

Donald Butts

Westport, CT 06880
www.linkedin.com/in/donaldbutts

585.315.1137
donald.butts@gmail.com

Emerging Technology Executive | Building Ecosystems & New Ventures

Bridging Technology & Business to Unlock Scale

Shaping deep tech strategy from the CTO's office, leading \$17M–\$80M R&D portfolios and partnering with startups, academic labs, and founders to translate emerging technologies into new ventures. Proven track record in **investment thesis development**, **early-stage partnerships**, and **ecosystem building**. Leverage **foresight** to uncover **overlooked technologies** and translate them into **scalable business outcomes**.

Investment Diligence | Strategy & Roadmaps | Partnerships | Scouting | Ecosystem Development

Venture & Advisory Experience

TSAI CENTER AT YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, CT, **Startup Mentor**

Guide startups on product strategy, go-to-market planning, and scaling.

MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC VENTURES, San Jose, CA, **Entrepreneur-in-Residence**

Advised on strategic investments in space and mobility technologies resulting in a decentralized positioning system proposal.

OUTTHINKER NETWORK, Remote, **Member**

Exchange insights and drive strategic innovation in invitation-only network with other Chief Strategy Officers and senior executive intrapreneurs.

Professional Experience

NOKIA, New York, NY

Head of Emerging Technologies

04/2025 – Present

Lead strategy, research, and ecosystem development for Nokia Technologies' Future of Computing and Device initiatives. Building a cross-disciplinary research team to conduct foundational deep tech research, drive technology roadmaps, and generate high-value intellectual property (IP) in next-generation architectures.

Head of Technology Scouting

01/2024 – Present

Oversee technology scouting, strategy, and operations for the CTO, managing external partnerships with startups, universities, and consortia to accelerate new business opportunities via partnerships and acquisitions.

- **Developed theses** and **sourced partnerships** across 15+ emerging tech areas, (quantum, physical AI) driving, **M&A diligence**, **VC partnerships** and **startup engagement** culminating in the launch of an **Emerging Technologies Center of Excellence**.

INTERDIGITAL, New York, NY

Senior Director, Strategy

01/2019 – 12/2023

Led an \$80M R&D portfolio across Wireless, Video, and AI, optimizing R&D across 300+ engineers and driving strategic expansion as a direct report to the CTO.

- Spearheaded strategic technology initiatives that contributed to a 43% revenue increase (\$319M to \$458M), leading to LexisNexis Top 100 Most Innovative Companies recognition (2022, 2023).
- Integrated **\$475M Technicolor acquisition** into CTO organization, expanding global engineering capabilities and strengthening market positioning in next-gen media and AI-driven applications.
- Built **key partnerships** that drove innovation in 6G, AI, and Synthetic Media, collaborating with University of Texas (6G@UT), Carnegie Mellon (Synthetic Media and Human-Computer Interaction), and Plug and Play (AI & Gaming partnerships). Research was shortlisted for a CSI Award and influenced next-gen monetization strategies.

HARMAN INTERNATIONAL, a Samsung Company, Stamford, CT

Director, Strategy

10/2016 – 01/2019

Spearheaded company-wide technology strategy as a direct report to the CTO, managing a \$17M R&D portfolio. Accelerated innovation and growth from \$4.4B to \$8.2B, supporting the value creation that led to Harman's \$8B acquisition by Samsung.

HARMAN INTERNATIONAL (continued)

- Led product technology strategy, launching innovations featured at CES, CNET, and TechCrunch, with adoption in 25M+ vehicles worldwide, advancing Harman's leadership in automotive and consumer audio technology.
 - Developed the industry's first Augmented Audio technology (ML-powered ambient sensing) and Harman's first Driver Monitoring System, now branded as Ready Care.
- **Led thesis development and technical diligence** for startup investments and acquisitions across connected car and consumer electronics; partnered with Samsung venture teams to shape the pipeline around opportunities.
- **Directed technology diligence and post-acquisition integration** for multiple strategic deals, including Symphony Teleca, inOnroad, and Yurbuds, ensuring alignment with roadmaps.

Senior Manager, Open Innovation

07/2015 – 10/2016

Directed product strategy from concept to launch through partnerships with Indiegogo, Quirky, Ford, Microsoft, Textron, and others.

- Co-developed wearable audio products by partnering with Indiegogo for user-driven feedback and Quirky for crowdsourced innovation, accelerating go-to-market with community-led product design.

Manager, Strategy

01/2015 – 07/2015

Supervised strategic foundation and integration of technology initiatives. Organized cross-divisional efforts in product innovation, roadmap consolidation, and M&A evaluations to drive cohesive growth and market leadership.

- Accomplished 1st cross-divisional technology roadmaps, harmonizing core technologies across multiple products, instrumental in guiding strategic acquisitions and maximizing market competitiveness.

Strategist

01/2013 – 01/2015

Defined HARMAN's consumer, professional, and automotive technology strategies as a subject matter expert in audio. Headed project portfolio investment, prioritization, direction, and long-range planning of initiatives.

- Identified new technologies and business opportunities, redefined development processes, and coordinated with key business stakeholders, delivering changes to product roadmaps, enhancing R&D investments and initiative prioritization, and aligning with market trends and technological advancements.

SIKORSKY AIRCRAFT, Stratford, CT**Acoustics Engineer**

05/2005 – 01/2013

Directed R&D across major aircraft programs, including the \$3B CH-53K Navy program, by creating technology roadmaps, defining system requirements, and leading multi-year R&D with NASA, academia, and industry partners.

- Awarded 1st Prize in the Northeast American Helicopter Society Lichten Competition for pioneering a novel regression-based prediction methodology, optimizing aircraft design for enhanced acoustic performance.

Education

- **Master of Business Administration (MBA)**, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
- **Master of Engineering (MEng)**, Acoustics, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
- **Bachelor of Science (BS)**, Aerospace, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Certificates

- Executive Certificate in Economics of Blockchain & Digital Assets, University of Pennsylvania
- Executive Certificate in AI Implications for Business Strategy, MIT Sloan School of Management
- Flying Car Nanodegree, Udacity
- Executive Certificate in Accelerating Change Readiness, University of California, Berkeley
- Machine Learning, Stanford University on Coursera
- Executive Certificate in Management & Leadership, MIT Sloan School of Management
- Executive Certificate in Strategy & Innovation, MIT Sloan School of Management
- Certificate in Strategic Management, Indiana Kelley School of Business