



2025

Inception Studio Team



JOHN WHALEY
Co-founder

25 years in Silicon Valley

3x Founder (UnifyID, Moka5,
Redcoat AI) (2 x acquired)

Forbes AI 50, Upstart 50, MIT AI
Startup of the Year

Teach GenAI in Stanford CS Dept



UNIFYID

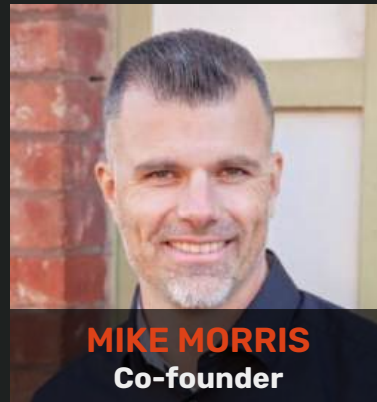


Pear

vmware

proofpoint

moka5



MIKE MORRIS
Co-founder

25 years Engineering in Silicon Valley
startups (3 x acquired, 1 IPO)

Founder Redcoat AI

Early engineer @ VMware 2001-2012

VPE @ exited startups (Netcitadel,
UnifyID)

Inception Studio Team



Michael Liu

15+ years of entrepreneurship experience,
Founder, Ecosystem builder, Non-profit
Director, ex-PwC, Rotman Commerce UoT



Tiffine Wang

Former Partner, MS&AD Ventures
Strategic investments Singtel Innov8
Alchemist Accelerator
Industry Fellow, UC Berkeley & Advisory
Board, UC Santa Cruz



Monisha Perkash

2x founder (Lumo Bodytech, TuitionCoach)
Meta "Intrapreneur" - smart glasses, music
Teach Startup Garage at Stanford
Stanford MBA & MA Education, Yale BA



Patricia Liu

Pitch Deck Specialist
Angel Investor, Startup Advisor
Restaurant Consultant, Line Cook
Ex-Accenture

Why we do what we do

Inception Studio's mission is to empower exceptional individuals to fulfill their full potential, fostering a diverse and inclusive community that drives positive global impact through entrepreneurship.

We organize Inception Studio as a nonprofit as a testament to this mission. Our focus is to attract the most exceptional founders and provide them unconditional support. We believe there is inherent value in curating a group of highly-engaged, exceptional, and diverse founders.

Traditional accelerators are not a good fit for the most talented builders.

- Serial entrepreneurs.
- Exited founders.
- Highly experienced engineers.
- Specialists with deep domain expertise.

Founders of this caliber **have** **different standards.**

Quality	Higher standards than inexperienced founders.
Earliest stage	Looking for ideas and co-founders of similar caliber.
Time/value	Don't want to waste time in a low value-add program.
Intensity	Thrive in the most high-pressure environments.

Inception Studio is a new accelerator model for the most experienced builders.



An exceptional community of Inception founders

- Built around our intense 72-hour, in-person retreats.
- Carefully curated cohorts of world-class talent.
- Focus on idea validation and company acceleration.
- High-stakes pitch at a Demo Day on the 3rd day.

Inception Studio retreats are part hackathon, part founder matchmaking and part early-stage startup workshop.

Our retreats manufacture serendipity

- Change of surroundings, removing distractions.
- Diverse, smart, creative people working in the same physical space.
- Ultra-rapid iteration of ideas and prototypes.
- A culture of cooperation and open collaboration.
- High-pressure scenarios to stress-test relationships and form deep bonds.

We provide **long-term value** to our Inception Founder community.

Ongoing support after the event

- Market validation, pitch, fundraising support.
- Network of experienced advisors.
- Discord/WhatsApp community for ongoing connections.
- Weekly in-person “Mini-Inception” co-working days.
- Other sponsored Inception Founder events.

Inception Studio at a glance



205
FOUNDERS
PARTICIPATED

84

FOUNDER
NPS

2022 FOUNDING YEAR

16 COHORT RETREATS

85% REFERRALS FROM
OTHER FOUNDERS

38 COMPANIES RAISED

>\$140M RAISED

15y AVERAGE WORK
EXPERIENCE

80% REPEAT FOUNDERS

32% REPEAT FOUNDERS WITH
PRIOR SUCCESSFUL EXIT

24% FEMALE FOUNDERS

>\$1.4B RAISED PREVIOUSLY

Cohort 3—April 2023 | Vacaville, CA



Cohort 9—March 2024 | Woodside, CA



SheStarts by Inception Studio

We strongly believe in the value of diverse founding teams.

Our long-term goal: **50% women founders** attend Inception events

SheStarts is a program designed specifically to encourage and support great women entrepreneurs on their startup journeys.



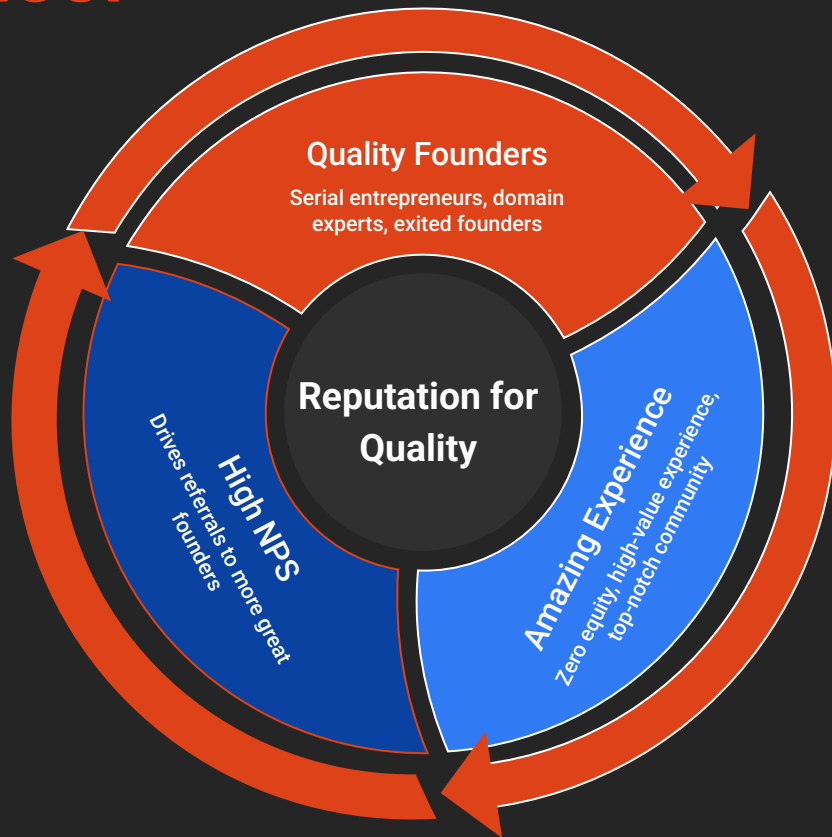
The Inception Brand Flywheel

High NPS → Brand → Flywheel

Virtuous Cycle:

1. High NPS (84) drives referrals
2. Strong referrals (88%) ensure quality
3. Quality attracts more top founders
4. Better deals strengthen brand
5. Stronger brand attracts better founders

This allowed us to extend beyond personal networks and continue to grow while keeping quality high.



Meet **Andy Chou**



BS from Berkeley & Stanford PhD
Founded Coverity as CTO in 2003
Acquired by Synopsys in 2014 for \$350M
Successful angel investor



“Inception gave us that initial push to get over the ‘activation energy’ required... Our company would not exist without Inception.”

Andy Chou
Founder & CEO, Ventrilo

Before:

Joined Inception Cohort 1 with
no co-founders and no
conviction on an idea for his
next company

After:

Left with a demo, a team, and a pitch
that led to raising \$10M from a16z

Meet **Josh Payne**



2x Stanford dropout
Founder Autograph (unicorn)
Founder AccessBell (acquired)
Co-creator of Coffee (1k+ GitHub stars)
20+ papers/patents in AI



"Inception is an absolutely incredible community and it came at just the right moment for me. I tell every top founder I know to join Inception."

Josh Payne
Founder & CEO, Ventrilo

Before:

Joined Inception Cohort 3 with the early stages of an idea combining GenAI, code generation, and reinforcement learning

After:

Founded Coframe
Raised \$9M from Khosla Ventures and NFDG (Nat Friedman and Daniel Gross)

Testimonials from Inception Founders

The most valuable 72 hours I've ever spent. The lessons, the energy, the community post-retreat are priceless!

One of the most positive experiences in my life!

This was a magical event. An intense, concentrated, espresso shot of ideas, building, and connecting. It changed my life.

It was a really great program and I'm so happy to have participated! Really, cannot thank you enough for everything! I'm happy to help in the future as much as I can.

Thank you soooo much for having me! I really really enjoyed the program! All my encounters & experiences there are my treasures in my life!

I'm delighted to witness first-hand that the future is being shaped by compassionate individuals, which fills me with hope. Meeting so many down-to-earth and kind people has been a truly gratifying experience. Their positive energy is contagious and uplifting.

I loved the caliber of people and energy of everyone hacking away at a project!

The way you care about the founders is unmatched! Thank you so much!

Honestly, more of the same - the vibe was incredible and I hope Inception can recreate that spirit in follow-on cohorts.

Inception is an absolutely incredible community. I could not say better things about it.

This was really an amazing experience, so just thanking you again for putting it together!

Had a great time and am really appreciative for the opportunity. Met many awesome people and excited to stay connected and help in any way I can!

Selected Inception Studio Companies

Company	Founder(s)	Description	Amount Raised
 Ventrilo.ai	Andy Chou: Stanford PhD Coverity Founder/CTO (acq. by Synopsys)	AI-powered quality partner for developers	\$10M from a16z
 coframe	Josh Payne: Stanford, Founder Autograph (unicorn), AccessBell (acquired), 20+ papers/patents in AI	Automatically refine UX with AI	\$9.3M from Khosla, Nat Friedman
 Synthpop	Elad Ferber: Founder Spry Health Jan Jannick: Stanford PhD, Founder imeem and VoiceBase	Unlocking AI for healthcare	\$8.2M from Newfund, OVO
 Axiom	Alex Beatson: Princeton PhD, ML Lead at Redesign Science, Genesis Therapeutics, Google	Replacing lab and animal testing with AI	\$7M from Amplify,Zetta
 memO	Taranjeet Singh: First GPT Store (400K MAU), Khatabook (10M MAU), eval.ai; Deshraj Yadav: Led AI Platform at Tesla, 1350+ citations	Personalizing LLM responses	\$3M from Kindred, Inception
 GuestOS	Jessie Fischer: 20+ years in hospitality Superhost for 7 vacation properties 10 years in startup operations	AI Concierge for hospitality	\$175K from Inception

conceptual returns if fund existed from day 1

Selected Inception Studio Companies

Company	Founder(s)	Description	Amount Raised
 First Intelligence	Kelly Peng: UC Berkeley EECS, Stanford, 15+ patents, Forbes 30u30, 2x CES Innovation Award Bayley Wang: MIT EECS, Researcher at MIT CSAIL, MIT Mini-Cheetah Robot	AI that helps you remember what you see, hear, and experience	\$3.7M from a16z, Inception, Susa
 Scorecard.io	Dare Emrani: Simulation and evaluation expert Prior founder, ex-Waymo, SpaceX, Uber	LLM model evaluation	\$3M from Neo, Tekton
 PIN AI	Bill Sun: Stanford Math PhD, Portfolio Manager at Millennium, Google Brain, Citadel, P72	Privacy-first personal AI assistant	\$10M from a16z
 Dryft	Anna-Julia Storch: Stanford MS Data Science, McKinsey, Amazon Leonie Freisinger: Stanford MS ML, TU Munich, Porsche, built DL framework with 3M downloads	AI-powered decision intelligence for industrial	\$3.3M from General Catalyst, Neo
 omi	Nik Shevchenko: Exited founder of \$4M ARR marketplace, Thiel Fellow	Open source AI wearable platform	\$2.7M from Tim Draper

... plus 30+ other amazing companies!

Inception Companies raise from Top VCs

al6z

SEQUOIA



GENERAL CATALYST

AI GRANT

LEONIS CAPITAL



KLEINER PERKINS



AI FUND

Bloomberg BETA



EMERGENCE

NF&DG

khosla ventures

CONVICTION

AIX Ventures

Pear



Kindred Ventures

KYBER KNIGHT



Index Ventures

Amplify.



Combinator

BlackRock.

Neo



RAIN CAPITAL

MAVEN VENTURES

11:2 CAPITAL

TEKTON VENTURES

Dispersion Capital



MENTORS FUND



E¹⁴



zetta

[B37] BLOCKCHAIN BUILDERS FUND

Alumni Ventures



SANCUS

FORESIGHT VENTURES



OVO FUND

defy.

newfund

ZELDA VENTURES

Goodwater

REBEL FUND

HF0

J2

DELL Technologies CAPITAL

Think+ Ventures



TEAM IGNITE VENTURES

NextView

TECHNI VENTURES



FIRESTREAK

PETERSON VENTURES

NTLER



Symbolic Capital

20

LIQUID 2

OUTLANDER

FIRSTHAND VC

SALT

Sponsorship Opportunities

Annual Sponsorship: Investor & Relationship-Building

- *Best for ongoing engagement with Inception Studio*
- Sponsorship at Inception events for the next year
- Ongoing community engagement between events
- Preferred and exclusive access to entrepreneurs/companies

Single Sponsorship: Brand Presence

- Branding at Inception events in a topic area
- Host a reception or happy hour event
- Digital marketing & promotional merchandise

Inception Studio is a nonprofit organization and is fiscally sponsored by a registered 501(c)(3). Sponsorships and donations are tax deductible in the US.

AI Visionary Investor Sponsorships

All tiers include:

- Recognition on Inception Studio's website and event materials.
- Tax-deductible sponsorship (Inception Studio is a nonprofit organization).

Accelerator Ally Gold

Deal flow: introductions to founders on demo days

Founder Relationships: Host up to 4 events/year, including mini-Inceptions and founder-only events

Innovation Catalyst Platinum

Premium Deal flow: Early access to cohort companies

Founder Relationships: Host up to 6 events/year, including cohort retreat dinners

Thought Leadership: Participate in speaking & panel discussions

Investment: Access to invest in cohort companies

AI Visionary

Premium Deal flow: First access and 1:1 introductions to cohort companies

Founder Relationships: Host up to 8 events/year, incl. cohort retreat dinners & kick-offs

Thought Leadership & Branding: Speaking opportunities, advisory, co-branded campaigns

Investment: Priority access & Inception Insights to invest in cohort companies

Relationship-Building Sponsorships

All tiers include:

- Recognition on Inception Studio's website and event materials.
- Tax-deductible sponsorship (Inception Studio is a nonprofit organization).

Startup Supporter Silver

Founder Relationships:
Host up to 2 Inception events per year, such as happy hours or lunch-and-learn webinars

Accelerator Ally Gold

Founder Relationships:
Host up to 4 events/year, including mini-Inceptions and founder-only events

Innovation Catalyst Platinum Anchor*

Founder Relationships:
Host up to 6 events/year, including cohort retreat dinners

Thought Leadership:
Participate in speaking & panel discussions

* Anchor sponsors can choose to be the exclusive sponsor for their line of business (e.g. banking, cloud provider, law firm, etc.)

Brand Presence Sponsorships

Branded Items

Scholarship for a candidate to attend a retreat

Travel sponsorships for cohort members or speakers to the Bay Area

Branding on gift bags

Option to include a giveaway gift to cohort members (gift provided by sponsor)

Speaker gifts

Digital Marketing

Sponsored written post in Inception newsletter

Sponsored video in Inception newsletter

Branding on event promotion and resource center

Inception website partners page

Event Branding

Venue partnership: host Inception events at your office or other location of your choosing

Host VIP dinner event with Inception Studio staff and cohort members

Attendee tickets to Demo Day events

Flexible options that align with budget & timing

Events Calendar

7 cohort retreats between
late January & November 2025

Each cohort:

- 12-15 builders
- 3-5 teams
- Target: 1-2 funded companies

Other Inception Events

- Weekly Mini-Inceptions
- Biannual Super Demo Days
- Cohort kickoff Happy Hours
- Company Launch Parties
- Private Donor-only Events

Inception 2025 Calendar of Events

Apr Founders' Retreat in SF VIP Fundraising Dinner Wellness Gatherings Pitch Workshops Technical Workshops	May Super Demo Day VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM Mansion Dinner Pitch Workshops WebSummit Vancouver SusHi Tech Tokyo: Panels, Side Events	June VIP Fundraising Dinner New York Tech Week • Events • Afterparties
July Buildathon in Japan: IVS VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM VIP Mansion Party Fundraising Workshop GTM Workshop	Aug VIP Fundraising Dinner Co-Founder Matching Inception AI Career Fair	Sept Founders' Retreat in SF VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM VIP Mansion Party Fundraising Workshop GTM Workshop
Oct Super Duper Demo Day VIP Fundraising Dinner SF Tech Week (Buildathon, Afterparty) LA Tech Week John and Mike's Century Party	Nov Founders' Retreat in SF VIP Fundraising Dinner WebSummit Lisbon (Afterparty)	Dec Super Demo Day VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM VIP Mansion Party Fundraising Workshop GTM Workshop

How to Sponsor

Step 1: Send an email to sponsor@inceptionstudio.org with your organization name, title, address, and desired sponsor package.

Step 2: We send you a sponsorship agreement for digital signature.

Step 3: Once you sign the agreement, we send you an invoice that can be paid via credit/debit card, ACH, wire transfer, or check.

Want to support Inception Studio, but don't want to sponsor? Visit our Donations Page to make a tax-deductible donation with your credit card! <https://inceptionstudio.org/donate>

Does your company offer an employee donation matching program? [Contact us](#) and we can work with you!

