YBA GUEST
DAVE LABOWITZ

INTRODUCTION

- My name is Dave Labowitz and I am 46 years old.

- I run my own business as a *Business & Leadership Coach*.

- As a coach, I work with solopreneurs, entrepreneurs, and leaders in larger organizations to help them START, SCALE, and LEAD their businesses and teams.

- Every day I help business leaders figure out strategies for overcoming business challenges and/or work through the personal challenges that arise from their businesses.
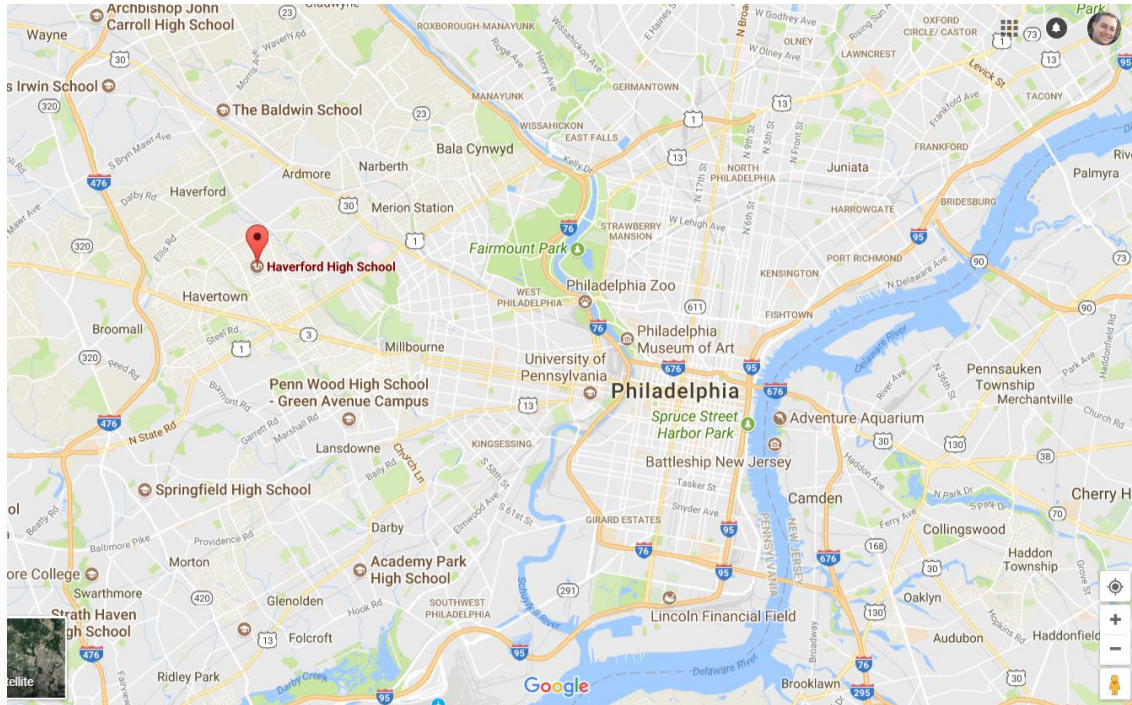
MY CHILDHOOD & FAMILY

- I was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA
- I was a pre-Olympic swimmer
- I played piano
- I got straight As
- I skipped 5th grade and then repeated 6th grade
- Dad was a computer programmer, Mom was full time mom
- Very smart but very drunk parents
- Expected me to succeed no matter what
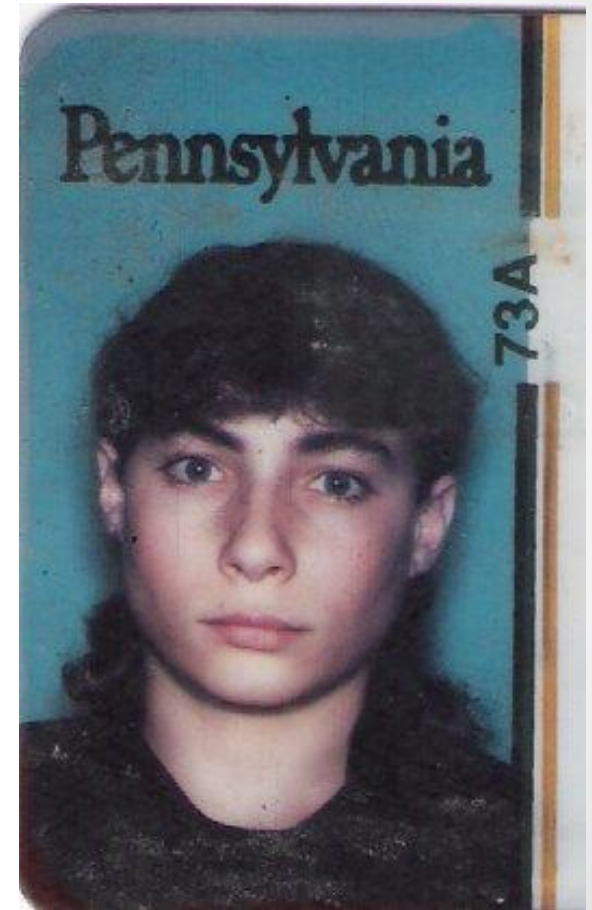
A BIT OF HIGH SCHOOL

- I attended Haverford High School in Havertown, PA (outside Philadelphia)

- But I dropped out in the second week of 10th grade

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

- My parents separated when I was 13, my mom threw me out when I was 14

- I moved in with my Dad, who I hadn't talked to in a year

- He was in and out of rehab; I was in and out of trouble/rehab

Epic mullet

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

- Things that felt difficult or challenging for me while I was in High School were:
  - Unstable home situation / not much parental oversight
  - Hanging out with the wrong crowd in the wrong places
  - More anger than I knew how to control

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

- Jobs I worked instead of High School were:
  - Working kitchen cleanup in a nursing home
  - Telemarketing – selling accidental death and dismemberment insurance for the JC Penney's credit card
  - Worked retail at Rock Tees t-shirt shop
  - Produce clerk at Genuardi's grocery store

MY TURNING POINT

- Someone tried to stab me in a case of mistaken identity (wrong Dave!)
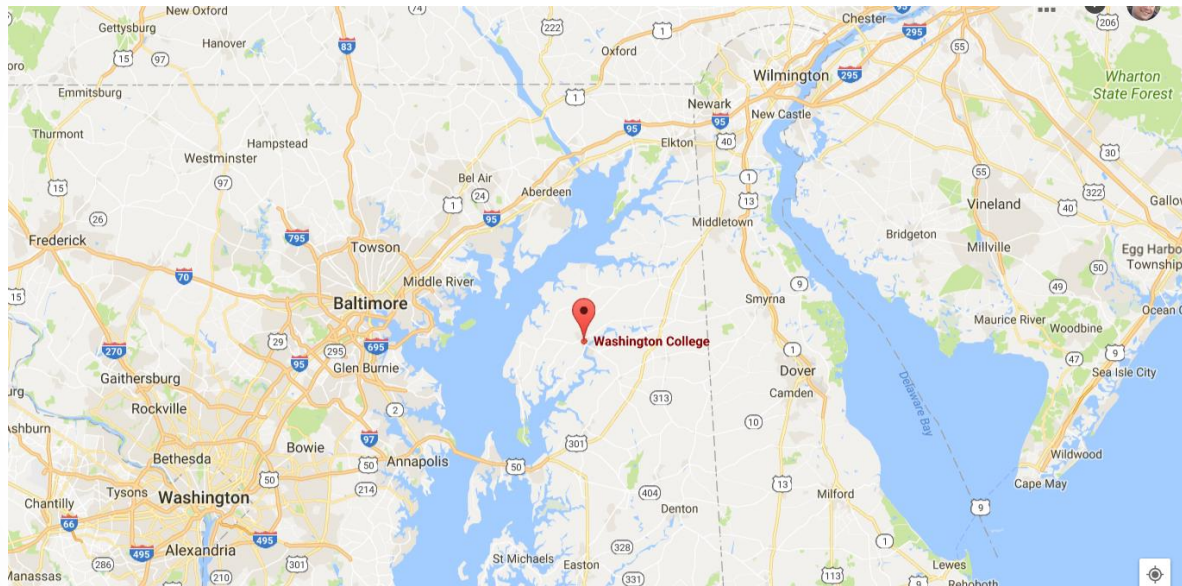- My girlfriend threatened to break up with me
- I hated all my jobs

I wanted a better life and knew I deserved one

GETTING IN TO COLLEGE

- The top few things I did to ensure I got into college were:
- I got my GED (easy test!)
- I met with recruiter at Washington College, they said I'd need to prove myself in community college
- I went to community college for a semester and got a 4.0
  - In Criminal Justice class I got a better grade than all the cops!
- I wrote a very honest essay about my crazy life to that point
- Then I transferred to Washington College
- Three years later, I transferred my college credits back to the high school and they gave me my diploma

COLLEGE

- I attended college at Washington College in Chestertown, MD

- It was the only place I could get into with a GED and it was WAY TOO EXPENSIVE.

- Not a particularly great school (ranked #96 in liberal arts)

COLLEGE

Things I enjoyed in College	**Things I didn't enjoy in College**
• Being away from home	• Core classes
• Psychology & Philosophy classes	• Being bored in the middle of nowhere
• Social life	• College was too small (<1,000 students)
• Parties	• So. Much. Reading.
	• Writing papers

COLLEGE

Favorite classes

- Symbolic Logic
- Philosophy classes
- Psychopathology
- Developmental Psychology

Least favorite classes

- English
- Chemistry
- History

COLLEGE

- Jobs I worked while I was in College were:
  - o Driver for student affairs
  - o Bartender
  - o Logic tutor
  - o Sold Cutco cutlery (during semester off)

COLLEGE

- Things that felt difficult or challenging for me while I was in College were:
  - My writing skills were terrible; I struggled with term papers until classes forced me to write enough of them
  - My self-discipline was lacking from too many years of running amok; I just had to learn to buckle down and do work
  - I took a semester off after my first semester and that made me realize I'd rather be in school
  - I got bored being in a small town and ended up traveling a lot on weekends
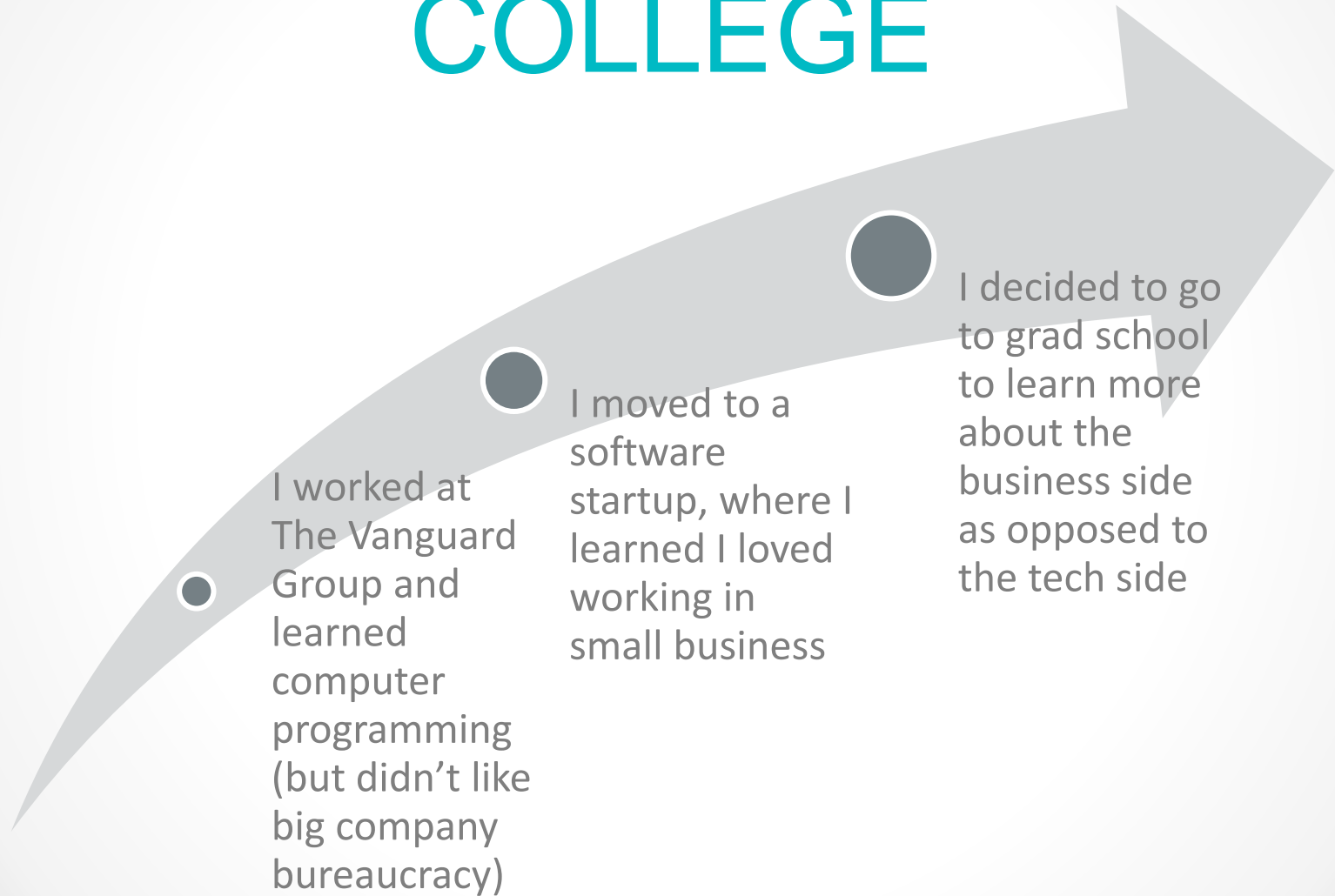
MY FIRST BEST MOMENT

GETTING A JOB AFTER COLLEGE

- The top few things I did to ensure I got a good job after college were:
  - I got good grades in school (3.8 GPA, Magna cum Laude)
  - I applied a ton of places; eventually got a job at The Vanguard Group (huge mutual fund company)
    - Big companies are good for job hunting early on as they tend to hire a lot of people at once
    - This was great because it forced me to learn about investing

Realize that after graduating, you're probably not "experienced" enough for the job. They'll hire you based on **your potential**.
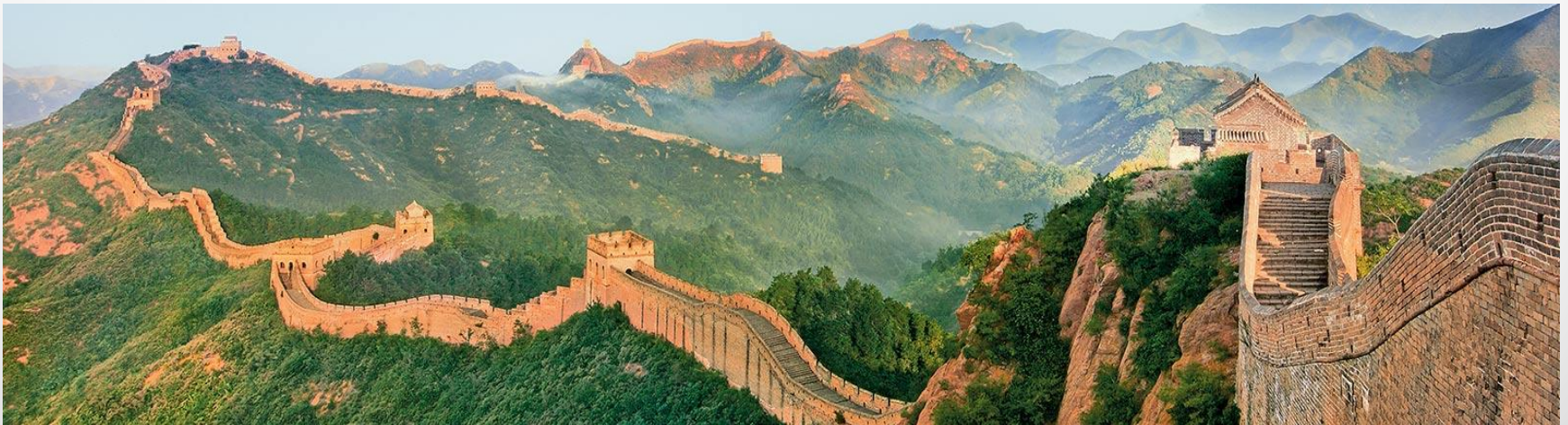
MY CAREER PATH AFTER COLLEGE

I worked at The Vanguard Group and learned computer programming (but didn't like big company bureaucracy)

I moved to a software startup, where I learned I loved working in small business

I decided to go to grad school to learn more about the business side as opposed to the tech side

GETTING IN TO GRAD SCHOOL

- The top few things I did to ensure I got into grad school were:

- I ended up at Pepperdine for a weekend and hit it off with a *recruiter*

- I asked what I had to do to get a scholarship as I couldn't afford to go to school there

- It was all about the GMAT, so I went home and studied until I could break 700 on every practice test

- Karma helped; my Letters for Flight 93 Project was known to the school

- Got a 740 and full scholarship
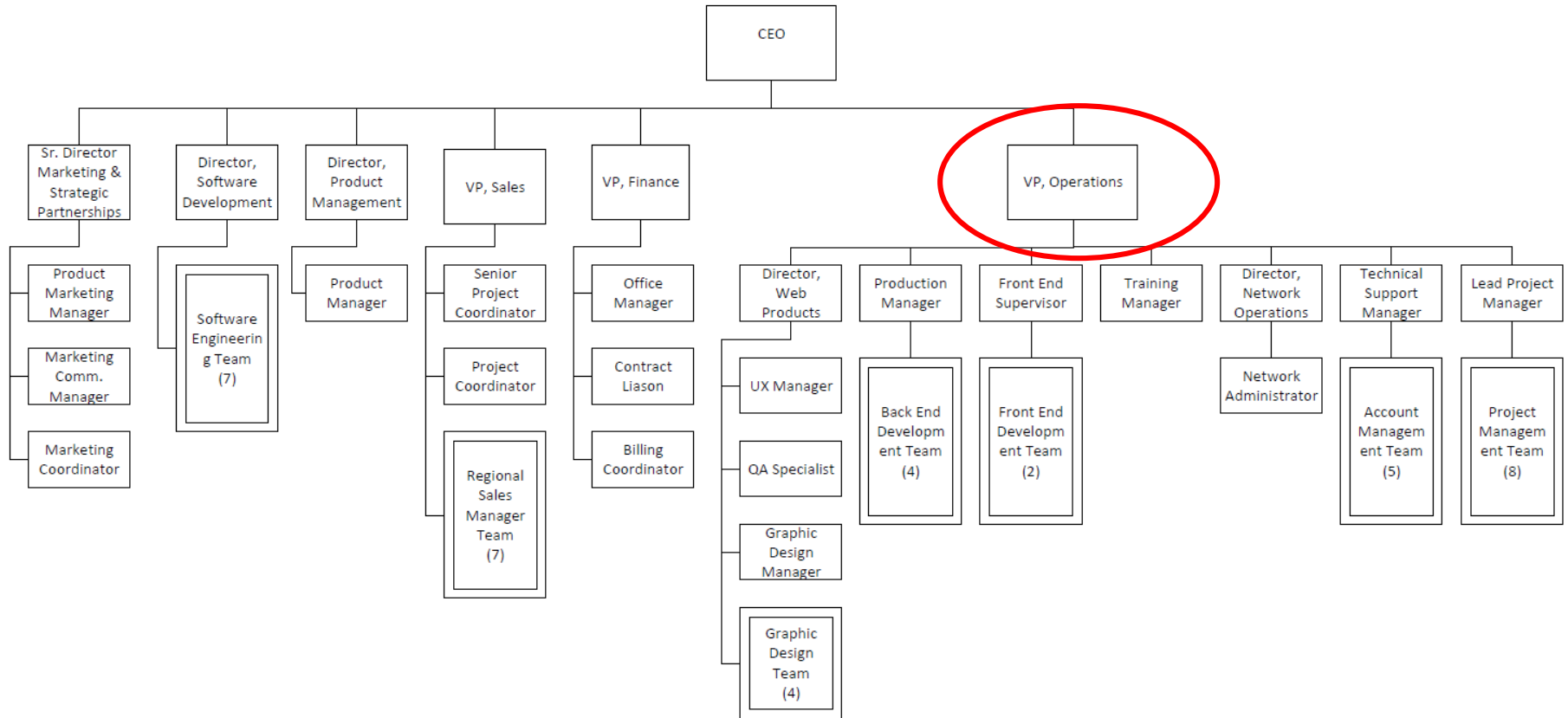
MY NEXT BEST MOMENTS

MY INTERNSHIP

- I pinned down my summer internship early, but it was TERRIBLE. I called my career advisor at Pepperdine; she told me to quit and find something else.

- My next internship was AWESOME and launched my entire career. It was a startup consulting company called Momentum Venture Management (MVM).

- MORAL: I wouldn't have found the good one if I hadn't been brave enough to quit the bad one. *If you're unhappy in a job, just quit.*
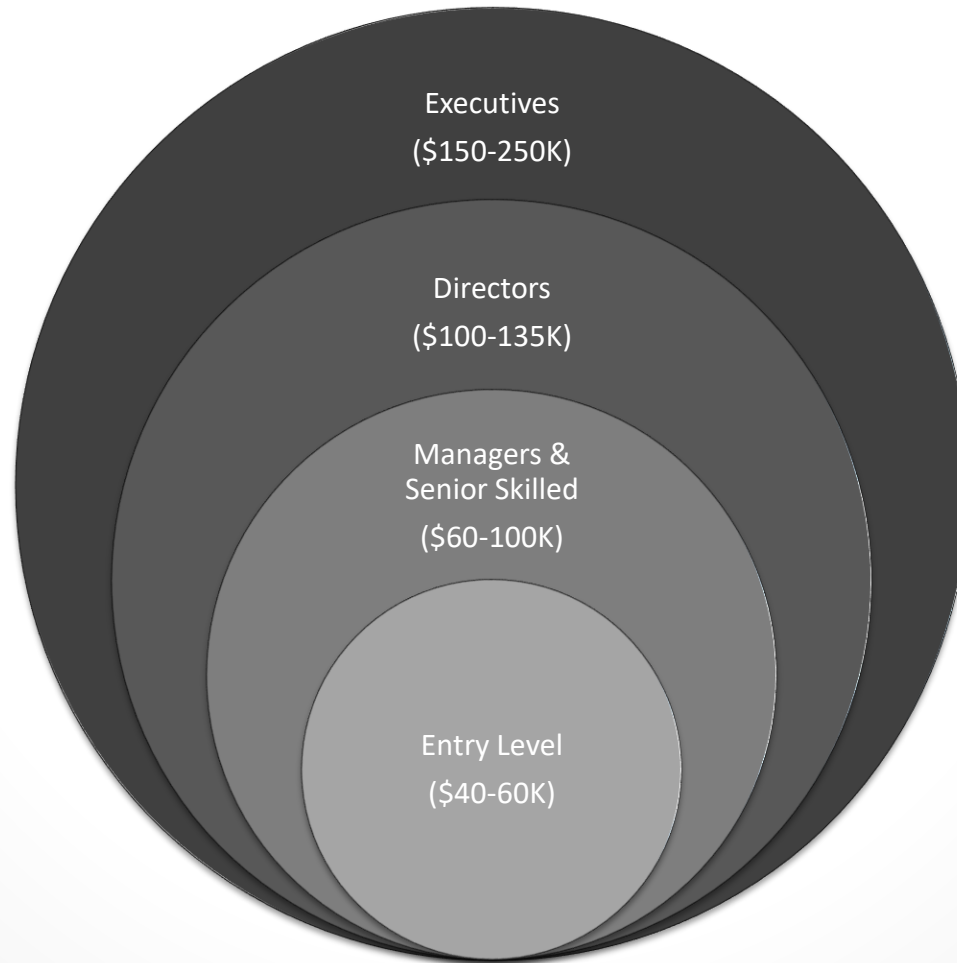
MY CAREER

- The first job I had after grad school was as Director of Operations at an MVM startup (laser marking ink)
  - I managed one person
  - I was responsible for supply chain, customer support, internal operations (software, phones, IT), and our distribution network.
  - Was there for two years and two rounds of funding
  - Left on good terms because there was nothing left to learn
- My next job was as VP, Operations at another MVM startup (energy management)
  - I managed 5-6 people, with 30+ in my departments
  - I was responsible for all the services teams, product management, HR, Finance, IT, and all other internal operations
  - Was there for four years and 3 rounds of funding
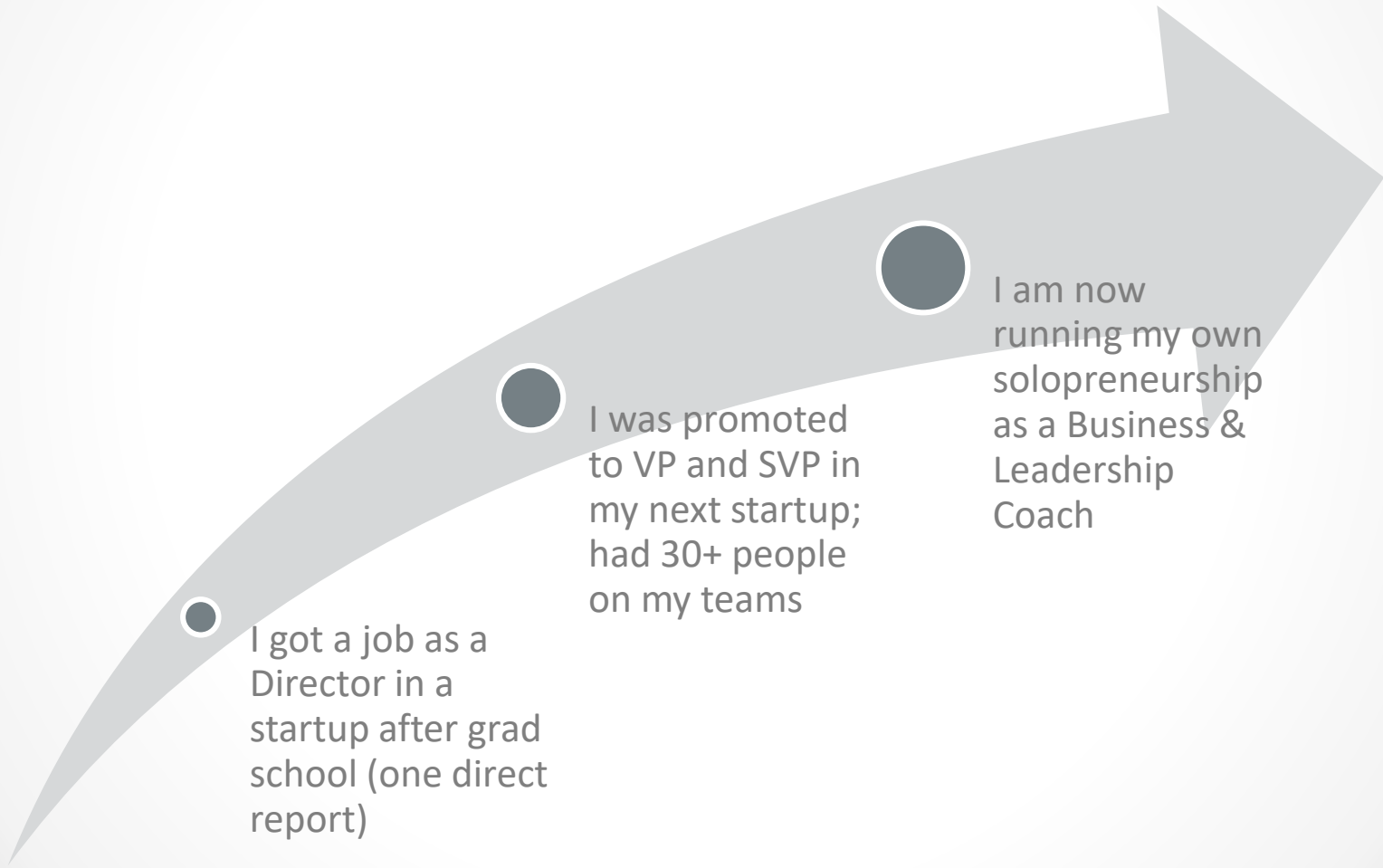 - Left on good terms because I didn't want to move to OC

MY ROLE WITHIN A FORMER ORGANIZATION

COMPENSATION AT MY COMPANY

Executives
($150-250K)

Directors
($100-135K)

Managers &
Senior Skilled
($60-100K)

Entry Level
($40-60K)

MY RECENT CAREER PATH

I got a job as a Director in a startup after grad school (one direct report)

I was promoted to VP and SVP in my next startup; had 30+ people on my teams

I am now running my own solopreneurship as a Business & Leadership Coach

MY CAREER CHALLENGES

- Challenges I have had to overcome throughout my career are:
  - Bad bosses/bad jobs
  - My own ego
  - My own attitude
  - Learning to lead people (especially those older than me who had been in their industry longer than I had)
  - Hackers, midnight server crashes, software breaking, ridiculous employees, impossible deadlines, grueling work trips, companies that were running out of money, etc…
  - Neck/back/pain/migraine issues

THIS IS MY COMPANY

- Every day at my company:
    - I help solopreneurs and entrepreneurs launch or grow businesses
    - I help them with negotiations
    - I help them with strategy
    - I help leaders work on their leadership skills
    - I help other professionals with career skills
    - I work on my own brand – blogging (thought leadership), social media, working on book

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MORE THAN JUST WORK

- When I am not at work I like to:
  - Hang out with my wife
  - Hang out with my dog
  - Dinners & game nights with friends
  - Watch sports (Eagles, Flyers, Sixers, Phillies)
  - Cook
  - Read
  - TV & movies
  - Travel when we can (back to East Coast at least once per year)
    - Places I've been: China, Taiwan, Germany, France, Netherlands, Peru, Israel
    - Places on my list: Australia/NZ/Fiji, Japan, SE Asia, Italy, Eastern Europe

DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN?

- If I could talk to my high school self, what would I say?
  - o Your adversities are your strengths! Be honest about them and people will want to help. Or at least find you interesting.
  - o Start investing immediately – buy real estate!
  - o Take advantage of your youth; keep breaking rules; make things happen for you
  - o Start a business. It's ok if you fail.
  - o Be safe. Understand that if you stand next to live grenades eventually you'll get hit with other people's shrapnel.
  - o You don't know everything. Read more. Get involved in personal development and make a lifelong commitment to it.
  - o TRAVEL IS AWESOME. JUST GO.
  - o No one will remember your grades. They won't remember who you hooked up with. But they WILL remember HOW YOU MAKE THEM FEEL.

QUESTION AND ANSWER