

Volume 1, July 2025 • Innovation in Arizona

Silicon Oasis

powered by Arizona Ascent

THE BUILDERS ARE HERE

How Arizona Tech Is
Taking the Lead

CHRIS CAMACHO: THE ARCHITECT OF MODERN PHOENIX

How Chris Camacho
Helped Turn Greater
Phoenix Into a Magnet
for Innovation,
Industry, and Talent

www.thesiliconoasis.org

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITOR



Kyle Macdonald

Editor-in-Chief, Silicon Oasis

When we launched **Silicon Oasis Magazine**, the goal wasn't to create another tech publication. It was to build a real-time record of what's happening here—on the ground, in Arizona—as our startup ecosystem gains traction, momentum, and identity.

There's a lot of noise in the national tech conversation, and not enough signal coming from places like this. That's what we're here to change. This magazine is our way of documenting growth, spotlighting builders, and reinforcing that what we're doing in Arizona matters. Not someday—now.

We've always said Silicon Oasis isn't just an event series or a brand. It's a collective effort to unify a fragmented landscape. Startups, founders, investors, students, creatives, operators—we all make up this ecosystem.

This month's stories reflect that. Supersede raised \$10M to scale cleantech innovation from Phoenix. Hadrian chose Mesa for a \$260M aerospace expansion. The state created a new Office of Defense Innovation. Grape ID went open-source. And Hack House brought together scrappy local talent to build side by side over a weekend.

We also saw reminders that innovation isn't always about venture funding or software. Novel Ice Cream became the #1 shop in the country. Local founders opened up about what it really takes to build here.

And behind the scenes, more people are stepping up to mentor, invest, and push Arizona forward. It's all part of the same story: we're building something in the desert—and people are starting to notice. Thanks for being part of it.



VISION & IMPACT

Transforming Arizona into a global tech hub led by local founders, built for the future.

Silicon Oasis is a nonprofit dedicated to uniting Arizona’s tech ecosystem. Our mission is to strengthen the local innovation economy by bringing together founders, investors, and entrepreneurs—and by creating spaces where collaboration can thrive.

We do this in three key ways:

- Centralizing the Ecosystem through startup-focused events and practical workshops led by experienced builders and funders.
- Cultivating Community by fostering authentic, expectation-free connections that go beyond traditional networking.
- Spotlighting Talent with dynamic video podcasts and media that highlight Arizona’s most promising innovators.

Pillar Partners



Driving Arizona’s AI future by connecting founders to mentorship, talent, capital, and transformative innovation pathways.



Accelerating defense and aerospace innovation through founder support, workforce development, and mission-aligned industry partnerships.



Founder-led software community uniting Arizona builders through events, peer groups, and startup-focused resources.

AZ CLEANTECH

Uniting Arizona’s climate innovators across energy, water, and mobility to accelerate clean tech collaboration and impact.

SILICON OASIS FINDS A NEW HOME AT LOLOFT PHOENIX

Inside our move to a space built for Arizona's startup momentum.

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

We're excited to share a big milestone for the Silicon Oasis team: we've officially moved our headquarters to Loloft Phoenix a flexible, founder-focused workspace designed to grow with Arizona's emerging tech community.

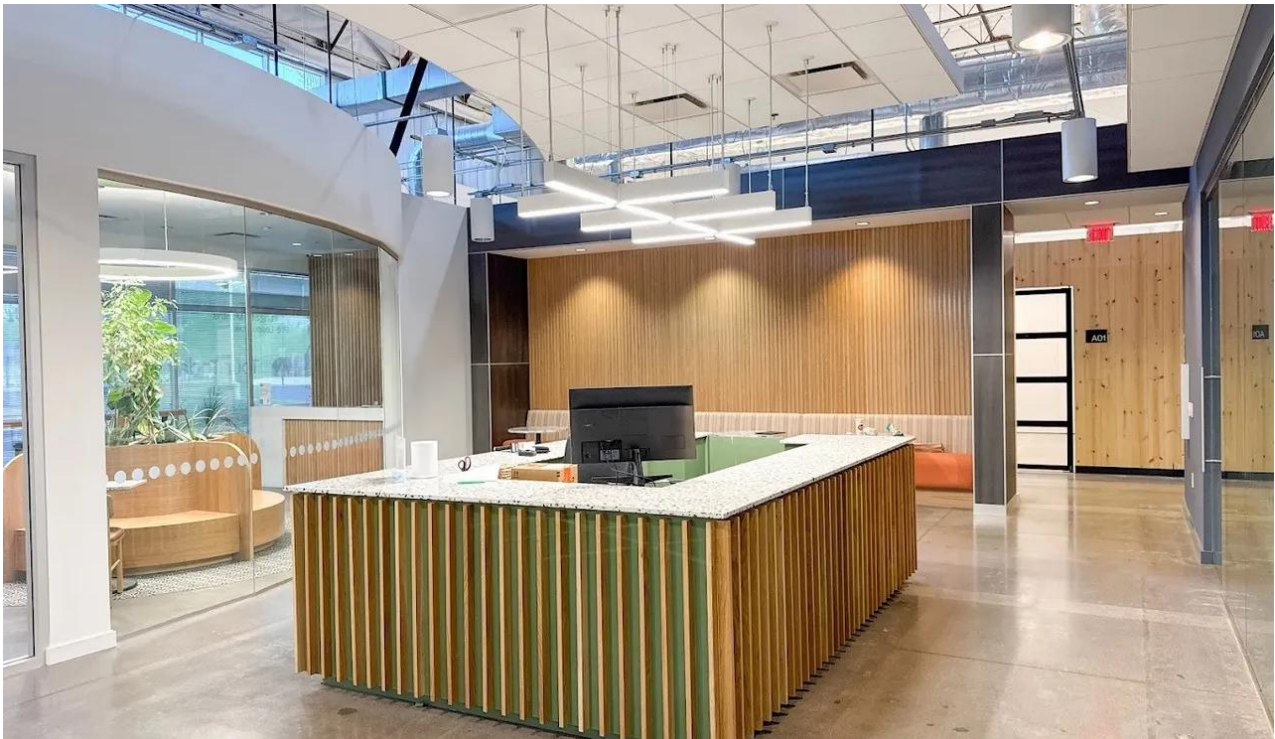
Located just minutes from Sky Harbor Airport and Arizona State University, Loloft Phoenix gives us room to scale, connect, and deepen our mission: to champion Arizona's startup ecosystem and build infrastructure that supports the state's next generation of entrepreneurs. This move isn't just about square footage. It's about strategic alignment and community proximity.

Why Loloft?

Loloft (short for Low Overhead, Lofty Ambitions) offers something rare in the Valley: a space that blends coworking flexibility with industrial capability. It's a space built for makers, technologists, creatives, and operators the kinds of people we support every day.



Silicon Oasis Community



For our growing team and partners, Loloft offers:

- Private offices, flex desks, and dedicated workspaces
- High-speed internet, meeting rooms, and secure 24/7 access
- Shared kitchens, collaborative lounges, and mail handling
- On-site warehouse units with loading docks, perfect for startups with physical products
- Month-to-month terms—ideal for early-stage flexibility

The result? An environment where community energy meets operational efficiency. Where one conversation in the kitchen can lead to the next breakout idea.

A Hub for Builders—Starting With Our Hack House

This new HQ also doubles as the official home of the Devlabs x Silicon Oasis Hack House a space where Arizona’s developers, designers, and builders can collaborate on early-stage ideas.

More than a place to code, the Hack House represents the heartbeat of what we believe: Arizona’s innovation economy thrives when builders have access to each other, mentorship, and community support. Through regular events, residencies, and partnerships with engineering talent and startup mentors, the Hack House is already generating connections and companies.

A Thank You to Loloft!

We want to express our deepest thanks to **Brendan Howell** and the entire Loloft team for their support and shared vision. From day one, their commitment to creating inclusive, accessible infrastructure for Arizona startups has been clear and aligns perfectly with our own.

We’re proud to call Loloft Phoenix our new home and we can’t wait to see what we all build from here. Visit us at 4750 S 44th Pl, Suite 120, Phoenix, AZ 85040 or learn more about Loloft: www.loloft.com

THE BUILDERS ARE HERE: HOW ARIZONA TECH IS TAKING THE LEAD

AI money. Donuts. Devs. Arizona's builder culture has arrived.

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor

The Valley is heating up and it's not just the summer sun. In just one week, Arizona landed a \$200 million tech investment, a hacker house got a surprise dessert drop from a local business legend, and a new founder community launched with a bold challenge: if you're not actively building, don't show up.

What we're witnessing isn't a trend. It's a movement. Arizona's builder culture is real, it's growing, and it's showing up in boardrooms, in back kitchens, and in warehouse coworking spaces all across the state.

AI Comes to Mesa: \$200M Says Arizona's Ready to Build Big

Let's start with the headline: **Hadrian**, a California-based aerospace and defense startup, raised a massive \$260 million Series B round to build AI-powered manufacturing hubs across the U.S. Here's the part that matters to Arizona: \$200 million of that funding is being invested right here in Mesa. The new Mesa facility will be four times the size of its California location and is expected to be fully operational by January 2026.



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It will serve as a flagship AI factory developing precision parts for aerospace and national security applications using next-gen automation and software-defined manufacturing.

This isn't just another tech expansion. It's a declaration: Arizona is a serious player in the future of advanced manufacturing. But while big money is backing Arizona's future, the present-day tech scene is fueled by something much more grassroots and far more delicious.

Hacker-Fueled, Doughnut-Powered: Novel Ice Cream Backs Arizona's Builders

It's not every day an ice cream shop becomes a hero to the startup scene but that's exactly what's happening at [Novel Ice Cream](#), a Phoenix-born dessert company run by [Shawn Allard](#).

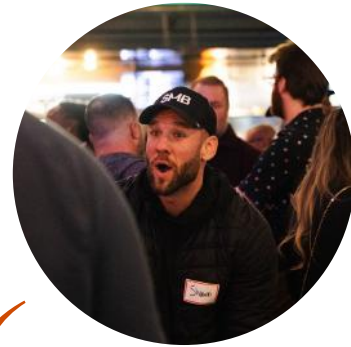
Known for its Dough Melt a warm donut sliced in half and filled with handcrafted ice cream Novel just earned back-to-back national awards for Best Ice Cream and Best Donut in the U.S.

But last week, Shawn made another headline: Novel is now the official dessert sponsor of Dev House, Arizona's first hacker house. He showed up on-site with free ice cream for the Dev House crew as they built late into the night.

"We've been trying to support different communities around the Valley," Shawn said. "Everyone in Arizona is interested in tech right now. We're just trying to boost the energy and uplift that community as much as possible."

"Put your head down. Let it take the time it needs to take. Focus on building the best product Arizona and the world has seen. If you do that, you'll win." It's a sentiment that resonates far beyond Dev House, and it's a perfect setup for the next evolution of Arizona's builder community.

Phoenix Builds, a newly launched community created by two Arizona State University grads, is flipping the script on traditional startup events.



"Put your head down. Let it take the time it needs to take. Focus on building the best product Arizona—and the world—has seen. If you do that, you'll win."

Shawn Allard
Novel Ice Cream



Novel is now the official dessert sponsor of Dev House, Arizona's first hacker house.

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The format is simple and strict: bring a project you're actively working on or don't come at all. There are no keynotes, no business-card swaps, no vague "innovation" talk. You show up, plug in, and build next to others doing the same.

"We'd been to too many events where no one was actually building," said [Ethan M. Clark](#). "So we created a space where they are."

The response has been immediate and enthusiastic. The community has already earned backing from Don Fotsch (Arizona Nerd), and Clay Richardson and Blake Spurgin (Startup Central). And of course, we're proud to support it here at Silicon Oasis. This isn't just a meetup. It's momentum.

One Thread. One Mission. One Arizona.

What does a \$200M aerospace investment, a donut-stuffed ice cream sandwich, and a no-tourists-allowed tech meetup have in common? Everything. Each one reflects a deeper truth: Arizona is no longer waiting for permission to be part of the innovation economy. We're helping build what comes next.

We're here to spotlight the founders, the teams, the stories, and the builders who are putting Arizona on the map week after week.

Special Thanks to Our Sponsor: Topo Advisors

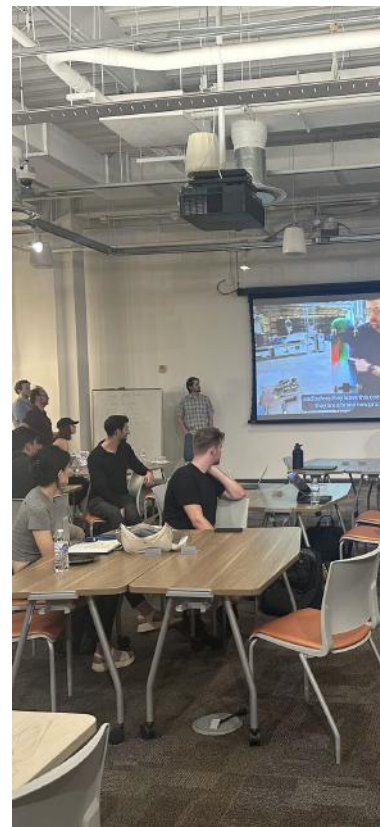
Every builder needs a solid foundation. That's where [Topo Advisors](#) comes in. As a trusted financial partner to more than 100 Arizona startups, Topo Advisors provides CFO-level guidance, financial planning, and bookkeeping to help early-stage companies scale with confidence. Their support has been instrumental in driving startup success across the Valley. Learn more at topoadvisors.com

Watch our full broadcast here:
[Phoenix on Fire](#)



"We'd been to too many events where no one was actually building. So we created a space where they are."

Ethan M. Clark
Phoenix Builds



Phoenix Builds held their first event on July 16th and over 50 people registered for 30 spots!

FUELING THE FUTURE OF DEFENSE TECH

Inside the Southwest MAC Cohort That's Propelling Arizona to the Frontlines of Innovation

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

On a warm evening in downtown Phoenix, eleven founders stepped onto the Demo Day stage. They weren't just pitching—they were reporting for duty. Armed with prototypes, field insights, and national security purpose, each startup was there to prove one thing: Arizona is ready to lead the next wave of mission-driven innovation.

Hosted at the heart of the region's emerging defense tech ecosystem, the **Southwest Mission Accelerator Center (SWMAC)** held its inaugural Fuel Accelerator Demo Day this June an electrifying culmination of an eight-week program designed to fast-track dual-use technologies with applications in both the commercial and public sectors. The program was powered in collaboration with Fuse, the Defense Innovation OnRamp Hub: Arizona, and an expanding network of national security stakeholders.

The Spring 2025 cohort wasn't just a showcase of early-stage ambition—it was a strategic play for real-world impact.



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A Mission with Momentum

The Fuel Accelerator program welcomed 11 startups—many of them Arizona-based—focused on sectors like AI, autonomous systems, thermal imaging, materials science, and next-gen energy. Over two months, founders received targeted mentorship, connected with public sector partners, and refined their go-to-market strategies in alignment with defense acquisition paths.

“We’re not just accelerating companies, we’re accelerating outcomes,” said **Drew Trojanowski, CEO of Southwest MAC**. “This first cohort exceeded expectations, and we’re just getting started.”

Some companies arrived with contracts already in motion. Others gained critical exposure to defense buyers for the first time. All left Demo Day with new traction and a growing sense that Arizona’s tech ecosystem is poised to become a national hub for dual-use innovation.

Meet the Spring 2025 Fuel Cohort

<u>AlgoFace</u>
<u>BKPK Power</u>
<u>CI-PHER</u>
<u>Corvus Industries</u>
<u>Delta Thermal, Inc.</u>
<u>Desert Rotor</u>
<u>EigenQ</u>
<u>EnKoat</u>
<u>Pillir</u>
<u>ShadowGen</u>
<u>Valence Intelligence Systems</u>



“We’re not just accelerating companies, we’re accelerating outcomes. This first cohort exceeded expectations, and we’re just getting started.”

Drew Trojanowski
Southwest MAC



The Fuel Accelerator program welcomed 11 startups many of them Arizona-based—focused on sectors like AI.

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These founders aren't just engineers or entrepreneurs. They're problem solvers working on the front lines of both commercial industry and government service.

On the Ground at Demo Day

The atmosphere at Fuel Demo Day was electric. Investors, defense operators, technologists, and civic leaders gathered to hear pitches and many stayed afterward to build relationships and explore partnerships.

Andy Griffith, CEO of Tucson-based Delta Thermal, presented a compact thermal imaging module. "What we build is mostly invisible but it protects the things you rely on every day," he said. Their AI-powered thermal sensors are already protecting server farms, railroads, and industrial systems.

Debin Ray, founder of Desert Rotor, showed off a universal drone controller capable of interfacing with nearly any unmanned system. "We're streamlining the future of robotics and defense aviation built in Arizona, for America," he said. "We want to scale here, hire here, and help Arizona lead the charge."

Jessica Sutton, Head of Community Partnerships for SWMAC, reflected the significance of the night: "This is just the beginning. Some of these companies have been building quietly for years now they're finally being seen. That matters."

What's Next for SWMAC—and Arizona

Fuel Demo Day wasn't just a finale it was a beginning. Organizers have already hinted at a second cohort in Fall 2025, and conversations around procurement, pilot programs are already underway.

Arizona's role in the national defense innovation pipeline is only getting stronger. With institutions like SWMAC, Fuse, and the OnRamp Hub laying the groundwork, the state is fast becoming a model for how regional ecosystems can support mission-aligned innovation.



"This is just the beginning. Some of these companies have been building quietly for years now they're finally being seen. That matters."

Jessica Sutton
Southwest MAC



The program was powered in collaboration with Fuse, the Defense Innovation OnRamp Hub: Arizona

STARTUP IN RESIDENCE: INSIDE THE HACKER HOUSE

Inside the Hacker House Empowering Arizona's Next Wave of Founders

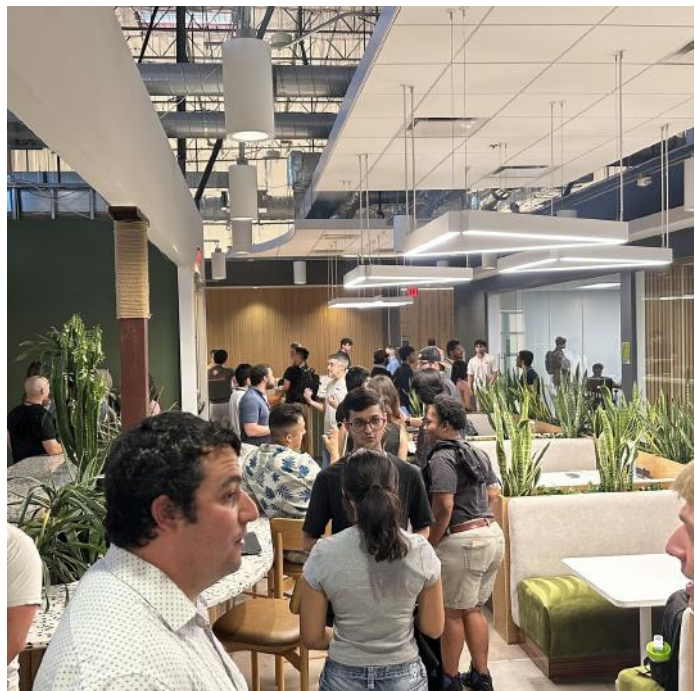
By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

From browser-native thinking tools to probiotic wellness drinks, Arizona's startup future is being shaped inside a Phoenix hacker house where founders are building, and launching under one roof.

Welcome to the Devlabs x Silicon Oasis Hacker House

What do a minimalist Chrome extension and a fermented tea have in common? They're both being built at Loloft Phoenix, inside the **Devlabs x Silicon Oasis Hacker House** a collaborative space where a handpicked group of early-stage founders are testing ideas, and building product. The model? Intentional community, and the kind of momentum only proximity can create.

We spotlight two rising Arizona founders: **Josh Groves, creator of Rite Note**, and **Mason Domecq, co-founder of Divini**. They're building in different industries — tech and wellness — but share a vision rooted in clarity, discipline, and purpose.



Silicon Oasis Community

Josh Groves: The Thought Tool You Didn't Know You Needed

If you've ever had an insight while browsing the web and immediately lost it, **Josh Groves** is building something for you. Groves is the founder of **Rite Note**, a lightweight browser-based thought tool designed to make capturing and organizing ideas frictionless. With a simple right-click, users can open a draggable, resizable note that lives directly in the browser no tab-switching, no productivity lag.

Currently in active development inside the Hacker House, Groves is leading product design, AI integration, and user testing while embracing a "build in public" philosophy. His goal isn't just to improve workflows it's to reduce mental friction and support peace of mind. As Demo Day approaches, he's clear on the path ahead: "This is exactly where I need to be."



"Everything I needed to learn, I'm learning here. The community keeps me focused and pushing toward launch."

Josh Groves
Rite Note

Mason Domecq: Wellness in a Bottle — and a Brand with a Mission

While Groves is designing tools for the mind, just across the room, **Mason Domecq** is approaching wellness from the inside out. He's the co-founder and CEO of **Divini**, a fermented honey kombucha crafted from green tea, raw honey, and a live SCOBY culture. Packed with probiotics, amino acids, and immune-boosting benefits, Divini is a smooth, flavorful drink aimed at healing the gut and inspiring the mind.

Divini is more than a drink. The brand's message built around creativity, intention, and self-actualization extends into everything from product design to community impact. Domecq recently spent a day speaking to six high school classes about entrepreneurship and personal growth. "Your gut affects your whole system from digestion to mental health. Divini supports that, but we're also here to remind people they can create the life they truly want."



Your gut affects your whole system from digestion to mental health. Divini supports that, but we're also here to remind people they can create the life they truly want.

Mason Domecq
Divini

Silicon Oasis Community



Why It Matters

The Hacker House model blends access, accountability, and acceleration offering not just a place to live and work, but a proving ground for bold ideas. In a space like this, innovation happens fast and with community.

Founders like Groves and Domecq are solving real problems in real time, with the support of mentors, peers, and partners. They're not just dreaming. They're shipping.

Powered by TOPO Advisors

This story was made possible by **TOPO Advisors**, a fractional CFO and financial strategy firm supporting early-stage startups throughout Arizona. TOPO provides FP&A, bookkeeping, and operational finance expertise, helping founders make smart decisions while staying lean and focused. We're proud to have TOPO Advisors as a founding sponsor of the Silicon Oasis News Network.

Hacker House Fast Facts

**4750 S 44th Pl, Suite 120,
Phoenix, AZ 85040**

Startups in Residence: 11

Program Length: 30 Days

Demo Day: August 15th, 2025

**Partners: Devlabs, Silicon Oasis,
TOPO Advisors**

Watch our full broadcast here:

[Hacker House Update](#)

ARIZONA STARTUP FUNDING SOARS IN Q2 2025

Arizona startups defy headwinds as Q2 funding climbs, signaling a shift from momentum to maturity.

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

Arizona's startup ecosystem is heating up. Despite macroeconomic uncertainty and tariff-related headwinds, Q2 2025 delivered a decisive uptick in venture activity both nationally and locally. Capital flowed, exits materialized, and Arizona startups continued to punch above their weight—proving this ecosystem is no longer a side note in national VC conversations.

National Snapshot

- \$69.9B invested across 4,001 deals in Q2 2025 — a sharp jump from \$49.9B across 3,819 deals a year ago.
- \$67.7B in exit value across 394 deals, making this the strongest quarter for liquidity since Q4 2021.
- Market sentiment remains “cautiously optimistic”, pointing to a reset — not yet a recovery. (Sources: NVCA, PitchBook, The Business Journals)

Behind the Numbers

Some of Arizona's biggest wins this quarter tell a compelling story about where the state is heading and why investors are paying attention.

NATIONAL SNAPSHOT

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- \$67.7B in exit value across 394 deals, making this the strongest quarter for liquidity since Q4 2021.

ARIZONA BY THE NUMBERS

- \$531.6M raised across 44 deals in Q2 2025 — up from \$344.7M across 40 deals YoY.
- A previously reported \$2.5B raise by World View Enterprises was clarified as low eight figures, led by Accel.

Investor Insights

In Pearce, Green Energy Global closed a \$211 million late-stage round to scale its renewable energy operations. Naari.ai, a women's health tech startup based in Scottsdale, raised \$100 million in a deal that while quiet on the details signals growing momentum in personalized health solutions.

Tempe's GT Medical Technologies brought in \$53.3 million to expand its work in health tech. Source Global, known for its innovative hydro panels, secured \$19.3 million. Payments startup IoniaPay raised \$14.6 million across multiple rounds.

And CND Life Sciences, developing neuro-diagnostic tools in Scottsdale, landed \$13.5 million in a Series A backed by strong regional support. These deals didn't just move the needle they confirmed it. Sectors like software, health tech, aerospace, clean energy, and defense aren't just growing they're defining Arizona's identity as an innovation economy.

Liquidity Finds a Way

The way startups are finding liquidity is shifting. The unicorn days of sky-high IPOs are mostly behind us. In their place? A new normal of down-round IPOs where companies like Chime and Hinge Health are choosing access to public markets and long-term strategy over inflated valuations.

Secondaries are stepping in as pressure valves, offering early shareholders partial exits and giving companies room to manage expectations. And early-stage rounds are stretching longer than ever, allowing founders more time to build real traction before chasing a next raise. These trends are rewriting the startup playbook and Arizona founders are adapting fast. Investors are leaning toward companies with measurable progress and compelling proof points.

ARIZONA'S BIGGEST DEALS THIS QUARTER

- \$211M – Green Energy Global (Pearce) – Renewable energy (Late Stage)
- \$100M – Naari.ai (Scottsdale) – Women's Health Tech (Undisclosed Series)
- \$53.3M – GT Medical Technologies (Tempe) – Health tech (Series D)

What This Means for Arizona Builders

Arizona is no longer just "emerging"—it's arriving. The state's innovation economy is accelerating, with founders leaning into national trends: AI, fintech, healthcare, clean energy, defense.

As capital continues to flow toward solutions aligned with future policy and market needs, Arizona startups are poised to lead with purpose and precision. With Q2's momentum, the back half of 2025 hinges on two things: **investor confidence and execution.**

Have Startup News, Founder Wins, or Funding Tips?

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info@thesiliconoasis.org

Subscribe to Silicon Oasis Magazine for exclusive interviews, deal reports, and trend forecasts from across Arizona's innovation landscape.

FROM ARIZONA TO EVERYWHERE: AIRGARAGE CLOSES \$23M SERIES B

From ASU Dorms to 38 States: How an Arizona Startup Is Modernizing the \$131B Parking Industry

By Kyle MacDonald, Editor-in-Chief

From a college side project to a nationwide infrastructure play, **AirGarage's** story is pure Arizona grit—with a national trajectory. Born in a dorm room at Arizona State University, the company was founded by students **Scott Fitsimones**, **Chelsea Border**, and **Jonathon Barkl**. What started as an idea to simplify campus parking has grown into one of the most compelling transportation-tech startups in the country.

Today, AirGarage announced a **\$23 million Series B round led by Headline Growth**, with participation from Founders Fund and Fourthline Capital. The raise brings their total funding to over \$41 million and supports a network that now spans more than 300 parking facilities across 38 states. But this milestone isn't just about scale. It's about performance.

Since their 2021 Series A, **AirGarage** has increased revenue tenfold and crossed into cash-flow positive territory a rarity in today's tighter venture capital environment.



Founding Rounds

Modernizing an Industry That Time Forgot

At its core, **AirGarage** is solving an invisible but universal problem: outdated parking infrastructure. Their vertically integrated software stack replaces clunky kiosks and scattered systems with one unified operating system for real estate owners.

The platform handles:

- License plate recognition
- Dynamic pricing
- Payments and enforcement
- Real-time analytics for landlords

The result? Smoother operations, more revenue for lot owners, and a better experience for drivers. As co-founder **Jonathon Barkl** puts it: “Most parking is still offline... You can’t optimize what you can’t see.”

Why It Matters to Arizona

AirGarage is headquartered in San Francisco now but it will always be a product of Arizona. The company cut its teeth with pilot programs in Tempe and Phoenix, and its founders are still deeply connected to the ecosystem that gave them their start.

AirGarage represents more than a win for the founders—it’s a signal to the entire region:

- Unsexy problems are often the most lucrative
- Arizona can build scalable, VC-backed software
- Our founders can go national—without losing their roots

To the **AirGarage** team: Congratulations. To the rest of us in the desert: Keep building. The next breakout story might be parking next to you.



“Most parking is still offline... You can’t optimize what you can’t see.”

Jonathan Barkl,
AirGarage



Their vertically integrated software stack replaces clunky kiosks and scattered systems .

GT MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES CLOSES \$53M SERIES D

With \$53M in new funding, GT Medical expands its life-saving brain cancer technology—and its Arizona-born mission—to hospitals nationwide.

By Kyle MacDonald, Editor-in-Chief

From a lab at **Barrow Neurological Institute** to hospitals across the country, one Arizona-born innovation is giving brain tumor patients a fighting chance and now it has \$53 million to go even further.

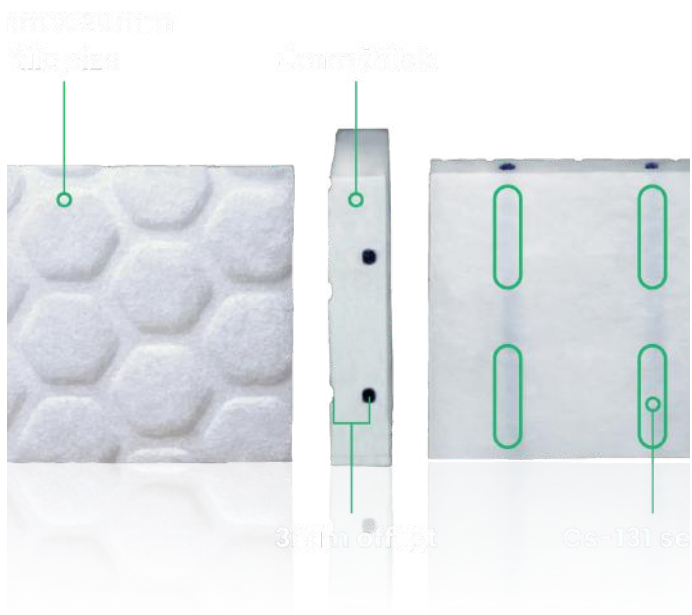
GT Medical Technologies, based in Tempe, has secured a \$53 million Series D round—including a recent \$16 million extension—to accelerate its mission to improve outcomes for patients with brain tumors. But this isn't just another medtech raise. It's a deeply personal, clinically driven effort to rewrite what's possible in brain cancer treatment.

A Tiny Tile with Life-Saving Potential

Their flagship innovation, GammaTile® Therapy, is a small, implantable radiation device designed to be placed during brain tumor removal surgery. It delivers targeted radiation directly to the surgical site immediately, when cancer cells are at their most vulnerable.



Image: GT Medical Technolo



Founding Rounds

Each **GammaTile** is placed before the incision is closed. No external machines. No weeks-long delay. Just focused radiation from day one, helping reduce the risk of recurrence while protecting healthy brain tissue.

More than 1,900 patients have already been treated at top hospitals nationwide. Now, with fresh funding in hand, **GT Medical** is accelerating its mission expanding commercial access, funding new clinical studies, and partnering with more hospitals across the U.S.

National Momentum

On July 24, **GT Medical** named **UofL Health in Louisville, Kentucky** as its latest GammaTile Center of Excellence. The designation recognizes institutions that demonstrate exceptional expertise in GammaTile procedures, meet annual case thresholds, and commit to continuous clinical education.

GammaTile is now offered at **UofL Health – Brown Cancer Center** and **UofL Hospital**, making it more accessible to patients in the region.

It's the latest in a growing national network as GT Medical partners with hospitals to bring GammaTile therapy to more communities without compromising on precision or quality of care.

Meet the Mission-Driven Founders

GT Medical was co-founded by a team of pioneers:

- **Dr. David Brachman, Radiation Oncologist and CTO**
- **Dr. Peter Nakaji, Neurosurgeon**
- **Dr. Heyoung McBride, Radiation Oncologist**
- **Theresa Thomas, Clinical Research**
- **And the late Dr. Emad Youssef, whose legacy continues to guide the company's purpose**

These founders weren't just looking to commercialize a device. They set out to solve one of neurosurgery's most persistent challenges—and improve lives in the process. This isn't just a win for GT Medical. It's a moment for Arizona's medtech ecosystem.



Increasing the size of the Series D allows us to stay focused on driving results for patients into the foreseeable future.

Per Langoe
GT Medical Technologies



GammaTile® is a tiny implant that delivers radiation during brain tumor surgery.

CODE IS JUST THE BEGINNING: YOU'RE BUILDING A BUSINESS

Why your brand, community, data, and partnerships matter more than your next feature release.

By Jonathon Chambless, Founder, LV8RLABS

For most of my career in tech, I believed what many of us were taught: build a killer product, ship fast, and everything else will fall into place. “If you build it, they will come,” right?

But that’s only half the story and it’s the half that causes most early-stage startups to stall out before they ever scale. What I’ve learned through years of trial, pivots, and pattern recognition both building my own company and advising others is this: building software creates a tool. Building assets creates a company.

The sooner you recognize that difference, the better your odds of **building something that lasts**.

The Founder's Blind Spot

In the beginning, most founders myself included channel all their energy into the product. The roadmap becomes gospel. The engineering sprint is the heartbeat. We get obsessed with features, bug tickets, and UI details.



Founders Advice

But what often gets missed is the larger business lifecycle. You can build a technically brilliant product that never finds traction. Not because it's flawed but because you never built the infrastructure around it. You didn't create the gravitational pull that makes people care.

That infrastructure? It's what I call your asset base and it's what separates software that fades from software that endures.

Brand Equity

Brand isn't your logo or color palette. It's the emotional and experiential connection customers form with your company. It's the reason someone chooses you over a competitor with identical features. It's built through consistent storytelling, trust, public presence, and values that align with your audience, and it has to be developed in parallel with your product.

Community

A thriving user base isn't just good for retention it's an ecosystem. Communities offer feedback loops, peer support, and evangelism you can't buy. At its best, community becomes a living organism user forums, Slack groups, AMAs, in-person meetups where your product is being co-shaped in real time. This asset compounds and reinforces brand loyalty in ways no marketing budget can replicate.

Proprietary Data

Data isn't just something you collect it's something you capitalize on. The startups that win don't just gather user activity logs; they extract behavior patterns, market trends, and product intelligence that no one else has. This kind of proprietary insight informs everything your roadmap, pricing, sales strategies. It becomes your secret weapon, your defensible moat.

Intellectual Property

Your code may be open-source-compatible, but your methodology doesn't have to be. Patents, proprietary



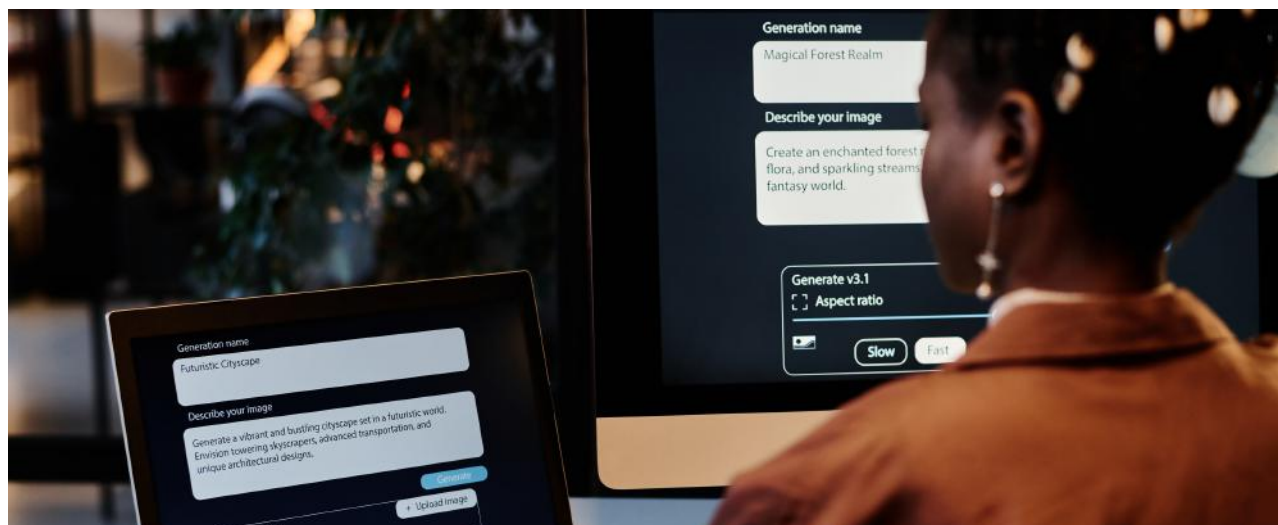
After years of building and advising, here's the truth: Software is a tool. Assets build a company.

Jonathon Chambless
LV8RLABS



IP isn't just protection—it's how you stand apart.

Founder Advice



models, unique workflows—these are assets that shape how you solve a problem differently, and why that difference matters. IP isn't just about protection. It's about positioning.

Strategic Partnerships

Whether it's enterprise integrations, API partners, or ecosystem allies, partnerships are force multipliers. They help you reach new markets, validate your solution, and create indirect sales channels. In the enterprise SaaS world, no founder can afford to go it alone. These relationships when cultivated early become an invisible asset that pays dividends at every stage.

AI Changed the Game

Historically, building these intangible assets was labor-intensive and slow. But that's no longer the case. Today, large language models (LLMs) and AI services have changed the rules for SaaS founders. These technologies allow you to:

- Generate brand-aligned content at scale
- Analyze customer feedback for actionable insight
- Create intelligent chatbots that deepen community engagement
- Building investor decks, landing pages, proposals

With the right tools, founders can now do more with less—faster than ever before. We're entering a world where early-stage companies can punch way above their headcount. Automation isn't replacing your instincts. It's supercharging them.

What This Means for Founders

At **LV8RLABS**, we still write software. But now we approach product development as one part of a broader asset-building engine.

We design every release with brand value in mind. We bake in feedback loops to deepen community. We build toward a data strategy, not just data capture. We think about our partnerships as part of the product experience itself.

Because the reality is this:

- Software gets you in the game.
- Assets keep you in business.

Founders, hear me out: if you want staying power in this new era of AI-fueled creation and digital abundance, your job isn't just to ship features. It's to build the architecture that turns your code into capital. Your startup isn't just a product. It's a system of assets. Start building like it.

WHEN THE WINDOW OPENS: TRUST, RISK, AND STARTING UP IN ARIZONA

Phoenix founder Chad Bellin reflects on the real lessons behind launching a business and why your instincts, relationships, and timing matter more than ever.

By Chad Bellin, Founder, Disica

Starting a business is terrifying. Whether you're launching from scratch or buying into something already built, it's never just a professional decision it's personal.

I've lived in Phoenix for decades. I've raised kids here. Worked jobs. Built companies. And through all of it, I've seen this truth hold steady: Arizona is still one of the best places in the world to start and grow a business.

It doesn't mean it's easy. But it means you're not crazy for wanting to try.

Where Instinct Meets Experience

Most business advice? It's generic. It's handed out by people who don't live your reality or know your industry. And too often, I've watched founders abandon their instincts because a so-called expert handed them a script. But when your startup idea comes from experience whether it's industry knowledge or long-standing passion that's your edge. You've felt the pain points. You've seen the inefficiencies. You understand what outsiders miss.



Founders Advice

Still, instinct alone won't carry you. Trust yourself—but verify. Talk to people. Inside your field and far outside it. Ask hard questions. Collect real data. And most importantly, listen to the people who take the time to have real conversations with you. Entrepreneurship isn't about chasing trends. It's about solving something real.

Just because “everything is headed toward AI” doesn't mean your solution should be. Some of the most valuable problems are the most tangled—and the least flashy.

The Difference Between Interest and Investment

Here's one of the most common early-stage mistakes: building for a problem that's interesting... but not urgent. I've seen brilliant people design beautiful products that solve “nice to have” problems—things users acknowledge, but won't pay to fix.

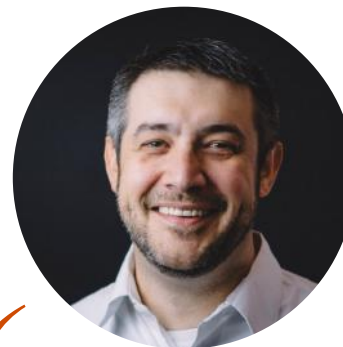
That's the trap. Don't build for applause. Build for budgets. Before you define your product or write a single line of code, identify your customer. Then go talk to them. Not with hypothetical “Would you use this?” conversations—but with real ones. Ask:

- What would you pay for this?
- Where would that budget come from?”

Those questions will tell you more than any pitch deck. And don't let competition scare you off. If it's a real, valuable problem, others will be working on it too. That's a good sign. Take the time to study them. Understand your space. Know exactly why someone would choose your solution—or choose nothing at all.

Why Relationships Are Your Real Runway

In the early days of building a company, you're often alone. Maybe it's just you and a co-founder grinding it out. Or maybe it's just you. That's where relationships matter most. Founders. Mentors. First customers. Even competitors. The connections you build will outlast your first product.



Entrepreneurship isn't just a good idea or a big trend. It's hard, deliberate work.

Chad Bellin
Disica



Relationships, not just strategy, have powered Arizona's most resilient startups.

Founder Advice



Disca was built through long hours, tested ideas, and relationships that lasted.

When we launched Disca, nearly all of our early growth came through relationships we had already built. One connection led to a key introduction. That introduction turned into a major client. And later, the referrals I made to help others came back around in ways I couldn't have predicted.

It works like this: If you want people to care about what you're building, care about them first.

That's not strategy. It's just real. In Phoenix, I've seen this truth again and again: generosity compounds. Over time, that's what builds the kind of community and company you want to be part of.

If You're Ready, Trust That

So if you're on the edge of starting or restarting here's what I've learned:

- Trust your instincts, but back them up.
- Solve a problem someone will pay to fix.
- Invest in the people who matter.

In Arizona, we're lucky. We have the space and the community to try something bold. And when the window opens, even if it feels risky... you just might be ready.

"The difference between acknowledgment and urgency is the difference between window shopping and swiping a credit card."

Chad Bellin

FROM BOOTS TO BACKEND: RETHINKING FIELD OPS GROUND-UP

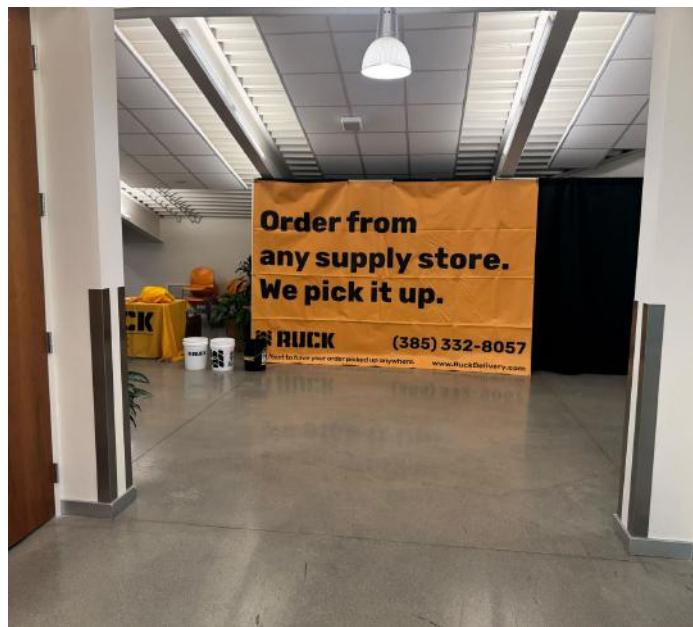
Ruck Reinvents Construction Field Ops, One Delivery and One Line of Code

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

On a scorching July morning, the jobsite had gone quiet. Crews stood idle, waiting on materials that should have arrived hours ago. Schedules unraveled, frustration grew, and the cost of delay ticked upward by the minute just another day in a system straining under its own weight.

Ryan Moorehouse wasn't there as a vendor, or a developer, or even a problem-solver not yet. He was there to listen, and in that heat and silence, surrounded by dust and downtime, he saw exactly what Ruck needed to be. "Construction runs on urgency. But the systems behind it are still built for a slower world," he said.

Before founding **Ruck**, Moorehouse spent a decade in enterprise consulting. He watched the small Chicago agency he joined scale rapidly after being acquired by Accenture growing from 800 employees to over 300,000. The software was clean, efficient, scalable.



Founder Spotlights

It just wasn't close to the ground. "You can build polished tools in enterprise," he says. But when you're 20 steps removed from the people using them, you lose touch with what actually matters."

Startups offered a different kind of challenge raw, messy, and urgent. When friends Lee and Sean pitched the idea for Ruck, Moorehouse didn't hesitate. They weren't looking to pitch an app. They wanted to roll up their sleeves and fix a problem they'd seen firsthand: last-mile chaos in the construction supply chain.

So that's what they did. They drove the trucks themselves. Made deliveries. Took phone calls in parking lots. Hauled ladders and drywall and equipment through rush hour just to get a feel for the work. Only after proving the concept did they start building the tech. "We needed to understand the job before we tried to automate it," Moorehouse says.



Ruck is still lean just under 15 employees split between Salt Lake City and Phoenix .



From dispatch to dev, Ruck's teams move as one to deliver what the construction industry demands: speed, visibility, and trust.

Today, Ruck is still lean just under 15 employees split between Salt Lake City and Phoenix , but it runs like a much larger machine. Dispatch, logistics, sales, development, and customer success teams work together to deliver exactly what the construction industry needs: speed, visibility, and trust. But it's not just about what Ruck delivers—it's how.

"Our users don't want shiny dashboards," Moorehouse says. "They want their crews to keep working and their projects to stay on schedule." That customer-first mindset shapes everything from product design to sales conversations.

Inspired by *The Mom Test*, a book that cautions founders against asking leading questions, Moorehouse steers his team away from showing off features and toward digging into customer pain. Instead of "Would this tool help?" it's "What's slowing you down right now?"

Founder Spotlights

One of his favorite moments came from a site foreman who called after a delivery. “You guys saved us today,” the man said. “I don’t even know how you pulled it off.” Moorehouse didn’t need a five-star review. That call said everything.

Ruck’s move into Arizona wasn’t just a smart market play it was personal. Co-founder Lee is a Phoenix native, and the state’s construction-heavy economy, business-friendly climate, and startup momentum made it a natural fit. But for Moorehouse, Arizona offered something more: community.

He quickly became an active voice in the local tech ecosystem, mentoring at hackathons hosted by the **Arizona Nerd Network**, and helping grow grassroots founder circles like Mighty Founders and Phoenix Forward. He now serves as an ambassador for Silicon Oasis, showing up at everything from pitch events to donut boat meetups.

“You can feel the gravity here,” he says. “People want to build and they want to build together.” That collaborative energy extends to how Ruck scales.



Ruck’s expansion into Arizona wasn’t just strategic it was personal.

The company is expanding at the pace of real demand. It’s refining its software. Piloting partnerships. Exploring ways to layer in AI especially around customer feedback and routing efficiency without losing the personal relationships that define its edge.

Moorehouse is clear about one thing: they’re not here to disrupt. They’re here to deliver better. That clarity carries over to his philosophy on startup life, too.

He talks openly about the pressures of building something from scratch and the toll it can take on your body and mind. “If you run yourself into the ground, your company will follow,” Ryan says. “

“You have to build with longevity in mind yours and your team’s.” It’s a principle he lives by. His days are built around movement, reflection, and space to breath and that rhythm carries into Ruck’s culture.

The company is still early, but it’s grounded in something sturdy: understanding over assumptions. That’s the difference, Ryan says, between software that looks good in a demo and software that actually gets used on-site.

“We’re not just delivering supplies we’re delivering momentum.”

THE MAN BEHIND THE BOTS: POWERING ARIZONA'S AI FUTURE

How Mahesh Vinayagam and qBotica Are Quietly Leading Arizona's AI Renaissance

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor

On a warm spring morning in Scottsdale, Arizona, while most executives were gearing up for another day of meetings, **Mahesh Vinayagam** was already deep in conversation with a bot.

Not just any bot. A highly trained, **qBotica** built AI assistant reviewing a tangled trail of customer service emails and suggesting optimized responses with machine precision and a touch of human empathy.

It's a moment that sums up Vinayagam vision: a world where artificial intelligence doesn't replace humans, but elevates them.

Just a decade ago, Mahesh was on a very different path wearing a suit, managing a \$300 million finance portfolio, and working in the high-stakes world of corporate outsourcing. His leap from that life into entrepreneurship, innovation, and AI leadership isn't just a story about tech. It's a story about reinvention and what it really means to bet on yourself.



Founder Spotlights

The Break Point

Born in India and educated in computer science, Mahesh began his career like many ambitious engineers: learning systems, playing by the rules. But something tugged at him early on an itch for scale, autonomy, and purpose.

After moving to the U.K. in 2000 and earning a master's in banking and finance from King's College London, Mahesh's career took off. By 2007, he had relocated to the United States for a senior role working with American Express partners in Arizona. He had a teenager at home. A steady paycheck. A comfortable life. But inside, something was cracking.

"I felt limited," he says now, seated in **qBotica's** sleek new offices. "I was solving problems but not creating anything. And deep down, I knew I could do more."

At 40, when many professionals double down on stability, Mahesh did the opposite. With no guaranteed revenue and a family depending on him, he walked away. "It wasn't reckless," he says. "It was deliberate. I wanted to build something that outlived me."

The First Year: Silence and Grit

The early days of **qBotica's** were eerily quiet. No clients. No income. Just an idea: that businesses were drowning in repetitive, low-value work and AI could fix it.

With \$1.5 million in bootstrapped funding from friends and family, Mahesh set out to build not just a product, but a philosophy: that automation could be intelligent, trustworthy, and human-first.

"People think of AI as cold," he says. "But I see it as liberating. It frees people to do the work that actually matters." Today, **qBotica's** calls itself an "automation-as-a-service" company. In simple terms: they use AI to eliminate the boring stuff.



After I quit my job, I didn't want to uproot my family. I needed stillness. And what I found here was an emerging community hungry for innovation.

Mahesh Vinayagam
qBotica



qBotica's Document AI reads the data, interprets it, and replies instantly.

Founder Spotlights

Need to process hundreds of shipping quote requests buried in messy emails? qBotica's Document AI reads the data, interprets it, and replies instantly. Need a voice-based customer support companion that sounds natural and responsive? Done. Accounting reconciliation for major insurance carriers? Covered.

The clients are responding. Forty-eight and counting, with five new ones signed in **qBotica's** best quarter to date.

Beyond Bots: The Rise of Agentic AI

But Mahesh isn't just optimizing emails. He's quietly laying the foundation for the next frontier of artificial intelligence: agentic AI. Unlike today's tools that require step-by-step prompts, agentic AI understands goals—and acts independently to achieve them.

"Imagine you're stranded at an airport," Mahesh says. "Instead of waiting on hold, your AI agent already rebooked your flight, reserved your hotel, and sent you a text explaining everything."



Forty-eight and counting, with five new ones signed in qBotica's best quarter to date.



Fueled by \$1.5M in bootstrapped support, Mahesh set out to build a philosophy—not just a product.

This isn't science fiction. It's a vision **qBotica's** is actively building toward where bots don't just follow commands, they think. It's the difference between a calculator and a concierge.

Why Arizona? Why Now?

For a company on the cutting edge of tech, Arizona might seem like an unlikely launchpad. But for Mahesh, the choice was deeply personal. "After I quit my job, I didn't want to uproot my family. I needed stillness," he says. "And what I found here was an emerging community hungry for innovation."

He's not wrong. With chip giants like TSMC investing billions in the state and universities like ASU pumping out engineering talent, Arizona's once-quiet tech sector is heating up. Mahesh believes the real work happens before the headlines.

Founder Spotlights



That's why he mentors local students, volunteers with FBLA, and teaches AI fundamentals to elementary schoolers. He even sits on ASU's Technology and Entrepreneurship Management advisory board. "We need to build tech from the roots up," he says. "Not just unicorns. Foundations."

The Power of One Coin

Mahesh often references a line from the TV show *Zero Day*: "You don't govern based on how things are. You govern based on how they could be." It's a mantra he's taken to heart. In meetings, when things feel overwhelming or delayed, he reminds his team of a simple truth: "Just move one coin forward." It's not about giant leaps. It's about momentum. Faith. Forward motion.

That same ethos is behind **qBotica's** latest innovation: Just Predict, a real-time prediction exchange platform that leverages collective insight to forecast trends, behaviors, and business decisions. "It's like combining intuition with math," Mahesh says with a grin. "And that's where the future is headed."

The Quiet Architect of a Bold Future

In a world obsessed with speed and scale, Mahesh's story is refreshingly patient. He didn't rush to raise VC capital or chase press coverage. He built. Carefully. Intentionally. Quietly.

Now, the noise is starting to catch up. Arizona may not be Silicon Valley but maybe that's the point.

Maybe the future of tech isn't just fast. Maybe it's focused. Rooted in values. Guided by people who remember why they started. And if you ask Mahesh, the revolution has already begun. You just might need to listen a little closer to hear it.

"People think of AI as cold. But I see it as liberating. It frees people to do the work that actually matters."

Mahesh Vinayagam

CHRIS CAMACHO: THE ARCHITECT OF MODERN PHOENIX

How Chris Camacho Helped Turn Greater Phoenix Into a Magnet for Innovation, Industry, and Talent

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

On a warm June morning in Phoenix, Chris Camacho stood before his team at the **Greater Phoenix Economic Council**. No fanfare. No farewell gala. Just a few final words—steady, sincere—and a quiet thank-you to the people who had helped turn a vision into reality.

After 17 years helping shape the region’s economic identity—and nearly a decade as GPEC’s President & CEO—Camacho is stepping down to begin a new chapter at Axon. But his departure isn’t just a leadership transition. It’s a moment to reflect on the transformation he helped spark.

The Blueprint Years

When Camacho joined GPEC in 2008, Arizona’s economy was at a crossroads. The housing crash had rattled the region, and its reputation as a low-cost, low-skill market lingered. Camacho saw something different: a chance to reposition Greater Phoenix as a magnet for high-value industries, global capital, and talent-driven innovation.



Featured Article

He went to work, not by chasing the biggest incentives, but by cultivating what economists call agglomeration the power of proximity. Bring companies, talent, and institutions into a shared geography, and the benefits begin to compound: more productivity, faster innovation, deeper resilience.

That vision became GPEC's compass. Under Camacho's leadership, the organization helped attract more than 1,000 companies, create over 110,000 high-quality jobs, and establish Greater Phoenix as a destination for advanced manufacturing, clean energy, fintech, health tech, and defense innovation.

Semiconductors and the Global Signal

The clearest proof of that strategy came in 2020, when TSMC announced a \$40 billion investment in a Phoenix-based semiconductor hub one of the largest foreign direct investments in U.S. history.

That deal didn't happen overnight. It was the result of years of groundwork: trust-building with international partners, investment in infrastructure, and consistent alignment between public and private sectors.

Camacho's fingerprints were all over it. His ability to unite stakeholders around long-term goals helped establish Greater Phoenix as a true semiconductor supercluster, with ripple effects reshaping everything from workforce training to national security strategy.

Backing Founders at Eye Level

But Camacho's legacy isn't just in the billion-dollar megaprojects. It's in the early-stage founders he made time for the people with more conviction than capital, working out of coworking spaces and kitchen tables.

He believed that economic resilience came from the bottom up. That entrepreneurship wasn't a niche, but a cultural identity. And that if Arizona wanted to lead, it had to invest not just in recruitment, but in its own people.



"TSMC didn't just show up. They came because the groundwork was there — the talent, the policy environment, the trust."

Chris Camacho
GPEC



Under Camacho's leadership, GPEC has attracted 1,000+ companies and 110,000 jobs.

Featured Article

“Chris never saw entrepreneurship as a sideshow,” said **Maureen Howell, GPEC’s Chief Operating Officer**. “He saw it as foundational. And he made sure the whole team did, too.

A Culture That Lasts

The team Camacho built at GPEC is one of his proudest achievements. Known nationally for its strategic rigor and collaborative culture, the organization has evolved into a model for regional economic development one that punches above its weight on the global stage.

Now, as the board launches a search for the next CEO, GPEC isn’t pausing. It’s accelerating. With deep institutional knowledge and broad regional alignment, the organization is well positioned to continue Greater Phoenix’s upward trajectory.

The Next Chapter: Innovation from the Inside

Camacho isn’t leaving the innovation space. He’s joining **Axon**, the Scottsdale-based public safety tech company known for its body cameras, AI software,



In 2020, TSMC’s \$40 billion investment in Phoenix marked one of the largest foreign direct investments in U.S. history and a defining moment for Arizona’s tech economy.



When Camacho joined GPEC in 2008, Arizona’s economy was at a crossroads.

and mission to protect life. It’s a natural next step moving from ecosystem architect to inside operator at one of Arizona’s most globally admired firms. The move keeps him close to the community he’s helped shape — and close to the edge of what’s next in civic tech, AI ethics, and connected intelligence.

What We Carry Forward

Camacho’s story is a reminder that regions don’t transform by accident. They transform because someone — or a team of someones — decides to play the long game. To build infrastructure before it’s needed. To recruit partners before there’s a headline. To believe before there’s proof.

We’ve had a front-row seat to Arizona’s transformation over the last decade. And we know Chris Camacho helped write that playbook.

So thank you, Chris for betting on this region. For uniting its leaders. And for proving that the power of agglomeration isn’t just economic. It’s human.

MEET OUR AMBASSDORS



Ville Houttu
Privv



Ryan Moorehouse
Ruck



Jason Beck
Kraus- Anderson



Joshua Hanson
ImageAid



Kyle Desousa
Koko Ni



Jasmine Bhatti
Navi Nurses



Derek Lundsten
LifeGuides



Anisia Corona
DxTx



David Schneider
Dane Health, Inc

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Heather Tugaoen
Watergenics



Jordan Fourcher
Cryo X CO



Jay Foster
Carbon Utility



Kris Saunders
Extend EV



Joseph Phillips
AIAEC International



Leah Walczak
Gemhaus



Dustin DeFrates
Geopoint Data



Bronson Hixon
Rhome



Marloes de Goeijen
NBSO Arizona

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Bill Swartz

AIVN



Peter Grob

Silicon Valley Bank



Christopher Fox

Vensure



Mahesh Vinayagam

qBotica Inc



Kelvin Tran

Solisa AI



Rob Anderson

Grape ID



Jonathon Chambless

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Blake Woodrow

Thin Air Nav



Debin Ray

Desert Rotor

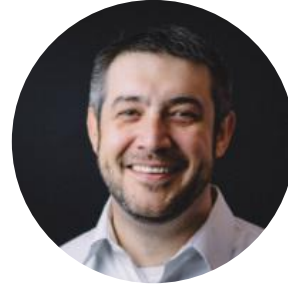
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Devize



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Luke Aschenbrand
Emblem



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Accenture

MEET OUR TEAM

Get to know the builders, storytellers, and connectors powering the Silicon Oasis movement behind the scenes.



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Editor-in-Chief



Josue Romero
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Shray Patel
Venture Research Analyst



Makaiah Gorhan
Venture Research Analyst



Josh Hanson
Venture Research Analyst






Sean Bair
Board Member

“We’re not just building stories — we’re building the community behind them. Every event, every article, every founder feature is powered by people who believe in Arizona’s future.”



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