of total operating income.
- **Executive Leadership:** Provided leadership to align and motivate key resources to implement strategic change and achieve financial objectives; managed analytical services, data acquisition and product marketing teams through the development of market offerings and capabilities for CRM clients, enabling them to better understand their customers and improve customer profitability.
- **Successful Exit:** Delivered the first profitable year in company history, turning around the business from a $6 million annual loss to $1.2 million EBITDA in 15 months with no capital expenditure; led the strategic pitch, growth strategy and business rationale that positioned Yesmail for a successful sale to InfoUSA (later InfoGroup) in 18 months; created $30 million in enterprise value with no additional capital.

Experian | Chicago, IL — *VP, Marketing, Product & Strategy — Telecom, Energy & Cable BU*, 1998 – 2001

- **Challenge:** Turn around a shrinking business unit at a large information services company and put it on a positive growth trajectory; owned strategy, product roadmap, and marketing for the ~$57M division serving telecom, energy, and cable clients.

- **Turnaround Growth Strategy:** Developed the strategic growth plan for the $57 million TEC (Telecommunications, Energy and Cable) division of risk, direct marketing and directory assistance products; the plan included defining the target customer set, priority application areas, product lineup and product development strategy to turn the business unit into a growth engine for the company; developed and implemented a business plan for accelerating revenue growth to 45% per year.
- **Pioneered Growth Strategy as a Model for the Rest of the Company:** The TEC strategy plan was a company first and a model for reorganizing the enterprise to be more customer-focused to achieve higher growth rates.
- **Strategic Marketing Plan:** Developed a strategic and tactical marketing plan to reposition Experian TEC as a solution provider that integrates consumer credit and direct marketing capabilities into a new customer-centric line of business; obtained senior management approval for an aggressive marketing budget that was 2x traditional marketing spend.
- **Discovered New Customer Insight:** Identified a new opportunity to develop data integration solutions that combine online and offline data into a comprehensive customer analytics platform for more efficient customer acquisition, retention, cross-sell and upsell.
- **Successful Implementation:** Reversed the division from −15% to +12% annual growth in under 10 months by launching new information-services products and enterprise data-integration offerings.

EARLIER CAREER

AT&T Wireless (exit) | Chicago, IL — *Director, Marketing & Product, PCS Consumer & Small Business*, 1996 – 1998

- **Challenge:** Launch a wireless startup to cover 50% of the US population and gain market share from well-funded, entrenched competitors.
- **Marketing & Customer Acquisition:** Ran marketing for the consumer and small business franchise for the Midwestern digital PCS region (Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati); acquired customers and achieved $20 million in revenue in the first 10 months.
- **Reinvented the Business Model for Hyper-Growth:** As a new entrant in the wireless market, completely reinvented the wireless product, positioning, pricing and go-to-market strategy for the biggest wireless startup in the industry. Within 60 days of launch, the AT&T Digital One Rate product had transformed the wireless industry and shifted the playing field to one of national footprint, national marketing and national operations.
- **Business Result:** Created and scaled AT&T Digital One Rate, the flat-rate national plan that moved the industry from analog voice to digital voice and data, helping create a unicorn within AT&T Wireless and adding an estimated $1.5B to market capitalization within 90 days of launch. AT&T Digital One Rate fundamentally changed the competitive landscape in the wireless industry in ways that still exist today.

Procter & Gamble | Cincinnati, OH — *Product Development Engineer, Oral Care (Crest, Scope, Peridex)*, 1992 – 1994

- Developed new products and concepts for the health care consumer goods category under the Crest, Scope and Peridex brand names. Projects included business development, global market opportunity assessment, competitive analysis, consumer and professional market research, and direct response advertising.

EDUCATION

Harvard Business School — MBA, General Management (focus: information systems and disruptive innovation) · Boston, MA

Purdue University — B.S., Chemical Engineering (completed in three years; co-ops at Dow, 3M, and P&G) · West Lafayette, IN