DONALD BUTTS

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Strategy Executive

Translating Emerging Technology into Investment Strategy, Go-to-Market Execution, and Commercial Reality

Technology strategy executive with 20+ years driving revenue growth and market expansion across aerospace, automotive, consumer electronics, telecommunications, and advanced technology. Track record includes **managing $17M–$80M global R&D budgets, contributing to 43% revenue growth and an $8B acquisition, launching products now deployed in 25M+ vehicles, and supporting $1B+ in M&A diligence and integration.**

Career built on leveraging foresight to uncover overlooked technologies before they become obvious and building the product strategy, market intelligence, and executive alignment needed to capitalize on them. Brings a rare combination of deep technical and senior business leadership, partnering directly with executive teams on multi-year strategy direction, go-to-market execution, and ecosystem development.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Portfolio Management • Go-to-Market Strategy & Execution • Partnerships & Ecosystem Development
Product & Technology Roadmap • Market Research & Competitor Analysis • Executive Stakeholder Engagement
Cross-Functional Team Leadership • M&A Diligence • Operations Leadership

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Silicon Foundry, a Kearney Company | *New York, NY*

Venture Partner *06/2026 – Present*

Lead investment diligence across quantum computing, AI, and edge computing opportunities on behalf of corporate and institutional clients, owning the technology diligence, product-market fit analysis, and adoption timing.

Nokia | *New York, NY*

Head of Emerging Technologies *01/2024 – 06/2026*

Built Nokia Technologies' emerging technology function from the ground up within the CTO Office, establishing the operating model, investment review governance, and $35M R&D portfolio to identify and develop next-generation platform opportunities across quantum networking, AI, advanced computing, and next-generation device and network infrastructure.

- Stood up the CTO Office emerging technology practice including investment review cadences and resource allocation processes, balancing near-term commercial priorities with long-horizon platform bets across quantum, AI, and 6G.
- Led market research, competitor analysis, and customer insight across 15+ emerging technology domains, translating findings into product direction, M&A pipeline, and ecosystem partnership decisions presented to executive stakeholders.
- Conducted investment diligence and customer discovery on quantum computing and quantum networking companies, evaluating product-market fit, enterprise adoption pathways, and go-to-market readiness for potential partnership and acquisition targets including engagements with leading quantum hardware and networking players.
- Built an AI-assisted market intelligence capability using semantic clustering to surface protocol, interoperability, and platform-layer opportunities ahead of the market, informing roadmap and investment decisions.

InterDigital | *New York, NY*

Senior Director, Strategy *01/2019 – 12/2023*

Led product strategy and investment direction for an $80M R&D portfolio across wireless, video, and AI as a direct strategic partner to the CTO. Defined what to build, how to position it for market, and how to align the roadmap to commercial and revenue targets. Represented technology roadmap and product vision externally to customers, partners, and investors.

- Defined and executed product strategy and go-to-market plans with full revenue alignment, contributing to 43% revenue growth ($319M to $458M) and LexisNexis Top 100 Most Innovative Companies recognition (2022, 2023).
- Co-founded the 6G@UT Research Center at the University of Texas as a founding industry partner alongside AT&T, Qualcomm, Nvidia, and Samsung, quoted in the launch press release; research directly influenced next-generation product and monetization strategy.
- Drove portfolio optimization across 300+ engineers, reallocating investment to high-conviction platform bets in 6G, synthetic media, and AI-driven human-computer interaction.
- Directed integration of the $475M Technicolor acquisition into the CTO organization, aligning roadmaps, go-to-market plans, and engineering capabilities.
- Established strategic research partnerships with Carnegie Mellon (Synthetic Media and 6G) and Plug and Play (Gaming, Video and Media Technologies).

Harman International, a Samsung Company | *Stamford, CT*

Director, Strategy *10/2016 – 01/2019*

Spearheaded company-wide technology strategy and new product management from the CTO Office, managing a $17M R&D budget across a high-growth environment scaling from $4.4B to $8.2B in revenue. Led strategic initiatives that contributed to the value creation behind Samsung's $8B acquisition.

- Ready Care: Led end-to-end product management for Harman's first Driver Monitoring System from concept through CES launch and OEM commercialization and now deployed in 25M+ vehicles worldwide as an industry-standard driver safety platform.
- Augmented Audio: Drove product management for the industry's first ML-powered ambient sensing audio system, adapting sound in real time based on environment, launched at CES and adopted across Harman's automotive and consumer portfolio.
- Led voice-of-customer discovery with lead customers including Hendricks Motorsports, Cessa, and UnderArmour to validate early-stage product concepts across automotive, aviation and sports markets. Translated direct customer insights into product requirements and go-to-market positioning for branded headsets, active noise cancellation and headphones.
- Conducted technical M&A diligence and post-acquisition integration for Symphony Teleca ($780M), TowerSec ($70M), and other strategic deals, ensuring alignment with product roadmaps and platform strategy.
- Partnered with Samsung NEXT and Catalyst Fund and led thesis development to source and shape investment pipeline across connected car and consumer electronics.

Senior Manager, Open Innovation | Manager, Strategy | Strategist *01/2013 – 10/2016*

- Built the first cross-divisional product roadmaps across Harman's automotive, consumer, and professional audio portfolio, guiding strategic acquisitions and market positioning.
- Established Quirky and Indiegogo open innovation partnerships producing SoundWear, a wearable companion speaker developed from community-driven design and launched as a direct-to-consumer product; featured in CNET as a pioneering corporate-crowdsourcing model.
- Selected for Ford's Supplier-in-Residence program at Ford Design Studio, embedding Harman's technology roadmap into Ford's next-generation connected vehicle architecture.

Sikorsky Aircraft | *Stratford, CT*

Systems and Acoustics Engineer *05/2005 – 01/2013*

- Led systems engineering and acoustics on the $3B CH-53K Navy program; awarded 1st Prize, Northeast American Helicopter Society Lichten Competition for novel acoustic prediction methodology.
- Managed government customer interface, translating system-level requirements into engineering commitments; directed supplier management across component definition and system integration validation.
- Established multi-year acoustic technology pipeline with UTC Research Center, NASA, and university partners, developing the long-range roadmap for next-generation rotorcraft platforms.

VENTURE AND ADVISORY EXPERIENCE

Tsai Center, Yale University | Startup Mentor
Advise early-stage founders on product strategy, go-to-market timing, and technology positioning; several portfolio companies have raised venture capital.

Outthinker Network | Member
Exchange insights and drive strategic innovation in invitation-only network with other Chief Strategy Officers.

Mitsubishi Electric Ventures | Entrepreneur-in-Residence
Developed new venture concepts in space-enabled mobility and decentralized positioning systems.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

- ClusterFunk Research: Author of AI-assisted semantic clustering and Bass diffusion modeling framework mapping emerging technology landscapes and adoption curves. Published at medium.com/@donald.butts
- Industry Engagement and Press: Founding industry partner quoted in 6G@UT Research Center launch (alongside AT&T, Qualcomm, Nvidia, Samsung); work featured through Omdia, CES, Mobile World Congress, CNET, AHS, and SAE.
- Patent and Publications Portfolio: Inventor and co-author across acoustics, human-computer interaction, wireless systems, and aerospace. Google Scholar: scholar.google.com/citations?user=Ke2YWDEAAAAJ

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration (MBA), Marketing, University of Connecticut | IBM Watson AI Use Case Project
Master of Engineering (MEng), Acoustics, Pennsylvania State University
Bachelor of Science (BS), Aerospace Engineering, Pennsylvania State University

CERTIFICATES

Leadership & Strategy:

- Executive Certificate in Accelerating Change Readiness, University of California, Berkeley
- 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

Technical:

- 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
- Machine Learning, Stanford University on Coursera