

Michael Sachs

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I am a data scientist, physicist and designer who is interested in the stories data can tell. I have led teams, been part of technology start-ups, and consulted with companies both large and small. My work has been published in scientific journals, covered by the popular science press, and I have given talks at scientific conferences in Hawaii, Singapore, San Francisco, Santa Fe and New York. I studied physics at Columbia University and the University of California, Davis, and visual design at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am a NASA Earth and Space Science fellow and a Santa Fe Institute Complex Systems Summer School alumni, and most recently, the head of Product at FLYR in San Francisco.

Technologies

Languages

Python and SQL are my languages of choice. I've worked with: JavaScript, C, C++, HTML, CSS, Java, php, CQL, bash shell scripting, Objective C, IDL, Mathematica, MatLab, lisp, and ActionScript.

Applications, Modules and Libraries

My most recent experience is with: Spark, Databricks, Numpy, Scikit-learn, Keras, Scipy, Pandas, MySQL/PostgreSQL, Google BigQuery, Matplotlib, Jira, and Confluence. In the past I have used: SQLAlchemy, Celery, Cassandra, Redshift, D3.js, Boto, Flask, HDF5, Django, JQuery, PIL, Ajax, Hadoop, WordPress, MPI, Mathematica, HEALPix, GeoFEST, LaGrIT, Polspice,

Cloud Platforms

Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud Platform

Professional Experience

FLYR

Head of Product

April 2019 to April 2020

- Defined and implemented FLYRs product strategy.
- Delivered a single airline revenue management platform that uses an LSTM neural network deployed on Google AI Platform to generate daily ticket prices for thousands of flights across multiple airlines.
- Developed a product measurement strategy, designed to handle the many confounding effects of measuring the success of revenue management systems. This measurement strategy was instrumental in smooth product roll-outs for three of FLYRs core customers.
- Managed the FLYR product, program and data science teams. A total of 22 people in locations in San Francisco, Krakow Poland, and Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

FLYR

Head of ML Ops

November 2018 to April 2019

- Created the charter, defined the roadmap, and managed the work of the ML Ops team at FLYR - a hybrid team of data scientists and engineers whose purpose was to create a platform to enable FLYR to deliver data science products at scale to multiple airline customers.
- Designed the system architecture for FLYRs production inference pipeline.

Radius Intelligence

Data Science Manager

March 2017 to October 2018

- Built a team of data scientists engaged in expanding and exploring The Network of Record: the most accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date B2B data.
- Led initiatives to deliver business value from first-party data provided by Radius customers. Major projects in this space include models and processes to perform phone and email validation, and net-new contact validation.

- Provided technical leadership and hands on modeling and coding work for Radius's updated matching framework. The new framework allowed fast iteration on model code which enabled the data science team to drive performance improvements to matching precision and recall.
- Defined data science as a discipline and scoped out roles and responsibilities for data scientists. Created a series of levels to provide opportunities for career growth for data scientists.
- Consolidated data science into a single unit within the engineering organization. Developed processes for how data science interacted with both the engineering and product organization.

Discovery Digital Networks

Director of Data Science and Technology

September 2014 to March 2017

- Designed and built a robust data science platform using python, redshift and distributed EC2 instances, to support data collection, distribution and analysis across multiple Discovery Communications brands including: The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet and The Science Channel. At its peak this platform was ingesting and analyzing over 500 million rows of data per day.
- Led a group of software architects, web engineers, and apps engineers in implementing and maintaining a suite of online properties with a total of approximately 2 million unique users per month and a data collection, reporting and analytics infrastructure storing information about tens of thousands of video assets across dozens of distribution platforms.
- Created flexible data dashboards which delivered performance data on hundreds of distribution sources including YouTube channels, Facebook pages, owned and operated web sites, and Freewheel ad services.
- Directed the design, implementation, and deployment of a modern RESTful web architecture, using Lumen, React and Node.js, which replaced an 8 year old legacy PHP framework. The finished architecture more than halved the page delivery and rendering time, and resulted in vastly improved stability and development time.
- Led the migration of all of Discovery Digital Networks web and data infrastructure to Amazon Web Services.
- Led the successful development and deployment of seekernetwork.com, an online video network featuring original content focused on travel and adventure.

Discovery Digital Networks

Data Scientist

April 2014 to September 2014

- Developed a time-series forecasting algorithm based on the notion of a directed random walk, and designed to predict 12 months of video distribution network performance. The results of this algorithm were deployed corporate dashboards and used to report predicted financial performance.
- Created and deployed a forecasting algorithm to predict the 30 day performance of new videos for use in setting advertising prices. Five days after a video had been published, 95% of the algorithms predictions were within 10% of the actual 30 day view totals.
- Using machine learning classification algorithms, developed and deployed a tool that used past video performance to help producers create better video titles. The tool automatically selected the best algorithm and external parameters, and created new models daily. The best case model guessed the correct answer around 80% of the time, while the worst case was still better than chance at around 56%.
- Created a process which continuously polls the YouTube and Facebook APIs to collect high-frequency view data for all published videos under 30 days old. The resulting data is stored in a Cassandra database and allows producers and audience development to react quickly to ensure videos success.
- Developed RESTful API endpoints using Python and Flask to deliver all analytics data to end users and applications.

Department of Physics, University of California, Davis

Researcher

April 2008 to April 2014

- Working under Professors John Rundle and Donald Turcotte, developed, extended and analyzed Virtual California, a computer simulation of the earthquake fault systems in California

and analyzed the results of the Regional Earthquake Likelihood Models earthquake forecasting results.

- Working under Professor Steve Carlip, developed a method of testing various properties of 2+1-dimensional spacetimes which emerge from causal dynamical triangulations, a lattice approach to approximating the gravitational path integral.
- Working under Professor David Wittman, analyzed weak gravitational lensing observations using wavelet techniques.

Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Columbia University

Research Assistant

May 2006 to September 2006

- Modeled the effects of dust contamination on Wolter type x-ray optics.
- Presented preliminary results at Columbia University's "Astrofest" in September 2006.

Mikesachs.com

Founder/Principal

January 2005 to September 2007

- Created compelling web experiences for a diverse set of organizations.
- Successful completion of five major projects for a variety of organizations including the New York Ad Club and Fountain House.
- Enabled small organizations to take control of their web presence.
- Collaborated with designers and subcontractors to deliver on client requirements.

Weill Cornell Medical College/NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital

Senior Web Designer

June 2002 to January 2005

- Led the successful completion of over 30 websites for both Weill Cornell Medical College and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital.
- Led the development of institutionalized IT project management within Weill Cornell Medical College.
- Improved the web development process by integrating project management, source control and reusable design components.
- Collaborated with NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital marketing and Weill Cornell Medical College directors to solve business problems on the web.
- Supported Weill Cornell Medical College Geriatric Division in completing grant audits.

Xperts Inc.

Creative Director

March 1997 to June 2002

- Designed and implemented user interface strategies for over 30 companies in market sectors ranging from healthcare and education to broadband and packaged consumer goods.
- Led an award-winning team of designers and user interface engineers through mentoring, selective hiring, and the development of management systems.
- Guided the development of Xperts software design methodology in collaboration with other company executives.
- Facilitated the acquisition of new business by developing sales strategies, project estimates and bid presentations.
- Directed the organizational wide acceptance of new user interface and design technologies.

Letterbrain.com

Co-founder

May 1999 to October 2000

- Partner and co-creator of an Internet-based business conceived to leverage web technologies in easing the process of traditional paper-based correspondence.
- Designed and developed an innovative WYSIWYG letter writing web interface using Flash 4 and Generator 2.
- Created the visual identity for the Letterbrain.com brand.

Education

University of California, Davis

Completed physics PhD, 2013

- Adviser: Professor John B. Rundle
- Area of Study: Computational physics and complex systems
- Previous Adviser: Professor Steve Carlip
- Previous Area of Study: Quantum gravity
- Course work completed with a 3.87 GPA

Columbia University

- Completed undergraduate physics curriculum, 2007
- 3.99 GPA

Virginia Commonwealth University

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Graphic Design, School of the Arts, 1995

- Tied for #1 public university school of arts and design in the country (#4 among public & private institutions) by U.S. News & World Report (2015).
- 3.24 GPA