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20 of the hottest enterprise startups of 2019 founded by former Google employees

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Transposit; RealityEngines.AI; Lucidchart; Coda; Yutong Yuan/Business Insider

- Former Google employees, known as Xooglers, are founding and leading some of the hottest enterprise software and services startups around.
- They've taken what they've learned about running one of the world's biggest tech companies and have launched startups to bring those lessons to other businesses.
- Companies in industries like artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and robotics may see their foreign investments rejected by the US government on the grounds of national security.

After working at one of the largest tech companies in the world, many Googlers get the itch to leave and start their own companies.

Google even has its own name for former Googlers. They're known as Xooglers.

The Xooglers who have founded enterprise companies worked in Google Cloud, YouTube, Google Drive, and other functions at the company, they told Business Insider.

They point to various things they learned at Google that they bring to their companies today. Some mentioned its transparency at Google's Friday meetings, where employees can ask any question they want. Others mentioned culture that encourages people to be entrepreneurial and create side projects. And many said that the scale of the company encouraged them to think larger as well.

Business Insider spoke to people throughout the enterprise industry to track down some of the key Google alumni who made the jump into entrepreneurship. We also researched each startup's total funding and valuations via Crunchbase and Pitchbook, the databases that tracks such metrics. Here are 20 buzzy enterprise startups founded by former Googlers, ranked by valuation.

Productiv cofounder and CEO Jody Shapiro



Jody Shapiro, co-founder and CEO of Productiv Productiv

Company: Productiv

What it does: Helps companies with their IT questions and analyzes how employees are using the IT tools and apps available to them.

Total raised: $8 million

Valuation: n/a

Productiv launched out of stealth in April.

Back when co-founder and CEO Jody Shapiro was at Google, he led Google Analytics. Now he does something similar with Productiv, which helps companies with their IT questions and analyzes how employees are using the IT tools and apps available to them.

For instance, Productiv can help IT departments figure out which applications their companies should license on an enterprise level.

"Many companies are having Microsoft Teams vs. Slack question," Shapiro said. "They're trying to understand which tool is right for them. Both tools offer a related but different thing. We look to see, does anything actually change in terms of usage of the team's products?"

One thing Shapiro says he brought from Google is to set aggressive goals, similar to Google's moonshots.

He's also brought some elements of Google's collaborative environment to Productiv, like a weekly meeting to keep everyone on the same page and allow employees to ask him questions, and he emphasizes mentorship among employees.

"The recognition that investing in others really does pay off significantly," Shapiro said. "People invest in each other. That's something we internalize."

Node cofounder and CEO Falon Fatemi



Falon Fatemi, co-founder and CEO of Node Node

Company: Node

What it does: An AI service that helps companies make smarter decisions about how to engage with customers, employees, investors, and partners.

Total raised: $36 million

Valuation: n/a

Falon Fatemi, cofounder and CEO of Node, started working at Google when she was 19 years old. At the time, she says, she was the youngest employee there.

She worked on global expansion at Google for four years, and then on YouTube business development and partnerships for two years. After that, she joined a startup called Firespotter Labs before starting Node.

Google "changed a lot while I was there. I reached a point in my career where I learned an incredible amount," Fatemi said. "When I jumped into the startup world, I was the first non-engineering hire. I learned more in the first three months than I did in the last four years."

She decided to start Node after she had to make many introductions between people, companies, and resources. That's when she realized she wanted to find a way to make these connections more productive and at a larger scale.

"We're enabling that," Fatemi said. "Ultimately it will be game changing for their end customer."

She says that the key thing she learned at Google was making decisions based on data. Whenever the company wanted to make a major decision, it would go through different potential scenarios and come up with corresponding plans.

In addition, she says, Google emphasized the notion of analyzing everything.

"You don't want to reinvent the wheel," Fatemi said. "You're constantly asking why. They encourage you to question why are we doing things this way. It's really focusing on having that line of questioning around the details that matter."

Coda cofounders Alex DeNeui and Shishir Mehrotra



Coda cofounders Alex DeNeui and Shishir Mehrotra Coda

Company: Coda

What it does: Creating a new type of document that combines the power of word documents, spreadsheets, and apps.

Total raised: $60 million

Valuation: n/a

Coda was founded by former Googlers Shishir Mehrotra and Alex Deneui who are working on a new type of document that combines the power of word documents, spreadsheets, and apps.

For example, users can collaborate on documents and customizable tables then add functionality to their document, like emailing a time sheet or nudging a coworker on Slack.

Previously, Mehrotra, the CEO, was the vice president of product at YouTube. He worked at Google for over six years, starting his career in the now defunct TV advertising business Google TV. He spent most of his time at Google in YouTube, where he was one of the top leaders. Before Susan Wojcicki became YouTube's boss, he was said to have been a likely candidate for that CEO position. Mehrotra also serves on Spotify's board of directors.

As for Deneui, the CTO, he was a software engineer for Google Drive and YouTube before he started Coda. He led his team to develop the first version of Google Drive and improve YouTube's homepage.

"There has been an explosion of productivity tools, but we are still doing the majority of our work on the same technology built two decades ago. In this networked age, we need tools that are collaborative and open. Coda is just that, allowing teams to build a doc as powerful as an app," Greylock partner John Lilly, who invested in Coda, previously told Business Insider.

Armis cofounder and CTO Nadir Izrael



Nadir Izrael, co-founder and CTO of Armis Armis

Company: Armis

What it does: Helps companies manage the devices on their networks and eliminate security threats

Total raised: $112 million

Valuation: n/a

Nadir Izrael joined Google right out of service from the Israeli army. While he was at Google, he worked on auto-complete, the service that makes suggestions as you type your search term.

"It was probably one of the coolest projects that was happening at the time," Izrael told Business Insider. Today he's the cofounder and CTO of Armis.

The experience taught him to think big when building tech. "You need to really think about the core of how to solve this for everyone," he said.

Although Izrael says he enjoyed working at Google and loved its culture, he always knew he wanted to build something from scratch.

"The product that you touch [at Google] touches the lives of millions of people," Izrael said. "The primary thing is just the feeling of how badly does Google need me vs. how badly do I need Google? If I left today, would Google suffer from it? The answer is probably not. I wanted to start something and breathe life into it and watch it grow."

So he co-founded a company that secures connected devices. He was inspired to tackle this area because he saw people using more connected devices but IT departments didn't always monitor what was on their networks.

With Armis, he's got 140 people, his employees, who believe in a common mission, which can be difficult to form inside a large company like Google. And things are going well, he says; annual revenue has grown over 700%.

"We want to be growing to a point where there's no device in the world that we don't know about," Izrael said.

Lucidchart cofounder and CEO Karl Sun



Lucidchart CEO and co-founder Karl Sun Lucidchart

Company: Lucidchart

What it does: A visual workspace that allows people to collaborate on diagrams and data visualization.

Total raised: $114 million

Valuation: n/a

Karl Sun, co-founder and CEO of Lucidchart, says he didn't originally have plans to start a company, but he stumbled into it.

His company develops a visual workspace that allows people to collaborate on diagrams and data visualization. Originally, Lucidchart started off as just a diagramming application, where people used it to make charts for presentations and reports.

But now it's also a tool to help people visualize complicated systems and processes they may encounter at work. For example, developers may use it to map out the applications they deployed on cloud computing services or to monitor how much bandwidth they're using.

"Whether you're in marketing or PR or sales or engineering, the number of applications and tools you use is exponentially larger than before," Sun said. "It's hard to understand and grapple with all

you're working with. Our goal is to help you see and understand the system that you're working with and see and understand the data in those systems."

After serving in various roles at Google, including in business development, patents, and opening a business in China, Sun felt that it was time to move on and try something new.

"I always liked doing something new and different and being part of a smaller team at Google," Sun said. "When I joined, it was 600 people. That was a lot more fun than when it got to several thousand or 10,000 people. I left in part because it was time -- time to find a new challenge and something interesting to do."

When Sun moved to Utah, he met cofounder Ben Dilts, who at the time was still a computer science student. Dilts built the first version of Lucidchart because his startup needed a better way to create diagrams.

"I saw the product and fell in love," Sun said. "In many ways, it was a much better user experience than even Google's text-based applications like Docs and Slides."

In 2010, Sun decided to jump in and co-found Lucidchart with Dilts and Darrell Swain, who is now the CEO and founder of a startup called Tiled.

Sun says that Google taught him the importance of hiring and creating a collaborative culture for people to thrive and help each other.

He's taken with him "this relentless focus on hiring great people and giving them autonomy and turning them loose and letting them really be able to spread their wings and do great things," Sun said.

"We let people have a lot of authority and autonomy, but we also expect people to do what's best for the company as a whole," he said.

Optimizely cofounder and executive chairman Dan Siroker



Dan Siroker, co-founder and executive chairman of Optimizely Optimizely

Company: Optimizely

What it does: Optimizely helps brands and companies experiment to deliver the best digital customer experience.

Total raised: $201.55 million

Valuation: n/a

When Dan Siroker, co-founder and executive chairman of Optimizely, first heard Barack Obama speak at Google, he decided he could not pass up being part of the 2008 campaign. Two weeks later, he flew to Chicago to work as a volunteer.

On the campaign, he worked on data analytics and tested how to best reach audiences. That experience inspired him to start Optimizely.

"It was really the pain point I saw in the Obama campaign," Siroker told Business Insider. "We also needed a developer to be part of every step of the way. That was really the inspiration for the company."

Now, Optimizely helps marketers experiment with how to best reach out to their customers online. In June, Optimizely announced it raised $105 million in a series D funding. With the funding, the company plans to invest in new products such as giving customers the option to roll out features progressively.

Siroker says he brought the open, Q&A Google all-hands meetings to his startup, but on the flip side, he also felt that Google's cultural values weren't clear enough when he was working there. He recalls that teams were told they needed to hire people who were "Googley," but he felt that it wasn't clear what it meant.

That's why at Optimizely, he helped define a clear set of cultural values and looks for those values in hiring.

"Because [being Googley] is so subjective, people can use culture fit for an excuse to not hire someone for a lot of bad reasons," Siroker said. "At least at Optimizely we should be consistent. We wanted to do that right. When someone's not a culture fit, we can understand why."

RealityEngines.AI cofounder and CEO Bindu Reddy



RealityEngines.AI CEO and cofounder Bindu Reddy RealityEngines.AI

Company: RealityEngines.AI

What it does: Helps any company use their own data to create accurate AI models.

Total raised: $5.25 million

Valuation: $25.25 million

RealityEngines.AI launched earlier this year to help any company use their own data to create accurate AI models. CEO and co-founder Bindu Reddy draws influences from her roots at Google and Amazon.

Reddy says that at Google, AI was infused into nearly everything. Seeing this at her former company, she was fascinated.

"A lot of the success Google had over the last few years is in part to that -- that devotion to putting machine learning first and putting AI first into all their services and products," Reddy told Business Insider.

Tech giants like Google, Amazon, and Facebook have the luxury to spend millions on AI and machine learning, she says. But not every company does, so she wants to bring that capability to every organization.

After Google, Reddy worked for some time at Amazon Web Services working with enterprise customers.

She found they were anxious to get started using AI but often didn't have the data and know-how to create accurate models. Those models are used for machine learning, which is how the AI algorithm learns to do the tasks it is being asked to do.

While Google had an entrepreneurial culture and Amazon emphasized moving fast, she found that large companies can be difficult places to work on creative, new ideas.

"Google has its culture. Amazon has its own culture," Reddy said. "If you have a different vision for the environment you want to work at, the kind of culture you want to cultivate and you want to be in, and the idea that you might want to push hard on, the combination is a real reason you want to go off and start something else."

That's why she encourages other employees to start companies, too, even later in their careers.

"Of late, a lot of people with a lot of experience don't start companies because they're in a really great positions," Reddy said.

While she understands that decision, she says "it would be better for Silicon Valley if we had more people with more experience start companies."

Tetrate cofounder and CEO Varun Talwar



Tetrate co-founders Varun Talwar and Jeyappragash “JJ” Jeykeerthi Tetrate

Company: Tetrate

What it does: Offers enterprises a computer networking technology known as "service mesh."

Total raised: $12.5 million

Valuation: $44.4 million

At Google, Tetrate CEO and cofounder Varun Talwar was the product manager and co-creator of Istio, an open source project that connects, monitors, secures and controls the flow of traffic between services. But he decided to start a company when he saw an opportunity to build a larger platform outside of Google Cloud.

Now Tetrate offers to enterprises what's known in the computer networking world as "service mesh." Service mesh helps with managing network traffic and security, and it's powered by Istio and another open source project called Envoy.

Talwar said leaving Google after working there a decade was a difficult decision. "It's a hard place to leave given the perks and benefits around the company. I felt strongly about this area and space. As someone who likes to start up new things, that's what got me from Google into entrepreneurship."

Talwar says he brought Google's famous "Objectives and Key Results" (OKRs) culture to Tetrate. That's Google's system for setting goals and measuring performance. He also brought Google's communication style to his startup, sharing company decisions with teams at all hands meetings.

"It's a way of driving the entire team towards one direction where you have measurable results along the way," Talwar said.

Tetrate just launched out of stealth in March and is now building up its non-engineering side of the company. It's opening a new project called GetEnvoy, which makes it easier for companies to use Envoy, and it's providing support for companies on how to use Istio, the open source project that Talwar previously managed and created. It's also building up a community for its own products.

"That amount of customer engagement and interest is keeping us super busy, but it's also validating in terms of where the market will go," Talwar said.

"Building a startup from scratch is something that's very challenging but also exciting," he added. "We believe that networking is cool again."

Transposit cofounder and CTO Tina Huang



Tina Huang, CTO and co-founder of Transposit Transposit

Company: Transposit

What it does: Helps developers easily build, use and publish application programming interfaces (APIs).

Total raised: $15.4 million

Valuation: $45 million

Transposit helps developers easily build, use and publish application programming interfaces (APIs). APIs allow applications to "talk" to each other. (For example, if you want to build an app that shows people's tweets, you would use the Twitter API.)

Since closing its $12.2 million in Series A funding in March, Transposit has been building tools that address what developers are struggling with, such as making it easier for developers to build chatbots.

"We want to lower the bar for how technical something has to be," Tina Huang, CTO and co-founder of Transposit, told Business Insider.

Huang got her start in programming when she was a teenager playing around with source code she saw online.

"When I was in high school and junior high, when we were still in the days of AOL, you could view the source code of various HTML pages," Huang said. "I would just copy and paste what other people did and change it and see what happened."

Huang has worked at Google, Twitter, and Apple, and says they all played a major role in the developer she is today.

At Google, she learned to build a strong infrastructure and the company also influenced how she builds a team at Transposit. Google can at times be insular, and she wanted to make sure that did not happen at Transposit, she said.

"When it comes to building for enterprises, that's hard," Huang said. "Most enterprises don't run like Google."

While Huang spent her career as an engineer building large-scale consumer products, her cofounder Adam Leventhal, CEO of Transposit, came from big-data company Delphix and had deep enterprise experience.

"The fact that our backgrounds are disjointed is the superpower we had," Huang said.

PlanetScale cofounder and CEO Jiten Vaidya



Jiten Vaidya, cofounder and CEO of PlanetScale PlanetScale

Company: PlanetScale

What it does: A database service that can run on multiple clouds using Kubernetes.

Total raised: $25 million

Valuation: $80 million

PlanetScale co-founders Jiten Vaidya and Sugu Sougoumarane have known each other for 25 years.

While Vaidya, PlanetScale's CEO, honed his skills at Google, CTO Sougoumarane grew up at PayPal. Then Sougoumarane joined YouTube in 2006, right before Google acquired it.

They both worked together at YouTube during a time when YouTube was growing quickly and they needed to scale its databases.

Scaling a database can be difficult because there are limits to how much data it can hold. To work around that, developers have to write code that can make the application much more complicated. Thus, Vaidya and Sougoumarane decided to solve this problem.

They built an open source project to help scale databases and in 2018, they built a company based off this project.

"Both of us knew this was gathering momentum outside of YouTube," Vaidya said. "People needed help because of fairly complicated distributed systems."

When Vaidya left Google in 2012, he joined a startup that was later acquired by Dropbox. He also spent time working in Washington, D.C. for four months for the U.S. Digital Service, solving problems in the veterans' administration.

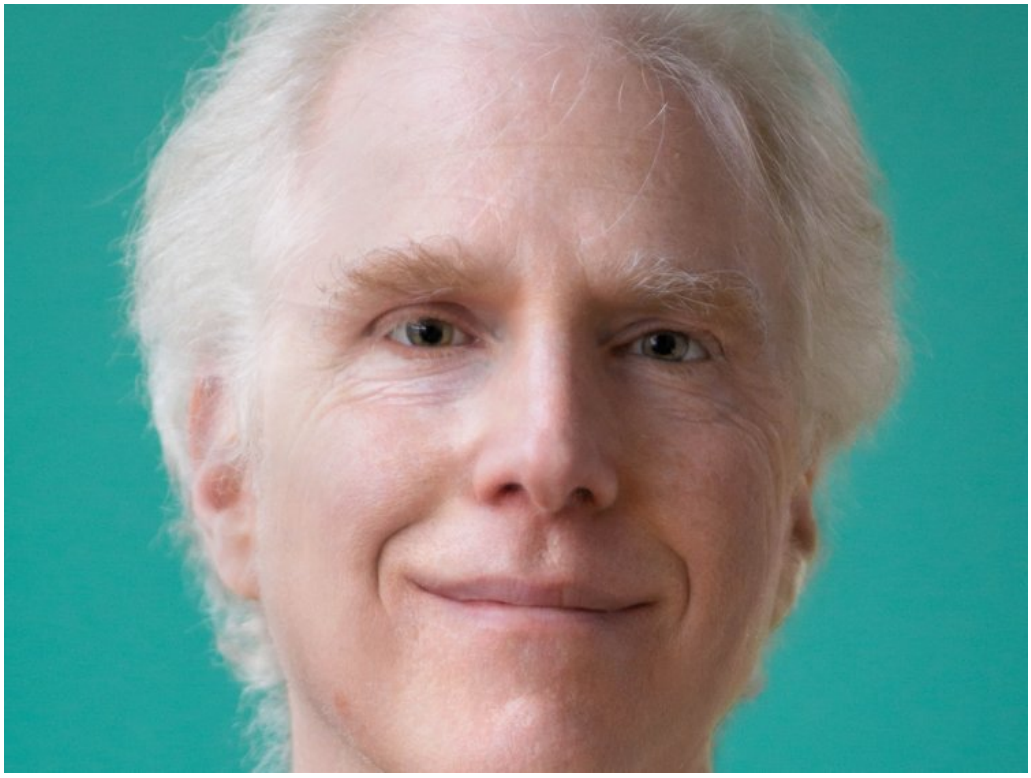
"I guess adventure is in my genes," Vaidya said. "I wanted to go back from managing people to doing engineering again."

Just a month and a half ago, PlanetScale raised its series A. They're working on a database service that can run on multiple clouds and the popular open source cloud project Kubernetes, which was originally started by engineers at Google. Their database service will be generally available in the next few weeks, Vaidya said.

He believes this cloud database service will be attractive to startups because it can grow as they grow.

"Experiencing really large scale [at Google] gives you a perspective that's hard to get anywhere else," Vaidya said. "We can start small and as they scale, they don't need to worry about scaling, our system will scale with them."

Scalyr founder and chairman Steve Newman



Steve Newman, chairman and founder of Scalyr Scalyr

Company: Scalyr

What it does: Allows companies to manage logs and monitor their servers to troubleshoot bugs.

Total raised: $34.07 million

Valuation: $155.5 million

Way back in 2005, Scalyr founder and chairman Steve Newman launched Writely, or "the web word processor." It started as an experiment included in a collaborative text-editing suite. The following year, Google acquired Writely, which became today's Google Docs.

Newman worked at Google for four years before launching a new company called Scalyr, which develops log management software that helps developers with debugging and troubleshooting their code. Scalyr is a DevOps startup, a hot category of startups that provides tools for both software development and operations.

Scalyr is used by customers like TiVo, OkCupid, and even Business Insider. It was valued at $155 million at the time of its $5.5 million funding round in 2018, according to PitchBook.

"Today's sophisticated and fast moving applications have sophisticated and fast moving bugs," Newman said. "It's been really interesting to see these situations play out in the real world and at the same time, one of the most satisfying things about Scalyr is we're able to see examples where we help customers through things like that."

Newman started looking for a new CEO last year who could accelerate Scalyr's growth, leaving him to focus on the technology.

In January, Scalyr announced former Cisco senior vice president Christine Heckart as its new CEO. Newman still serves as the company's chairman.

"From the very beginning, Steve and the leadership team built it for cognitive diversity," Heckart previously told Business Insider. "It makes a huge difference, not only in the employee experience. It also makes a huge difference in the success of the company."

Humu cofounders Jessie Wisdom, Laszlo Bock, and Wayne Crosby



Humu co-founders Jessie Wisdom, Laszlo Bock, and Wayne Crosby Humu

Company: Humu

What it does: Analyzes a company's HR data to offer suggestions on how to create a better environment for its workers.

Total raised: $40 million

Valuation: $175 million

For seven years, Jessie Wisdom and Wayne Crosby both worked at Google but did not cross paths. Now, they are co-founders of highly-watched, buzzy startup Humu, along with Google's former HR head Laszlo Bock, the CEO.

Wisdom ran Google's HR employee survey team and conducted research on human behavior like how to nudge employees towards better habits like healthier eating and exercise. She says she wanted to take what she learned about behavior science, aka what Google calls "people analytics," and apply it to more places than Google.

"One of the biggest lessons I learned at Google was how to solve people problems," Wisdom told Business Insider. "A lot of it was doing the right thing and helping people and it was important to the way we thought about things in people operations."

Likewise, Crosby spent time thinking about what the labor market looks like beyond Google, and he wanted to use that experience more broadly, too.

Their startup, Humu, uses behavioral economics to help employees make better decisions and collaborate across teams. Specifically, it analyzes a company's HR data to offer suggestions on how to create a better environment for its workers.

"Fundamentally, I believe that people like to work and they're going to continue to build things with their own two hands," Crosby told Business Insider. "How can we help make that better for everyone?"

At Google, Crosby says he learned to think about a product at scale and build a system that is privacy centric. That's what he's doing with Humu, applying it to how companies improve their culture.

"I think that the one thing that I'd like to really emphasize is for the first time ever, we're able to run data driven experiments with regards to how you can help improve culture at work," Crosby said. "That is really a change in mindset with how people approach this problem."

Factual founder and CEO Gil Elbaz



Gil Elbaz, CEO and founder of Factual Factual

Company: Factual

What it does: Helps marketers to better understand, reach, and engage consumers by using location data and actionable insights

Total raised: $105.28 million

Valuation: $237 million

Factual CEO and founder Gil Elbaz says his fascination with data goes back to childhood. He would beg his parents to take him to the library, and he would spend hours browsing through the reference section.

Elbaz later on would found Factual, which customers use to build and execute digital advertising strategies, understand audiences, and support business solutions. Factual isn't Elbaz's first run as a founder. Back in 1998, he co-founded Applied Semantics, which Google acquired in 2003.

Elbaz ended up staying at Google for four years and even led Google's Los Angeles office. During that time, he continued working on one of Applied Semantics' original products AdSense.

"Eventually, my heart was drawn back toward the excitement of blazing new trails at a new startup," Elbaz told Business Insider. "I became concerned about just how large of an advantage Google's data dominance represented. Data is a fundamental building block for almost any important invention, and I worried that Google could monopolize innovation itself."

In 2007, he left Google and started building Factual shortly after. This Los Angeles-based company has now raised $104 million in funding and is used by over 6,000 brands and advertisers.

Shape Security cofounder and COO Sumit Agarwal



Sumit Agarwal, cofounder and COO at Shape Security Shape Security

Company: Shape Security

What it does: Safeguards logins, online transactions, banking, and other experiences for its customers.

Total raised: $131.96 million

Valuation: $499 million

Shape Security is located just down the street from Google. A decade ago, its co-founder and COO Sumit Agarwal was working at Google.

After Agarwal left Google, he worked for the Obama administration for a year and a half, focusing on cybersecurity issues at the Department of Defense.

Agarwal calls Google a "training ground." He says that with security, it can be difficult to simplify it for customers. But at Google, the company often created complicated products and focused on making them easy for customers to use. Likewise, he wants to apply this mindset at Shape Security.

"When an enterprise customer works with Shape, much more so than a security vendor, they're getting the outcome of security," Agarwal said. "Driving in that direction has been an incredibly powerful thing for us as a security vendor."

He decided to go into security because of his experience with the Obama administration, as well as his 17-year service with the Air Force. He saw firsthand the gaps that businesses and government organizations can face when it comes to security. He realized that some government organizations didn't know enough about using the Internet securely.

Today Shape Security safeguards logins, online transactions, banking, and other experiences for its customers.

Dialpad founder and CEO Craig Walker



Dialpad CEO and founder Craig Walker Dialpad

Company: Dialpad

What it does: Dialpad is a voice-over-IP startup that does phone calls, conference calls, and call-center work over the Internet via a desktop browser or mobile app

Total raised: $120 million

Valuation: $500 million

With Dialpad, CEO and founder Craig Walker wants to replace office desk phones.

Dialpad is a voice-over-IP startup that does phone calls, conference calls, and call-center work over the Internet via a desktop browser or mobile app. It integrates with popular apps like Slack, Zendesk, Salesforce and G Suite.

Lately, the company has been building out new artificial intelligence features for the app, like live transcriptions, sentiment analysis and coaching that tells employees what to do next on a call.

"The biggest differentiator between us and everyone else was we were built after the iPhone launch, after the cloud launch," Walker told Business Insider. "We built our service at a time when worker productivity was changing, where the mobile phone has become the primary means of communication. We're really built around the future of work."

Walker sold his previous companies to Yahoo and Google. One of those companies, Grand Central, became Google Voice.

When Walker founded Dialpad, he wanted to refocus his efforts on a paid product for enterprises, rather than Google's free consumer phone. Many of its early hires came from Google as well, which influenced them in building out a large-scale application.

"The way we do it, we have a lot of experience doing it at scale from our Google Voice years," Walker said.

HeadSpin cofounder and CEO Manish Lachwani



Manish Lachwani, CEO and co-founder of HeadSpin HeadSpin

Company: HeadSpin

What it does: HeadSpin offers software that allows developers to spot and fix bugs before they launch the app.

Total raised: $31 million

Valuation: $510 million

Manish Lachwani, CEO and co-founder of HeadSpin, founded his startup after working at YouTube, Google Chrome and Zynga when he realized that mobile app developers didn't have enough tools to test their mobile apps before releasing those apps to the public.

"One of the problems was it was nearly impossible to understand why mobile apps fail," Lachwani previously told Business Insider.

He experienced this frustration first-hand when he worked as CTO of Zynga back in 2011 and didn't have an easy to way to understand if an app would work or not.

"That's where a number of these games failed. We had a very hard time," Lachwani said. He then built a startup that helped debug mobile apps called Appurify.

He landed at Google when the search giant bought Appurify and then he stayed at Google for about year before launching HeadSpin, another startup in a similar vein.

HeadSpin offers software that allows developers to spot and fix bugs before they launch their apps. Lachwani says HeadSpin can often find and solve mobile bugs within five minutes, saving developers headaches and money.

"All this learning helped us create a platform that helps you understand what to fix prior to launch," Lachwani said.

ThoughtSpot cofounder and CTO Amit Prakash



Amit Prakash, CTO and co-founder of ThoughtSpot ThoughtSpot

Company: ThoughtSpot

What it does: Offers companies AI-based analytics, where they can sift through corporate data to find insights.

Total raised: $309.45 million

Valuation: $950 million

ThoughtSpot CTO and co-founder Amit Prakash originally had the ambition to become a professor, devoting his life to academic research.

As he was working on his PhD, he had the opportunity to join Microsoft, and then found an even better opportunity doing research for Google. He led a team for the Ad Serving system, and he felt that it was the best of both worlds: doing research and working in the industry.

"After spending some time over there, I realized I enjoyed working in the industry a lot more," Prakash told Business Insider. "At that point, I wanted to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. That's when I decided that I wanted to go out on my own and start a company."

He started talking with Ajeet Singh, a Nutanix co-founder who went to the same college as Prakash. They saw that the market for sales analytics was right, as shown by Tableau's rapid growth.

"We are taking on an industry mostly run on technology built 20 years ago," Prakash said. "We're constantly learning from data and user input in different industries."

He says that at Google, he learned the importance of a large engineering infrastructure and being data driven.

"These organizations had done a really good job of fulfilling their business growth into a few metrics," Prakash said. "Everyone was empowered to make improvements to these metrics. That caused every individual to try 10, 20,30 different ideas every quarter."

Cohesity founder and CEO Mohit Aron



Cohesity CEO and founder Mohit Aron Cohesity

Company: Cohesity

What it does: Provides services for storing, backing up, securing, and managing a company's data

Total raised: $411 million

Valuation: $1.1 billion

Cohesity CEO and founder Mohit Aron worked at Google for nearly five years. He then moved onto Aster Data Systems and with people he met there co-founded Nutanix.

He left Nutanix to start his next company, Cohesity, as CEO.

Aron says he admires how Google took time to build effective technology. While competitors may do something "quick and dirty," Google spends time and resources building a strong infrastructure, he says.

He also learned that if employees do right for the customer, it will translate to "big financials" for the company.

"That philosophy, thinking for the long term and then building an infrastructure for that and not doing something quick and dirty was a philosophy I carried out from Google," Aron told Business Insider.

Originally, Cohesity started as a data backup company. However, now it offers other services like storage, sharing files, and analytics for both the cloud and private data centers. Before, he says, many enterprises had to go to different companies for managing their data.

"We kind of realized there's a problem there," Aron said. "Everything is siloed. Within backups we have to go through three different vendors. We were like, well this is a complete mess. That was the key vision behind Cohesity."

Since Cohesity started as a backup company, Aron says many people still view it as such. However, he's trying to change that view.

"Sometimes I draw an analogy to a smartphone," Aron said. A smartphone has to be a great phone to begin with. We are a great backup [company] to begin with. But we are much more than that. A smart phone is not just a phone. It has a camera and a GPS and a flashlight."

Asana cofounder Justin Rosenstein



Asana cofounder Justin Rosenstein Sportsfile/Corbis via Getty Images

Company: Asana

What it does: Asana offers team-based project management, workload management.

Total raised: $213.51 million

Valuation: $1.5 billion

The work management software startup Asana is known for being founded by ex-Facebookers. A former engineering manager at Facebook, Asana co-founder Justin Rosenstein was known for creating Facebook's "Like" button.

But before Rosenstein joined Facebook, he also worked at Google as a product manager, where he helped create Google Drive and GChat.

Now, Asana is valued at $1.5 billion, and in February Asana announced it crossed $100 million in annual recurring revenue, with over 60,000 paying organizations. It counts Yelp, Google, Deloitte, and others as customers.

"We started Asana because we're really passionate about helping other groups of people work together to accomplish their goals," Rosenstein previously told Business Insider.

Work management, Rosenstein said in that interview, is a fundamental problem every company faces and said he believes every organization can benefit from making this more efficient.

"Once you have a group of talented people trying to work on something, the overhead of coordination really slows you down," Rosenstein said. "It cramps the scope of the ideas you take on. You're not even willing to entertain complex, ambition goals because there's so many moving pieces you couldn't even imagine coordinating them all."

Rubrik cofounders Soham Mazumdar and Arvind Jain



Rubrik cofounders (left to right) Arvind Nithrakashyap, Soham Mazumdar, Arvind Jain, Bipul Sinha Rubrik

Company: Rubrik

What it does: Manages data and applications on the cloud and on-premise networks.

Total raised: $553 million

Valuation: $3.3 billion

Just January, the data backup and management startup Rubrik closed a $261 million round of investment, bringing its value to $3.3 billion.

And two of the co-founders of Rubrik previously worked at Google. Rubrik co-founder Soham Mazumdar worked at Google from 2004-2010 where he met another Rubrik co-founder Arvind Jain and helped build Google's search infrastructure.

Mazumdar says Google was like an engineering school and he still brings some influence from Google to Rubrik today.

"This was a time of great change," Mazumdar told Business Insider. "There were a lot of big infrastructure projects. This was my first entry into building big systems. I got the chance to learn a lot from a lot of great people. In a nutshell, it gave me the opportunity to be a good engineer."

Mazumdar, who also worked at Facebook before co-founding Rubrik, says that at large companies it can be difficult to have a meaningful impact.

"That's the big call for starting something new," Mazumdar said. "You believe you can have a very large impact. You form a team together with some people you think you want to work with. You need to make sure there's a problem that's sufficiently interesting and big."

He and the other co-founders at Rubrik saw their opportunity around data protection and management.

From Google, Mazumdar said that he learned to build strong engineering processes, including principles around designing, testing, and launching products. At Rubrik, he also ensures that engineers are given the opportunity to work on projects that are different from their day-to-day tasks.

"There was a massive business opportunity," Mazumdar said. "It's an opportunity that requires solving hard technical problems that engineering principles learned at Google can play a really strong role in. That's the Google to Rubrik connection."