

Raj Bhortake

Los Angeles, CA, United States | [LinkedIn](#)

As a seasoned executive with over a decade of experience leading high-growth, venture-backed businesses, I specialize in strategic partnerships, product management, and go-to-market operations across diverse industries including technology, e-commerce, media, social commerce, AI, ad-tech, and healthcare. Formally trained as a computer engineer, honed Strategy, Operations and Business Development skills globally at renowned consulting firms, dynamic startups and by earning an MBA from one of the world's top business schools. Most recently, as the COO of Ara Labs, I led a digital ad-tech company that powers innovative media networks for rideshare platforms, EV charging stations and other spaces.

My career is marked by a passion for developing products and strategies that secure a competitive edge and deliver superior customer experiences. I excel in crafting and executing growth initiatives that have propelled my companies into new markets, achieving significant revenue increases and expanding operational footprints globally. Notable achievements include pioneering a novel advertising partnership with Uber, leading to a transformative impact on the digital out-of-home advertising landscape.

I'm most proud of creating value for customers and partners via:

- Strategic Business Development: Developed and implemented commercial strategies that facilitated entry into 14 major cities, driving triple-digit revenue growth for Ara Labs through both new and existing market channels.
- Product Leadership: Spearheaded the development and launch of cutting-edge hardware and software solutions, managing full product lifecycles to ensure seamless user experiences. My strategic vision covers extensive go-to-market strategies, from product conception through to customer acquisition and retention.
- Collaborative Partnerships: Successfully negotiated and managed high-value alliances with major companies like Uber, GSTV, and ChargePoint.
- Operational Excellence: Directed the scaling of operations, optimizing a complex global supply chain and vendor network to enhance profitability and efficiency. My analytical approach to operations has consistently resulted in improved cost structures and unit economics, driving sustained growth and profitability.

EXPERIENCE

GTM
Palmstreet
New category expansion - cold start categories, exponential, sustainable growth, P&L ownership

Dec 2024 — Present

Chief Operating Officer
Ara Labs Inc.
As COO, I spearheaded the company's strategic direction alongside the management team and Board, crafting comprehensive business strategies, roadmaps, and budgets to drive sustainable growth. My leadership encompassed Strategic Partnerships and Business Operations across multiple functions, including Ad Sales, New Business Development, Customer Service, and more, ensuring excellence in customer integration and retention throughout the product lifecycle.
Strategic Initiatives:

- EV Charging Station Advertising: Directed the inception and launch of a new business vertical in EV charging station advertising, managing all aspects from product development to asset financing and operations. This initiative significantly expanded our revenue streams and positioned the company as a leader in integrated digital advertising solutions.
- Strategic Partnerships Development: Successfully negotiated and secured exclusive, multi-year partnerships with industry giants like GSTV and ChargePoint, enhancing our market reach and service offerings.

Business impact:

- Revenue Growth: Engineered a pricing and product-market fit strategy that catalyzed triple-digit revenue growth, effectively adapting our monetization approach to improve unit economics and scalability.
- Sustained Profitability: Maintained profitability through critical periods, including the COVID-19 pandemic, by implementing strategic cost-management and operational efficiencies, demonstrating resilience and adaptive business management.

Jun 2019 — Dec 2024
San Francisco, California, United States

Director, Growth and Market Expansion
Ara Labs Inc.
As Director of Growth and Market Expansion, I developed and implemented scalable strategies for successful market entries. My focus was on creating repeatable processes to ensure efficient and effective expansion across new markets.
Strategic initiatives:

- Strategic Playbooks: Created comprehensive playbooks that standardized market entry strategies, enhancing our ability to scale rapidly and effectively.
- Feedback Integration: Leveraged driver and rider feedback to refine product strategies and prioritize development roadmaps.
- Strategic Partnership: Collaborated with Uber to facilitate entry into 14 major US markets, aligning our expansion efforts with key stakeholder objectives.

Business Impact:

- Cost Efficiency: Achieved a double-digit reduction in customer acquisition costs through targeted strategies and optimizations.

Jun 2018 — Jun 2019
San Francisco Bay Area

- Driver Acquisition: Successfully onboarded over 50,000 active rideshare drivers, significantly boosting market presence and service capacity

Engagement Manager, Global Innovation | Strategy & Operations

Deloitte Consulting

Oct 2016 — Dec 2018

San Francisco Bay Area

In my second tour of duty at Deloitte, I played a key role in developing and scaling new business lines under the mentorship of the Global Chief Innovation Officer. My focus was on launching innovative product solutions and strategic service offerings that propelled Deloitte's growth across global markets. I was promoted several times within the firm, starting as a Senior Consultant.

Strategic Leadership and Innovation:

- Robotic Process Automation (RPA): Championed the creation and expansion of Deloitte's RPA advisory business, which surpassed \$1 billion in revenue. This involved conducting critical labor market research, spearheading AI partnerships, and developing thought leadership that positioned Deloitte as a leader in this space.

- AI Partnership Development: Generated over \$50 million in revenue by establishing and expanding relationships with cutting-edge AI startups, crafting frameworks that facilitated their integration into enterprise systems.

Product and Market Expansion:

- SaaS Marketplace Development: Spearheaded the design and launch of 'Bridge', an AI-driven marketplace connecting Fortune 500 companies with innovative startups. This initiative contributed \$60 million in new revenue and expanded Deloitte's influence across more than 15 markets.

- B2B Platform Leadership: Led a cross-functional team in the agile development of a B2B platform, managing the entire product lifecycle. This resulted in a 200% increase in user acquisition and a 120% increase in revenue, underpinning Deloitte's strategic expansion into new business technologies.

Thought Leadership:

- Strategic Insights: Cultivated a think-tank that provided Deloitte's executives and over 3500 subscribers with actionable insights on emerging tech trends, including AI, blockchain, and IoT, driving informed decision-making and innovation.

Previous roles include: COO – Bridge by Deloitte and Management Consultant, Strategic Relationship Manager, Plug and Play Tech Center

Corporate Development Manager

BuzzMyVideos

Feb 2015 — Sep 2015

London, United Kingdom

In my role as Corporate Development Manager, I was instrumental in advancing strategic initiatives that supported BuzzMyVideos' growth objectives and financial goals, aiming for a startup valuation of \$100M.

Key Contributions:

- Fundraising and Financial Forecasting: Assisted in fundraising efforts by developing long-range financial forecasts, demonstrating the potential for substantial valuation growth and investor returns.

- Market Expansion Strategy: Led the strategic prioritization of new markets, identifying key growth opportunities that aligned with the company's long-term objectives.

- Pricing Strategy Overhaul: Formulated and executed a revised pricing strategy that successfully turned around a previously loss-making partnership, enhancing profitability and partner satisfaction.

Strategic Sports Partnerships Development

YouTube

Jan 2014 — Jan 2015

London, United Kingdom

At YouTube, I specialized in the sports media rights sector, where I developed a comprehensive valuation methodology for global boxing online media rights. This strategic initiative aimed to quantify and tap into a market opportunity potentially worth approximately \$350M in annual revenue.

Key Achievements:

- Valuation and Market Strategy: Crafted and implemented a valuation framework for boxing media rights, leading to the creation of a targeted approach for top boxing partners globally. This framework was pivotal in identifying and understanding the revenue potential within the sports media landscape.

- Strategic Partnerships and Market Expansion: Successfully identified and initiated strategic relationships with the top two boxing media rights holders in the EMEA region, significantly enhancing YouTube's market positioning and content offerings.

- Analytical Framework Expansion: Extended the revenue and CPM/RPM analysis methodology beyond sports to include other key entertainment verticals such as entertainment, news, and politics, broadening the impact and applicability of my analytical contributions.

Co-Founder and Managing Partner

ConceptCatapult

Jan 2011 — Jan 2013

As a co-founder of ConceptCatapult, I led the launch of a crowdfunding platform targeting energy and clean-tech projects. I oversaw strategy development, market expansion, and infrastructure setup.

Key Achievements:

- Platform Launch: Directed the creation and launch of a platform facilitating funding for innovative clean-tech projects, enhancing access to capital for emerging technologies.

- Strategic Execution: Managed strategic operations and market prioritization that supported scalable growth and operational robustness.

- Industry Recognition: Achieved semi-finalist status at the 2012 CleanTech Open, recognizing our platform's impact on the clean-tech sector.

Strategic Advisor

Jan 2010 — Jan 2013

Goals2Green

As a Strategic Advisor for Goals2Green, I guided the founding team through critical phases of strategic planning, market entry, and energy audit processes to facilitate regional expansion.

Key Contributions:

- Strategic Planning and Market Entry: Provided expertise in strategic planning that shaped the company's approach to entering new markets, focusing on scalable growth strategies.
- Marketing Strategy Development: Developed and implemented a marketing strategy that successfully attracted and secured over 500 new client contracts in Indiana, resulting in a 40% revenue increase.

Technology Commercialization Manager

Mar 2007 — Jul 2007

RTI International

Research Triangle Park, NC

Collaborated with leading researchers and scientists to design and develop new business models and commercialization strategies for inventions while protecting key IP.

Senior Consultant

Jan 2007 — Jan 2013

Deloitte

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Senior Consultant

Recognized as one of the top 25 "High-flying Consultants" nationally, I provided strategic advisory on M&A, growth strategies, and operational improvements, rapidly advancing from Analyst to Senior Consultant.

Key Engagements:

- Pharmacy Benefits Management: Managed due diligence and integration for critical M&A activities during sector consolidation.
- Healthcare System Transformation: Structured financial and operational frameworks for a private academic institution acquiring two \$1B hospitals.
- Health Insurance Expansion: Directed the Texas Medicaid market entry for the largest US non-profit health insurer.
- Financial Optimization: Developed strategies achieving \$25M in operational savings and spearheaded financial management processes at a major health insurer.
- Medical Institution Reporting System: Implemented a finance management system for a \$2.1B academic medical center, streamlining integration and reporting.

Business Analyst/Product Owner

Jan 2005 — Jan 2006

UnitedHealth Group

Los Angeles Metropolitan Area

As a Product Owner at UnitedHealth Group, I led the development and strategy for a key software tool designed to enhance the productivity and performance of finance operations. My role encompassed full lifecycle management from strategic planning and requirements gathering to KPI performance management and solution development.

Responsibilities:

- Product Strategy and Vision: Defined and directed the product strategy to align with the organization's future-state goals.
- Performance Management: Developed key performance indicators to systematically measure and improve the efficiency of finance operations.
- Product Development: Oversaw the end-to-end development process, ensuring the software met strategic objectives and operational needs.

EDUCATION

London Business School

Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Strategy

Activities and societies: President, LBS North American Club

Careers Officer, LBS Student Association

Harvard Business School

Harvard Leadership Essentials Certification

Leadership Essentials

Duke University

Master of Engineering Management in Engineering, Business Strategy and Law

Researcher - "Education, Entrepreneurship and Immigration" research paper (Duke, UC Berkeley, Kauffman Foundation) - surveyed immigrant entrepreneurs to learn about their background and education; examined intellectual property contributions by individual states, universities and immigrant groups

Savitribai Phule Pune University

BE in Computer Engineering

Activities and societies: Secretary and Vice-Chairman, IEEE '01-'04

SKILLS

E-Commerce · Brand Marketing · Revenue & Profit Growth · Growth Hacking · Strategic Planning for Growth · Go to market · Customer Acquisition · Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) · Visual Basic · Negotiation · Real Estate · Natural Language Processing (NLP) · Presentation Skills · Annual Budgeting · Feeders · Sales Management · Lead Generation · Client Presentation · SaaS Sales · Territory Planning · Compensation Structures · Annual Planning · Business Reviews · Creative Problem Solving · Creative Agencies · Media Industries · Agency Leadership · Revenue Generation · Research Computing · New Business Opportunities · Global Business · Team Management · VBA Excel · Analytic Problem Solving · Large Language Models (LLM) · Product Development · Cross-functional Team Leadership · Analytical Skills · Leadership Development · Strategic Partnerships · Product Management · Go-to-Market Strategy · Portfolio Management · Management Consulting · Strategy · Business Strategy · Entrepreneurship · Management · Competitive Analysis · Financial Modeling