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Special Edition: Spring 2021

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Matt Katzer, CEO Of KAMIND IT

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Special Edition:
Spring 2021

How A Childhood Obsession Inspired Matt Katzer To Become the Largest Independently Owned, Tier 1 Microsoft Gold Partner In The Northwest

Matt Katzer's dad has had an enduring influence on Matt and the way Matt helps his clients. His dad was an inventor who taught Matt how to experiment. "I grew up in a problem-solving environment," Matt said. "I was encouraged to always look at how I could do something differently and improve what I was doing. My dad took complex problems and solved them. He invented a process for building engine blocks while working at General Motors (which is still used today).

Inspired by his dad's approach, Matt started young at solving simple problems for something he was passionate about – model trains. In just the fourth grade, he got frustrated with his trains shorting out on the tracks, so he figured out a sophisticated way to get power running across all the train tracks. He then evolved into solving complex problems, still within his passion. "I wanted to automate model trains," Matt said. "So I got involved early on with the National Model Railroad Association and helped develop the NMRA Digital Command Control (DCC) protocol standard for computerizing model trains."

His early experience developed into a lifelong passion for model trains and for solving complex problems for people. Still a model train enthusiast, his strong work ethic carried over to his work and shapes a core philosophy he applies to his business today: to always learn and grow.

"My parents never got mad at me for trying something and failing at it," Matt said. "Instead, they would ask me questions about what I learned and how I was going to do it the next time. It influenced my philosophy today which is that anybody can do anything, it's just a matter of how much time you're willing to invest in it."

Matt's philosophy was reinforced in each new challenge he encountered. An electrical engineer with an Executive MBA, Matt worked at Ford developing in-car automation control systems and later at General Motors working in the development plant facility designing plastic processing control systems. Surrounded by chemicals that can reduce your capacity to breathe, he helped figure out, design, and build a remote-control room to build products remotely so employees could avoid breathing in any unsafe chemicals.

Later he worked for Intel as an applications specialist, helping companies design solutions using Intel products. Problems ranged from working with General Electric on reactors to working on projects for Redstone Arsenal, the military base for various tenants across the Department of Defense, Department of Justice, and NASA.

"Intel was a problem-solving company," Matt said. "Everything I did, even the security projects I handled for the National Security Agency (NSA), was about trying to help people for a common good and figuring out how to get people to the next level. I got into the security side of IT when I became involved in projects for the federal government while working with the agency in Fort Meade."

Simultaneously, Matt started a software development company on the side. He holds 17 patents and dozens of copyrights for software he developed during this time. Some of his inventions linked back to his childhood obsession. "I invented a way to do internet-controlled trains and structure high-speed data to low-speed devices," Matt said.

In 2008, Matt became focused on cloud solutions and getting people together to collaborate on the then up-and-coming cloud computing. Matt left Intel so that he could pursue his own innovations.

In 2009, to pay it forward for the betterment of the community, he launched KAMIND IT. Focusing on cloud solutions and providing a secure IT infrastructure, KAMIND IT helps companies become competitive and scale their business in an increasingly technology-driven world.

One of the First To Collaborate With Microsoft On Cloud Solutions

Combining his early adoption of cloud solutions with his experimentation approach, and a knack for mapping out solutions to complex problems, Matt became one of the first Microsoft Partners for Cloud Solutions. Matt developed solutions and published them so the entire community could move forward. He continues to publish his solutions and is the author of 5 books, including the bestselling book on the cloud Office 365: Managing and Migrating Your Business in the Cloud (Apress), and Securing Office 365 (Apress).

Today, Matt has grown KAMIND IT into the largest independently owned, founder-run, Tier 1 Microsoft Gold Partner in the Pacific Northwest and one of only a few Managed Microsoft Partners in the United States. Serving over 34,000 end users in 37 states and 11 countries, KAMIND IT continues to grow 25% to 30% year over year. As one of the select few in Microsoft's Advanced Programs, Matt works with information six months to a year before the rest of the partner community and his peers ever see it. "I anticipate trends and document them for the partner community to help others jumpstart their growth," Matt said.

He's received numerous awards for his business and technology developments. His awards include the Inc. 5000 list for the last two years, more than 20 different Microsoft Partner awards recognizing outstanding successes and innovations and making the Portland Oregon Business Journal's "Best Of" and "Fastest Growing" lists. He's also the only Registered Practitioner Organization (RPO) in Oregon that helps companies get the necessary security certifications they need to work with the federal government.

How KAMIND Is Helping Clients Innovate And Grow To The Next Level

KAMIND IT partners with companies in five sectors; not-for-profit, corporate, education, government, and Government Community Cloud High (GCC High) which is for government contractors and federal customers that require the most secure and robust platforms available to meet growing security and compliance needs.

Developing partnerships with companies that are focused on innovation and growth, KAMIND's clients range from small and mid-sized companies to publicly traded companies. Matt's forward-thinking team and growth-focused processes heavily contribute to clients reaching growth goals–even in the most difficult circumstances. "We're always looking at where they want to go," Matt said. "We map everything out for clients and backfill with the tactical decisions, aligning them with the future direction they want to go. We then help them through the process, including educating them so they can reach the next level."

For example, one of the early clients began its partnership with KAMIND, they had 60 employees. Now they have 600+ employees and were recently acquired. Now KAMIND is helping the new owners to work through how to achieve their next high-level objective.

"We have a number of companies that, even during COVID, go through mergers and acquisitions and growth, and we're happily part of that," Matt said. "We also are a part of helping our clients acquire companies."

Achieving Growth Securely And Comfortably

Small and medium-sized companies also appreciate KAMIND's co-managed IT approach which allows companies access to top IT experts before they are ready to hire their own. "We'll have small clients that want to grow," Matt explained. "We do everything from soup to nuts for them. We enable them to grow and slowly help that client build and put their own IT resources in place while adjusting the services we provide for them based on what their needs are, which helps them get to the next level."

Why ALL Clients Meet The Highest Level Of Cybersecurity And Compliance

KAMIND is one of the few Microsoft Partners in the country that has seven gold competencies and advanced specialization in threat detection and analysis. As part of the Microsoft Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) Acceleration Program run by the Aerospace Division of Microsoft, Matt aims to make cybersecurity and compliance mainstream. By 2022, he predicts that MSPs are going to be required to go through a formal IT accreditation based on federal standards.   "We drive all our clients to meet federal standards and get them to the level where they could get accreditation," Matt said. "We feel this will be required and without this type of security and accreditation companies will not qualify for cyber insurance policies and even lose contracts. CMMC is a game changer."

Matt discovered that 10% of his existing clients are required to implement this standard. "CMMC is touching all kinds of businesses, not just defense contractors," Matt explained. "It's touching not-for-profits that get federal grants and companies that have federal contracts associated with it. We are seeing these security and accreditation standards as a basic requirement to do business with or even bid on a contract where the company you are doing business with is associated with the government. It's going to affect a huge number of businesses."

Making A Difference In The Community

KAMIND also assists organizations in the non-profit and education sectors to overcome additional business hurdles. Each year they help secure funding for ten to twenty non-profits. "We have a lot of large not-for-profits clients," Matt said. "We work with Microsoft to get funding for them. Last year, we generated about $70,000 worth of donations for engineering services, to help them get things done and get them on a Microsoft stack. And we do the same in education."

"Getting involved and challenging myself to revolutionize model trains when I was young taught me the importance of giving to the community by helping others solve problems. Whether that's building cloud-based solutions and publishing them in a book, helping create stability by building a secure company environment poised for scalability with Microsoft infrastructure, or helping secure donations. Much the way David took on Goliath, our mission is to help companies grow by giving them the ability to innovate so they can compete better against bigger businesses." ■