

DEREK SIMMONS

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Executive leader with 15+ years of experience bridging human-centered principles with technological advancement. Proven track record generating \$20M+ in new revenue and leading direct teams of 60+ professionals. Specialized expertise in AI strategy, pattern recognition frameworks, and digital transformation. Adept at translating complex technical concepts into practical business value while building systems where technology enhances rather than replaces human capability. Strategic builder, coach, and teammate focused on organizational growth through ethical technology implementation.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

AI Strategy Consultant | Independent Practice

Nov. 2024–Present

Research and development in AI implementation frameworks for enterprise applications

- Developing methodologies for organizational AI strategy tailored to modern technological environments
- Creating frameworks using pattern recognition for knowledge management and productivity optimization
- Designing systems where technology serves as extension of human capability, not replacement
- Consulting on ethical AI implementation and organizational change management

Executive Director, New Products | Star Tribune Media

March 2022–Oct. 2024

Led AI strategy development and cross-departmental product innovation for 1,000+ employee organization

- Presented comprehensive AI strategic plan after extensive research, leading to AI Task Force development and enterprise-wide implementation strategy
- Created approximately \$5M+ in incremental revenue streams through innovative product solutions and strategic partnerships
- Directed cross-department product development and standards ensuring cohesive and ethical implementation across all platforms
- Led enterprise-wide initiatives impacting company operations, digital transformation, and strategic direction

Chief Creative Officer, Vice President | Star Tribune Media

Dec. 2013–March 2022

Executive leadership driving digital transformation and revenue growth through innovation

- Drove digital subscription growth to 100,000+, achieving top 6 national ranking among major metropolitan newspapers
- Pioneered franchise concept for content verticals creating \$15M+ revenue growth through innovative sponsorship model
- Led company transformation from regional impact to perennial Top 5 global ranking by Society for News Design
- Built and led high-performing teams through organizational change management, hiring 50+ journalists in 24 months
- Managed \$2M+ annual budget across multiple departments while maintaining operational excellence
- Coached and developed talent pipeline with multiple team members advancing careers internally and externally

Deputy Design Director | Los Angeles Times

April 2007–Dec. 2013

Strategic design leadership for major metropolitan newspaper during digital transition

- Maintained top global ranking for visual excellence from Society for News Design throughout tenure
- Led design innovation across editorial platforms, enhancing audience engagement and driving digital subscriptions
- Contributed to Pulitzer Prize-winning projects (2009 Explanatory Reporting; 2011 Feature Photography; 2011 Public Service)

AI RESEARCH & TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Large Language Models

1,500+ hours of research tracking capability evolution and developing enterprise applications

Process Automation

Designed solutions reclaiming 2.5 work-years annually for sales operations

AI Ethics & Training

Developed learning framework strategy and evaluated enterprise-wide AI platform partners

Human-AI Collaboration

Created approaches maintaining human judgment while leveraging machine learning capabilities

Tools & Partnerships

Technical Stack: Claude, GPT-4, Cursor, Obsidian, Notion, GitHub, Replit, Lovable, Leonardo, Runway, LTX Studio, ElevenLabs

Strategic Partnerships: Explored AI opportunities with AWS, Cohere, SAP, Skyline ATS, MuleSoft, Zeta Global, Sportradar

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Kansas State University

Bachelor of Science, Mass Communications | Managing Editor & Head of Design, Kansas State Collegian

MIT Artificial Intelligence & Data Science Program

Admitted, 2025 cohort

University of Southern California

Master of Communication Management (Admitted, 2022)

Additional Certifications

Yale University: Science of Well-Being | Leiden University: De-Mystifying Mindfulness | Poynter Institute Leadership Academy

CORE COMPETENCIES

Leadership & Strategy

- **Digital Transformation Leadership:** 10+ MVP initiatives and enterprise-wide strategies
- **Revenue Generation:** \$20M+ in new streams through innovation
- **Team Management:** Built high-performing teams of 55+ professionals
- **Strategic Planning:** Established KPIs/OKRs across multiple departments

Product & Innovation

- **Product Development:** Launched 20+ digital products with proven ROI
- **Brand Governance:** Frameworks impacting 1,000+ employees
- **Content Strategy:** Award-winning initiatives with international recognition
- **Change Management:** Led organizations through major transitions

COMMUNITY IMPACT

- **Basketball Coach:** 10+ years in Minnesota with 75% college scholarship success rate
- **Board Leadership:** President, East Ridge Athletic Association (500+ families served)
- **Advisory Roles:** Minnesota State University-Mankato Customer Experience Board | International News Media Association
- **Volunteer Commitment:** 75+ hours annually supporting academic and non-profit organizations