

MATTHEW KOCHMANN

Strategy & Innovation Executive | Special Situations | New Ventures

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Strategy and innovation executive who steps into complexity, cuts through the noise, and builds coherence where none existed. A repeat zero-to-one operator across 16+ years in sensitive, tightly regulated markets — from launching Uber's NYC operations as employee #7, to securing entitlements for a \$4B waterfront redevelopment, to creating Tree Burial™, a new climate-infrastructure category that drew 1B+ media impressions. A systems architect and seasoned public speaker who turns high-stakes ambiguity into clear mental models that move people, align institutions, and mobilize capital. The through-line across every venture: turning consequential problems into refined, durable systems where capital, culture, and conscience meet. Now seeking a Chief Strategy Officer (CSO), Head of Strategy & Innovation, or senior new ventures / special projects role within an organization leveraging frontier technology, regenerative thinking, and inspired design to create more deeply human experiences and generate long-horizon value at scale.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Strategic Planning · New Market Development · Zero-to-One Venture Building · Market Expansion · Business Model Design · Portfolio Value Creation · Capital Formation & Fundraising · M&A & Due Diligence · Regulatory Strategy · Public-Private Partnerships · Innovation Management · Executive Stakeholder Alignment · Board & Investor Relations · GTM Strategy · AI Strategy & Transformation · Agentic AI & Orchestration · Cross-Functional Leadership · Experience Design · Brand Architecture · Sustainability Strategy · Impact Measurement · Strategic Communication · Narrative Development · Hospitality & Real Assets · Special Projects Leadership · P&L Oversight

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & CEO | Transcend (Venture-Backed Climate Infrastructure Company)

January 2021 – Present · Brooklyn, NY

- Created Tree Burial™, a carbon-negative alternative to conventional deathcare that plants people as trees when they die, converting burial demand into perpetually protected forests, defining a new category at the intersection of cultural memorialization, climate infrastructure, and land conservation.
- Raised \$2.7M from mission-aligned investors and assembled a 12-person cross-functional team, overseeing resource allocation, product development, marketing, and key partnerships.
- Directed the Future Tree pilot program that planted 45,000+ trees and generated \$2.4M in early-adopter value, validating demand, scalability, and long-horizon customer commitment.
- Led strategic communication and narrative development, building a nationally trusted brand with 1B+ media impressions (New York Times, NPR, Bloomberg, Vice, The Atlantic) that normalized an entirely new climate-forward approach to death and legacy.
- Navigated regulatory and cultural barriers to establish the first commercially viable tree burial offering in the U.S., synthesizing land-use policy, conservation law, and consumer trust into a scalable business model.

Special Situations Director (Head of Strategic Initiatives) | Fifth Space

December 2016 – January 2021 · San Francisco, CA

- First hire and strategic advisor to the Managing Partner on the \$4B Dogpatch Power Station redevelopment, transforming 29 acres of San Francisco's industrial waterfront into a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood.
- Played a central role in securing approvals for approximately 2,600 residential units, 1.5M sq ft of office/life-science space, 100K sq ft of retail, 7 acres of parks, and a 250-key hotel in under four years: the fastest-entitled master plan in San Francisco history.
- Managed high-trust, CEO-level special projects throughout the entitlement process, including adaptive reuse of the historic power station into a boutique hotel and a new Bay Area water transit pilot program.
- Architected a community engagement strategy, spanning 170+ public events and workshops, that converted opposition into trust, establishing a stakeholder-alignment model later adopted by large-scale developers.
- Coordinated across 20+ city agencies, civic organizations, environmental groups, and development partners to deliver complex regulatory and political outcomes.

Founder & CEO | Buster (Venture-Backed Transportation Marketplace)

October 2012 – December 2016 · Brooklyn, NY

- Scaled a nationwide, two-sided digital marketplace connecting thousands of transportation providers with enterprise and retail clients, processing ~\$35M in annual transaction volume (platform still operational).
- Secured \$3.7M from General Catalyst, Allen & Company, and former Priceline CEO and CFO; led M&A diligence and negotiated a strategic merger with Global Charter Services Inc.
- Recruited and managed a 20-person team spanning product, engineering, design, and go-to-market execution, with full P&L oversight and OKR design.
- Crafted the creative direction, brand identity, and product vision that consolidated a fragmented industry into a cohesive, consumer-facing technology platform.

Managing Director | Scarlet Fire (Strategic Consultancy)

November 2011 – October 2012 · Brooklyn, NY

- Advised Veolia/TransDev, a \$3.9B global transportation operator, on innovation strategy, system modernization, and market positioning.
- Authored, lobbied for, and won the NYC E-Hail RFP for Hailo, a British mobility startup backed by Accel Partners and Union Square Ventures, navigating significant political resistance and policy complexity to secure the first approved e-hail app in New York City.
- Partnered with private equity and venture capital firms on mobility and ride-hailing industry structure, competitive landscape, and investment evaluation.

NYC General Manager (Employee #7) | Uber

December 2010 – November 2011 · New York, NY

- Launched and owned P&L for Uber's New York City operations, establishing logistical infrastructure and navigating regulatory affairs with the NYC Taxi & Limousine Commission in one of the country's most politically complex markets.
- Hired and led the founding NYC team, onboarding 400+ drivers and scaling to a \$4M annualized run rate within three months of launch.
- Developed the city-by-city launch playbook that became the foundational framework for Uber's national and global market expansion strategy.
- Shaped early product-market fit, rider trust, and brand narrative during Uber's high-ambiguity period of rapid expansion before handing off operations to build new ventures across adjacent industries.

ADVISORY & STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENTS

Symphonara | Principal Conductor

2026 – Present

- Built Symphonara, an applied AI studio offering agentic orchestration, multi-agent workflow automation, and AI strategy, designed to turn fragmented tools into coordinated, LLM-powered, generative-AI systems and make frontier AI practical and adoptable for non-technical teams.

Catalytic Pledge | Author & Architect

2024 – Present

- Authored Catalytic Pledge, a framework for redesigning incentives to redirect \$2T+ in dormant philanthropic assets toward venture-scale impact; presented to foundation leaders, mission-driven impact investors, and donor-advised fund (DAF) holders.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP & RECOGNITION

- Social Entrepreneur Fellow | Unreasonable Institute (2010), Boulder, CO.
- Featured speaker and podcast guest on category creation, climate infrastructure, and impact investing (SXSW, Aspen Design Conference, Disruptors for GOOD, Solving the Riddle of Being Human, and others).

EDUCATION

Cornell University · B.S., Landscape Architecture & Social Entrepreneurship · Ithaca, NY · 2010