

## **MBA Alumni Career Profile**

**Adil Dhalla** – Chief Platform Officer, My City Lives

**Tell your own story. Where were you in terms of your professional career, before you started the program? Where has the MBA taken you professionally?**

Prior to the MBA, I spent a lot of time schooling, traveling and experimenting with ideas that invoked my passion including working in Brooklyn on the Obama campaign, participating in various student governments and learning everything about start-ups through experience and intentional exposure. The MBA accelerated my learning and understanding of how to build a great business, much of which I have the fortune of employing on a daily basis at My City Lives.



**Please tell us about your organization, your current role and your motivation for getting involved.**

I am the Chief Platform Officer for My City Lives, a company I co-founded with a fellow Laurier MBA Alum, Adam Ben-Aron, in 2008. My City Lives (MCL) is a platform for digital storytelling. Our technology organizes videos based on where they were filmed providing an innovative way to explore and learn about cities. Launched in 2009, we exist in 150 cities worldwide and have built one of the world's leading mobile video applications.

Adam and I initially partnered to build an idea we developed in our entrepreneurship class but we pivoted when an incubator we started during the recession produced the idea for My City Lives. We were instantly inspired by the potential that MCL could have on education and the economy by telling the story of cities like they've never been told before.

**What Career Development did you engage in at Laurier during your studies?**

During my time at Laurier, I co-founded an online ticketing company with another Laurier MBA student, Kevin McDermott. I was really interested in the online space but had limited experience with it so Kevin and I had a goal to build a simple online business that would be revenue positive and require little maintenance. It was a great learning experience not just because of the initial exposure to the online industry but because we constantly improved our thinking by sharing our ideas with peers, profs and the various entrepreneurship resources that Laurier offered us. Tickettrunk is alive and revenue positive to this day.

Laurier's impact on my development extended beyond the walls as well. I had two really valuable co-op experiences with a boutique consulting firm in Toronto and high growth start-up in New York. In combination with the MBA Award dinners, MBA Student Association and our thesis project

(BU610), Laurier provided every opportunity to meet the right people and grow through a broad spectrum of experiences.

**How was networking a part of your career success and how does it continue to be important in the work you do?**

Akin to sports, you won't succeed unless you've got a great team. It's really simple. Every successful person I've met understands that to succeed, you need to surround yourself by people who are the best in the areas you are not and the first step is finding them.

**Provide information about the types of skills, education and experience required to move into your career.**

I've dabbled in every single start-up cliché from as early as 6 years when I opened my first lemonade stand. Everything since - be it my history degree from Queen's University, launching an NGO in Tanzania or working at the Centre for Social Innovation - has contributed to my current makeup but ultimately, there is only one "skill" that that one needs whatever profession they pursue and that's will. History will attest that those who have built great things have little consistency in their backgrounds but all share the same will required to question convention and convert vision into reality. Accordingly, I think the best preparation for whatever you do is find what you're most passionate about and aspire to do it every day.

**Please discuss any future trends or future needs that you are aware of in your career area.**

I work in the world of digital media and technology so the only thing that has been consistent has been change. Although change is something to which we're typically resistant, in my field it's part of the allure because it's driven by constant innovation and business models that can support their sustainability. The void of the latter had previously prevented the industry from initially attaining legitimacy but in the last few years, we've witnessed an explosion in the number of revenue-generating online businesses that have validated the need for more minds to work on model creation and execution.