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Professional Redefined: Sonny Vu, Founder, Misfit Wearables

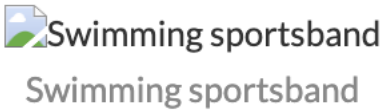
A founder of three companies, Sonny Vu is not afraid to fail and learn from his mistakes. From language technology to medical devices and now wearable fitness products, Vu’s ventures seem to echo the ethos: “Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits.”

Vu and his two partners found their company Misfit Wearables in October 2011. The San Francisco-based business has become the home of “the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes.” But it is not about being crazy or breaking the law.

A celebration of being different

Born to Vietnamese parents who took him to the US after the war, Vu set off on an education journey that involved many twists and turns. “I started in engineering, then design school, then I switched back into maths, and finally a completely different field for my PhD,” Vu refers to his PhD in linguistics under Noam Chomsky.

Although his major qualifications land in maths and languages, Vu says his first love is design and entrepreneurship – “the only thing I’m qualified to do.”



With his first startup sold to a large search engine – his second, AgaMatrix, grown from a two-person startup, to a company turning over between USD \$50 to 200 million revenue – Vu is content his third venture is a “sweet spot” of under 100 employees.

“Everyone can relate to not fitting in at some point in time. Being a misfit is about breaking the rules, not breaking the law, so that we can accomplish great things,” Vu explains the requirement for joining the Misfit Wearables family.

In fact, the company’s website even has a *Misfitopia* section which celebrates the most famous misfits of all time.

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Redefining “wearable” in the wearable market

Vu found in John Sculley – Apple’s former CEO – a co-founder, a mentor and a friend. “It was a little odd as he was old enough to be my dad,” Vu says, “he brings with him literally 50 years of business experience.”

Together with Vu’s high school friend – Sridhar Iyengar, the trio share a unique vision for wearable fitness devices – “form over function.” The rationale is: “Otherwise you end up in a situation where you may have an incredibly accurate sensor but if you don’t wear it, the accuracy of it is actually zero.”

“Too often in the wearables’ world, people think wearability is something you can wear as opposed to something that you want to wear,” Vu remarks, predicting the future of this market will see more aesthetic and invisible products.

Shine – Misfit Wearables’ first product that won a number of design awards – encapsulates his wish to make not only beautiful but also “incredibly useful and desirable” devices.

For technology to really serve humans and help them lead a healthier life, Vu believes “the greatest products are the ones that are more ambient and passive, things that don’t require a lot of usage.”

The true reward of business

Vu is a team player, he recognises “having a great team” as the key differentiator for startups and cites his peers as his biggest influencers. He describes Misfit Wearables as “a place where people can do meaningful work. There’s nothing more rewarding than doing work that gives you a sense of purpose.”

Despite the connotation one may infer from the company’s name, Vu says they are actually not looking to stand out from the crowd, but to “do great work”.

This is also enshrined in Misfit Wearables’ core values: “Provide goods and services to enable communities to flourish; and create opportunities for people to express their innate capacity for creativity and productivity in meaningful ways.”

Vu often travels to Vietnam, where one of the company’s offices is, and admires “the attitude and hunger to achieve great things”. “I love the fact that there’s so much talent, almost untapped talent,” Vu remarks, “it’s a privilege for us to have a presence there and to be able to get people excited about what we do.”

Almost always using “we” instead of “I” in answering questions, Vu says: “We’re living the dream... and Shine is just the beginning. This is just the very tip of what we’re planning on doing.”

*Most of us need to be motivated to lead a healthy life. Would you wear a fitness product like Shine?*

To find out more go to [Misfit Wearables](#)

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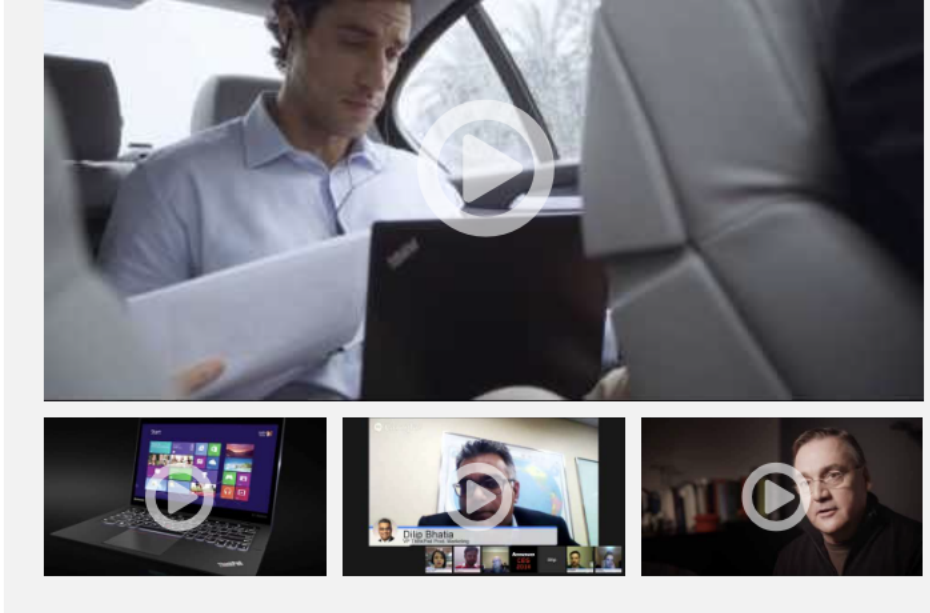
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