

Michael Sachs

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I am a data scientist, physicist and visual 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 the product and program org at FLYR in San Francisco.

Technologies

Languages

python, C, C++, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Java, php, SQL, CQL, bash shell scripting, Objective C, IDL, Mathematica, MatLab, lisp, ActionScript

Applications, Modules and Libraries

Spark, Databricks, Numpy, scikit-learn, scipy, celery, SQLAlchemy, MySQL, Cassandra, Redshift, D3.js, boto, EC2, Flask, HDF5, Django, Matplotlib, JQuery, PIL, Ajax, Hadoop, WordPress, MPI, Mathematica, HEALPix, GeoFEST, LaGriT, Polspice,

Operating Systems

Mac OS X, Linux, Windows

Professional Experience

FLYR

Head of Product and Program April 2019 to Present

- Work with FLYR executives and customer stakeholders to define FLYRs product strategy.
- Lead the delivery of FLYRs FusionRM application suite to multiple major airlines.
- Lead FLYRs product and program management team.
- From November 2019 on, lead FLYRs data science team.

FLYR

Data Science Manager/Product Owner Data Science Platform November 2018 to April 2019

- As product owner of the FLYR data science platform, collaborated with business and tech leaders to define a platform designed to deliver data science products to FLYR customers at scale.
- Led a team of data scientists and engineers in building and deploying the FLYR data science platform.

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.
- 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.

- 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.

Discovery Digital Networks

Director of Data Science and Technology

February 2016 to March 2017

- Created 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.
- Working with stakeholders at Discovery corporate, advised a company wide data working group tasked with creating a corporate data strategy.
- Analyzed the performance impact of new products on Facebook and YouTube.
- Led the competitive analysis of potential corporate acquisitions.
- 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.
- Developed a time-series forecasting algorithm based on the notion of a directed random walk, and deployed the results of this algorithm to corporate dashboards.

Discovery Digital Networks

Director of Technology and Data

September 2014 to February 2016

- 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.
- 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 enterprise level software designed to collect and process video usage data across multiple distribution channels. This software reliably collects daily data from over two gigabytes of log files and over 30,000 api calls and consolidates it into a single data warehouse.
- Created a forecasting algorithm to predict the 30 day performance of new videos, and processes to produce daily forecasts for all videos under 30 days old. After 15 days, 95% of the predictions made by the algorithm were within 10% of the actuals.
- Using machine learning categorization algorithms, developed a tool that uses past video performance to help producers create better video titles. The tool automatically selects the best algorithm and external parameters, and creates 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

- Web Project Manager/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/Lead Designer 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