



**2025**

# Inception Studio Team



25 years in Silicon Valley

3x Founder (UnifyID, Moka5, Redcoat AI) (2 x acquired)

Forbes AI 50, Upstart 50, MIT AI Startup of the Year

Teach GenAI in Stanford CS Dept



Pear

vmware

proofpoint



UNIFYID

moka5



25 years Engineering in Bay Area startups (3 x acquired, 1 IPO)

Founder Redcoat AI

Early engineer @ VMware 2001-2012

VPE @ exited startups (Netcitadel, UnifyID)

# Inception Studio Team



Michael Liu

15+ years of entrepreneurship experience,  
Founder, Ecosystem builder, Non-profit  
Director, ex-PwC, Rotman Commerce UoT



Tiffine Wang

Former Partner, MS&AD Ventures  
Strategic investments Singtel Innov8  
Alchemist Accelerator  
Industry Fellow, UC Berkeley & Advisory  
Board, UC Santa Cruz



Monisha Perkash

2x founder (Lumo Bodytech, TuitionCoach)  
Meta "Intrapreneur" - smart glasses, music  
Teach Startup Garage at Stanford  
Stanford MBA & MA Education, Yale BA



Sophie Vu

Founder w/ 20+ years tech startup GTM &  
brand category leader (3x acquired)  
Broadvision, Google, Kony, Hootsuite,  
Unbabel, UCLA Anderson MBA, Startup  
Mentor, SFSU



Patricia Liu

Pitch Deck Specialist  
Angel Investor, Startup Advisor  
Restaurant Consultant, Line Cook  
Ex-Accenture

# Why we do what we do

Inception Studio's mission is to empower exceptional individuals to fulfill their full potential, fostering a diverse and inclusive community that drives positive global impact through entrepreneurship.

We organize Inception Studio as a nonprofit as a testament to this mission. Our focus is to attract the most exceptional founders and provide them unconditional support. We believe there is inherent value in curating a group of highly-engaged, exceptional, and diverse founders.

Traditional accelerators are not a good fit for the most talented builders.

- Serial entrepreneurs.
- Exited founders.
- Highly experienced engineers.
- Specialists with deep domain expertise.

# Founders of this caliber **have** **different standards.**

Quality	Higher standards than inexperienced founders.
Earliest stage	Looking for ideas and co-founders of similar caliber.
Time/value	Don't want to waste time in a low value-add program.
Intensity	Thrive in the most high-pressure environments.

# Inception Studio is a new accelerator model for the most experienced builders.



An exceptional community of Inception founders

- Built around our intense 72-hour, in-person retreats.
- Carefully curated cohorts of world-class talent.
- Focus on idea validation and company acceleration.
- High-stakes pitch at a Demo Day on the 3rd day.

# Inception Studio retreats are part hackathon, part founder matchmaking and part early-stage startup workshop.

Our retreats manufacture serendipity

- Change of surroundings, removing distractions.
- Diverse, smart, creative people working in the same physical space.
- Ultra-rapid iteration of ideas and prototypes.
- A culture of cooperation and open collaboration.
- High-pressure scenarios to stress-test relationships and form deep bonds.



# We provide **long-term value** to our Inception Founder community.

Ongoing support after the event

- Market validation, pitch, fundraising support.
- Network of experienced advisors.
- Online community for ongoing connections.
- Weekly in-person “Mini-Inception” co-working days.
- Other sponsored Inception Founder events.

# Cohort 3—April 2023 | Vacaville, CA





# Cohort 9—March 2024 | Woodside, CA



# SheStarts by Inception Studio

We strongly believe in the value of diverse founding teams.

Our long-term goal: **50% women founders** attend Inception events

SheStarts is a program designed specifically to encourage and support great women entrepreneurs on their startup journeys.



# Meet **Andy Chou**



BS from Berkeley & Stanford PhD  
Founded Coverity as CTO in 2003  
Acquired by Synopsys in 2014 for \$350M  
Successful angel investor



“Inception gave us that initial push to get over the ‘activation energy’ required... Our company would not exist without Inception.”

Andy Chou  
Founder & CEO, Ventrilo

## **Before:**

Joined Inception Cohort 1 with  
no co-founders and no  
conviction on an idea for his  
next company

## **After:**

Left with a demo, a team, and a pitch  
that led to raising \$10M from a16z



# Meet Josh Payne



2x Stanford dropout  
Founder Autograph (unicorn)  
Founder AccessBell (acquired)  
Co-creator of Coffee (1k+ GitHub stars)  
20+ papers/patents in AI



"Inception is an absolutely incredible community and it came at just the right moment for me. I tell every top founder I know to join Inception."

Josh Payne  
Founder & CEO, Ventrilo

## Before:

Joined Inception Cohort 3 with the early stages of an idea combining GenAI, code generation, and reinforcement learning

## After:

Founded Coframe  
Raised \$9M from Khosla Ventures and NFDG (Nat Friedman and Daniel Gross)

# Testimonials from Inception Founders

The most valuable 72 hours I've ever spent. The lessons, the energy, the community post-retreat are priceless!

One of the most positive experiences in my life!

This was a magical event. An intense, concentrated, espresso shot of ideas, building, and connecting. It changed my life.

It was a really great program and I'm so happy to have participated! Really, cannot thank you enough for everything! I'm happy to help in the future as much as I can.

Thank you soooo much for having me! I really really enjoyed the program! All my encounters & experiences there are my treasures in my life!

I'm delighted to witness first-hand that the future is being shaped by compassionate individuals, which fills me with hope. Meeting so many down-to-earth and kind people has been a truly gratifying experience. Their positive energy is contagious and uplifting.

I loved the caliber of people and energy of everyone hacking away at a project!

The way you care about the founders is unmatched! Thank you so much!







Honestly, more of the same - the vibe was incredible and I hope Inception can recreate that spirit in follow-on cohorts.

Inception is an absolutely incredible community. I could not say better things about it.

This was really an amazing experience, so just thanking you again for putting it together!

Had a great time and am really appreciative for the opportunity. Met many awesome people and excited to stay connected and help in any way I can!





# Selected Inception Studio Companies

Company	Founder(s)	Description	Amount Raised
 Ventrilo.ai	Andy Chou: Stanford PhD Coverity Founder/CTO (acq. by Synopsys)	AI-powered quality partner for developers	\$10M from a16z
 coframe	Josh Payne: Stanford, Founder Autograph (unicorn), AccessBell (acquired), 20+ papers/patents in AI	Automatically refine UX with AI	\$9.3M from Khosla, Nat Friedman
 Synthpop	Elad Ferber: Founder Spry Health Jan Jannick: Stanford PhD, Founder imeem and VoiceBase	Unlocking AI for healthcare	\$8.2M from Newfund, OVO
 Axiom	Alex Beatson: Princeton PhD, ML Lead at Redesign Science, Genesis Therapeutics, Google	Replacing lab and animal testing with AI	\$7M from Amplify,Zetta
 memO	Taranjeet Singh: First GPT Store (400K MAU), Khatabook (10M MAU), eval.ai; Deshraj Yadav: Led AI Platform at Tesla, 1350+ citations	Personalizing LLM responses	\$3M from Kindred, Inception
 GuestOS	Jessie Fischer: 20+ years in hospitality Superhost for 7 vacation properties 10 years in startup operations	AI Concierge for hospitality	\$175K from Inception

conceptual returns if fund existed from day 1



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Company	Founder(s)	Description	Amount Raised
 <b>First Intelligence</b>	Kelly Peng: UC Berkeley EECS, Stanford, 15+ patents, Forbes 30u30, 2x CES Innovation Award Bayley Wang: MIT EECS, Researcher at MIT CSAIL, MIT Mini-Cheetah Robot	AI that helps you remember what you see, hear, and experience	\$3.7M from a16z, Inception, Susa
 <b>Scorecard.io</b>	Dare Emrani: Simulation and evaluation expert Prior founder, ex-Waymo, SpaceX, Uber	LLM model evaluation	\$3M from Neo, Tekton
 <b>PIN AI</b>	Bill Sun: Stanford Math PhD, Portfolio Manager at Millennium, Google Brain, Citadel, P72	Privacy-first personal AI assistant	\$10M from a16z
 <b>Dryft</b>	Anna-Julia Storch: Stanford MS Data Science, McKinsey, Amazon Leonie Freisinger: Stanford MS ML, TU Munich, Porsche, built DL framework with 3M downloads	AI-powered decision intelligence for industrial	\$3.3M from General Catalyst, Neo
	Nik Shevchenko: Exited founder of \$4M ARR marketplace, Thiel Fellow	Open source AI wearable platform	\$2.7M from Tim Draper

*... plus 30+ other amazing companies!*

# Inception Companies raise from Top VCs

al6z

SEQUOIA



GENERAL CATALYST

AI GRANT

LEONIS CAPITAL



KLEINER PERKINS



AI FUND

Bloomberg BETA



EMERGENCE

NF&DG

khosla ventures

CONVICTION

AIX Ventures

Pear



Kindred Ventures

KYBER KNIGHT



Index Ventures

Amplify.



Combinator

BlackRock.

Neo



MAVEN VENTURES

11:2 CAPITAL

TEKTON VENTURES

Dispersion Capital



MENTORS FUND



E<sup>14</sup>



zetta

RAIN CAPITAL

[B37] BLOCKCHAIN BUILDERS FUND

Alumni Ventures



SANCUS

FORESIGHT VENTURES



OVO FUND

defy.

newfund

ZELDA VENTURES

Goodwater

REBEL FUND

HF0

J2

DELL Technologies CAPITAL

Think+ Ventures



TEAM IGNITE VENTURES

NextView

TECHNI VENTURES

FIRESTREAK



OUTLANDER

PETERSON VENTURES

FIRSTHAND VC

ANTLER

SALT



Symbolic Capital 18

LIQUID 2

# Events Calendar

7 cohort retreats between  
late January & November 2025

Each cohort:

- 12-15 builders
- 3-5 teams
- Target: 1-2 funded companies

Other Inception Events

- Weekly Mini-Inceptions
- Biannual Super Demo Days
- Cohort kickoff Happy Hours
- Company Launch Parties
- Private Donor-only Events

# Inception 2025 Calendar of Events

<b>Apr</b> <b>Founders' Retreat in SF</b> VIP Dinner x Rho Wellness Gatherings Pitch Workshops Technical Workshops	<b>May</b> <b>Super Demo Day</b> VIP Dinner x Rho GTM Mansion Dinner Pitch Workshops WebSummit Vancouver SusHi Tech Tokyo: Panels, Side Events	<b>June</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner <b>New York Tech Week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Events</li><li>• Afterparties</li></ul>
<b>July</b> <b>Buildathon in Japan: IVS</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM VIP Mansion Party Fundraising Workshop GTM Workshop	<b>Aug</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner Co-Founder Matching Inception AI Career Fair	<b>Sept</b> <b>Founders' Retreat in SF</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM VIP Mansion Party Fundraising Workshop GTM Workshop
<b>Oct</b> <b>Super Duper Demo Day</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner <b>SF Tech Week</b> (Buildathon, Afterparty) LA Tech Week John and Mike's Century Party	<b>Nov</b> <b>Founders' Retreat in SF</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner WebSummit Lisbon (Afterparty)	<b>Dec</b> <b>Super Demo Day</b> VIP Fundraising Dinner GTM VIP Mansion Party Fundraising Workshop GTM Workshop

