

DANIEL LARIMER

Founder, BitShares

A Passion for Freedom—Via Decentralization

Not all that deep and hidden in his entrepreneurial heart of hearts, Daniel Larimer is a philosopher and a dreamer, identities he readily attests to in discussing an approach to life, study and work that has placed him in the forefront of the Bitcoin world, where he is known within its inner circles as “Father of the DAC.” (He originated the idea of the “decentralized autonomous company.”)

As founder and CEO of BitShares, an utterly innovative “crypto-equity” platform that he founded in 2013 (see page 14), Larimer’s passion is bound not so much by building successful companies, though that is all well and good, but by having those companies do nothing less than help change the world. He aims to do so under the guiding vision of a radically decentralized economy that reflects his own company’s mission to pursue free markets that ensure “life, liberty and property for all.”

Larimer is a Colorado native who spent his formative years in Florida and Virginia, the latter serving as his home base since graduating in computer science from Virginia Tech in 2003. Having learned computer programming from his father when still in elementary school, he turned an almost in-born techy/entrepreneurial bent into a business venture fresh out of college, when he joined a handful of buddies to launch a virtual reality company.

“We did well and made money every year, but we closed it down after five years and went on to other things,” he says. Some of those involved him writing code for unmanned ground and air vehicles, a field he later left when its military implications left him a touch uneasy.

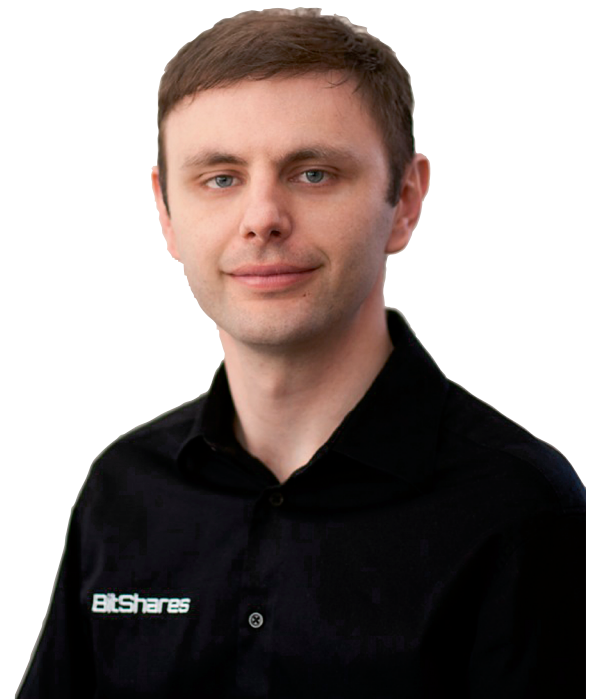
All the while, he was pursuing nothing less than what he unabashedly calls “the pursuit of truth about everything—I’ve always wanted to know what’s going on in the world and how things work.” Encounters with the Ron Paul presidential campaigns stimulated an intellectual odyssey into the depths of libertarianism, a passion that informs his unique fusion of economics, innovation, politics and the common good.

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“I believe whole-heartedly in voluntary associations and moving beyond a contract society where I’m going to get you to do X, Y or Z or I’ll get the government to point a gun at you,” he says. “Contracts always come down to government force. All that just drives costs and misery up. I want to do business on a handshake and make reputation primary, because if your reputation is damaged it’s the worst thing that can happen, and your business suffers. It’s never about coercion, but about the Golden Rule with a slight twist: ‘Don’t do unto others as you don’t want them to do unto you.’”

He points out that Bitcoin operates on basically the same premise, where, he says, “No one delivers anything by fiat.”

True to the Internet age, he discovered Bitcoin when pondering the intellectual knots attendant to decentralization of the financial sector. So he Googled “decentralized currency,” and up popped the name



“Satoshi Nakamoto,” the pseudonym for the developer of Bitcoin, whom he soon began regularly communicating with before developing his own twist on Nakamoto’s blockchain technology in the form of BitShares.

“I was trying to figure out how to create a decentralized bank,” he says, “so I had an idea and put out a bounty on the Internet, for which I’d pay \$1,000 to anyone who could convince me not to put my life savings into it. No one really could, but I paid it anyway, because there had been a lot of good questions raised. Then a few days later, I solved why my idea wouldn’t work! I was really sad, but then on June 2, 2013—I remember the day—it came to me. I discovered the key that led to one of the BitShares businesses we’re building called BitSharesX—a decentralized exchange that combines the benefits of Bitcoin with the price stability of the dollar. That has continued to lead to more exciting uses of our technology.

“Will I get where I want all this to go in my lifetime? I don’t know, but this is the first step.”

