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THE PAPER FUEL

BUSINESS MAGAZINE

George Clooney: Who Turned Friendship & Taste into Billion-Dollar Empire

Prada: Turned restraint into a global luxury language

Thai Lee: The Quiet Billionaire Who Built a Global Tech Empire

The Oracle of Silicon Valley: Sam Altman's Big Bet on Future

Sam Altman

THE PAPER FUEL
BUSINESS MAGAZINE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The Entrepreneurial Reset

Entrepreneurship in 2025 looks nothing like the eras that came before it. The garage startup myth has given way to something more accessible, more intentional, and far more diverse. Today's founders aren't driven purely by disruption for disruption's sake-they're building with purpose, supported by tools that once belonged only to large corporations. Artificial intelligence has become the quiet co-founder in almost every new venture, reducing barriers, accelerating decisions, and allowing entrepreneurs to focus on what truly matters: solving real problems with measurable impact.

What makes this moment extraordinary is the shift in mindset. The entrepreneurs rising today are not fueled by the pursuit of scale at any cost, but by sustainability-economic, environmental, and human. They embrace micro-ventures, build lean, and grow only when their community grows with them. They are global from day one, yet deeply connected to local needs. They understand that success is not a straight line but a series of continuous resets, each guided by agility and authenticity.

As we enter the final quarter of the year, this "entrepreneurial reset" feels less like a trend and more like the new foundation of global business. The next decade's most influential companies may not come from the biggest boardrooms, but from individuals who dared to build with intention, armed with nothing more than insight, technology, and conviction.

In this issue, we explore the stories, strategies, and quiet revolutions shaping this new generation of founders. The future of business is being written-reset by reset.

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The Oracle of Silicon Valley:

Sam Altman's Big Bet on the Future

How a 39-year-old college dropout became one of the most powerful people in tech and why his biggest challenges may still be ahead

In early 2023, just after OpenAI launched ChatGPT, Sam Altman made a calm but unsettling remark. "If this goes wrong, it could go really wrong," he said. Then he added, "But we have to try anyway."

That single line captures who Altman is. A man racing toward the future while worrying if it might destroy us. He believes artificial general intelligence AI smarter than humans could either save or ruin humanity. And somehow, he feels responsible for steering it safely.

At 39, Altman has become one of the most influential tech leaders of our time. Not as famous as Elon Musk or as polarising as Mark Zuckerberg, but quietly more powerful than both. He's building the technology that could define the next decade.

The question is whether his vision and the ideals of Silicon Valley can survive what's coming next.

The Dropout Who Couldn't Stop Building

Sam Altman grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. As a teenager, he taught himself programming and came out as gay at 16, an act that took courage in a conservative suburb in the early 2000s. The experience gave him thick skin and the ability to stand by unpopular views.

He entered Stanford University in 2004 to study computer science but dropped out after two years to start something real. With his classmates, he built Loopt, a location-based app that came years before Foursquare and anticipated ideas used later by Instagram and Uber.

Loopt wasn't a billion-dollar hit; it sold for $43 million but it showed Altman could execute. More importantly, it caught the attention of Paul Graham, co-founder of Y Combinator, Silicon Valley's most respected startup accelerator.

In 2014, at just 28, Altman became Y Combinator's president. Many thought it was a crazy move to give such responsibility to someone so young. But under his leadership, YC grew from a small startup incubator into a global powerhouse backing giants like Airbnb, Stripe, DoorDash, and Razorpay.

Altman could look at a founder and, in minutes, know whether they could win. But even as YC flourished, his mind was already on a bigger problem: the future of artificial intelligence.

The Side Project That Changed the World

In 2015, Altman joined Elon Musk, Greg Brockman, and Ilya Sutskever to launch OpenAI, a non-profit AI research lab built to ensure that AI benefits all humanity. The idea sounded noble, even naive. They promised transparency and safety in an industry dominated by corporate labs like Google's DeepMind.

No one expected it to succeed this fast.

By 2019, OpenAI's language models were astonishing the world. GPT-2 could write essays; GPT-3 could code and converse almost like a human. But the company's research costs were exploding.

Altman made a bold decision: turn OpenAI into a "capped-profit" company. It allowed investors to earn profits, but only up to a limit, keeping the mission intact. Microsoft quickly invested $1 billion.

In 2019, Altman left Y Combinator to lead OpenAI full-time, a huge risk. "We were the underdogs," a former employee said. "But Sam believed even when nobody else did."

Then came November 2022. ChatGPT launched and the world changed overnight.

The Firing That Shook Tech

In November 2023, OpenAI's board suddenly fired Altman, saying he wasn't "consistently candid." No scandal, no corruption, just lost trust. Chief scientist Ilya Sutskever led the move.

The backlash was instant. Investors revolted. OpenAI's president Greg Brockman quit. Microsoft offered Altman and Brockman new roles. And within 48 hours, over 700 of OpenAI's 770 employees threatened to quit unless Altman returned.

By Tuesday, the board was gone, and Altman was back as CEO.

It was a dramatic power shift. The man fired for being "too powerful" had just proven how much loyalty he commanded. But it raised an uneasy question: had Sam Altman become too big to fail?

Betting on the Future

Altman's ambitions stretch far beyond AI. He's invested hundreds of millions into nuclear fusion through Helion Energy, longevity research through Retro Biosciences, and digital identity via Worldcoin.

Helion aims to create limitless clean energy, and Microsoft has already agreed to buy power from it by 2028. Worldcoin, on the other hand, is more controversial; it uses iris scans to verify human identity online. Some see it as futuristic; others see it as dystopian. Regulators in many countries have already cracked down on it.

Altman doesn't slow down. He believes solving three problems: energy, intelligence, and longevity will solve everything else. His mindset is long-term, almost alien in its scale.

The Power of Quiet Influence

In person, Altman isn't loud or dramatic. He dresses simply, speaks softly, and listens carefully. He doesn't behave like a tech messiah. Yet behind the calm is a master strategist.

While Musk argues on social media, Altman testifies before governments. He presents himself as the reasonable voice of AI, open to regulation and safety. Whether that's genuine or smart positioning doesn't really matter, it works.

In 2024, he married his longtime partner, Oliver Mulherin. He's been open about the challenges of being a gay man in tech, which adds depth to his public image. He's also a skilled networker, maintaining friendships with Silicon Valley's most powerful figures like Satya Nadella, Reid Hoffman, and Vinod Khosla.

Altman knows that in modern tech, stories matter as much as products. And he's crafted his narrative perfectly: the thoughtful leader guiding AI toward a better world.

The $157 Billion Gamble

By late 2024, OpenAI's valuation had hit $157 billion without going public. That's an insane number for a company still figuring out how to make consistent profits.

But investors are betting on dominance. If OpenAI keeps leading the AI race with models like GPT-5 and GPT-6, it could control the infrastructure of the future economy.

Still, rivals like Google's DeepMind, Anthropic, and Chinese AI labs are closing in fast. Even Altman admits uncertainty: "We could be wrong about everything. The scaling laws might break down. But I think this path is worth taking."

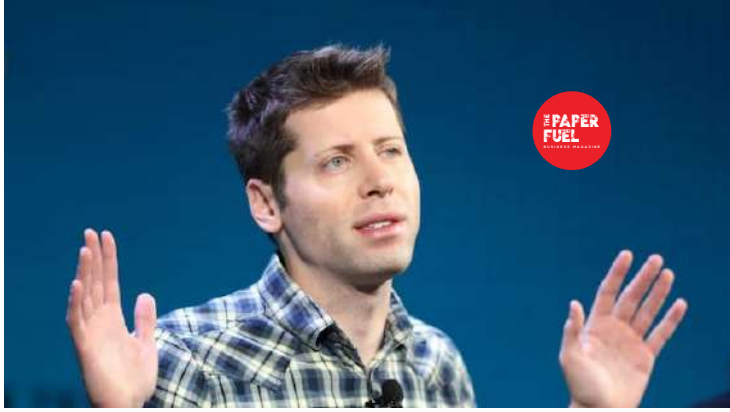
That honesty admitting doubt makes him believable.

The Real Worry

Altman's biggest fear is the "alignment problem": how to ensure super-intelligent AI doesn't harm humanity. He speaks openly about it, funds safety research, and calls for regulation.

But his critics say he's moving too fast. Releasing ChatGPT to millions, integrating it into everything does that look like caution? Altman argues the opposite: that testing in the real world is the only way to learn how to make AI safe.

No one knows who's right. We may only find out when it's too late.



The Man and the Myth

Away from headlines, Altman lives quietly. He works long hours, avoids parties, and spends time at his ranch in California. Those close to him say he's friendly but guarded, deeply focused, and rarely emotional. Even his firing drama barely cracked his calm.

He's hard to fully understand both idealist and capitalist, both cautious and bold.

The Architect of Tomorrow

So who is Sam Altman really? A visionary or a risk-taker? A saviour or a danger? Probably all of it.

He believes AI can bring abundance and fairness, yet he's building one of the most powerful companies on earth to control it. He talks about safety but moves faster than anyone else.

Whatever your view, one thing's clear: Sam Altman has changed the world. ChatGPT didn't just make AI mainstream, it made people think about its moral, social, and political consequences.

And at the centre of it all is a 39-year-old from St. Louis who dropped out of Stanford and now holds the keys to humanity's next chapter.

Whether that should comfort or worry us that's up to you.

For now, Sam Altman is still building, still betting, still chasing the future. And the rest of us? We're just trying to keep up.

A Big Bet at the APEC Summit

In October 2025, at the APEC summit in Gyeongju, something quietly powerful happened. NVIDIA and Samsung announced plans to build a massive AI factory. This isn't just about building chips, it's about combining Samsung's semiconductor strength with NVIDIA's GPU and AI expertise in a whole new way.

Why This Factory Matters

Traditionally, chip factories are slow, precise, almost sacred places. But Samsung wants to change that. They plan to use AI to monitor the equipment, predict faults, and optimize production in real time. NVIDIA's software like its Omniverse and CUDA libraries will run across the factory floor. If all goes well, this could drastically improve yields and speed up the production cycle.

A Strategic Move for Korea

This isn't just a business play. The Korean government, along with major companies such as Hyundai and SK, is backing this project. Their aim is clear: to keep the full value-chain of AI and semiconductors firmly in South Korea. In other words, they want to build and protect a future where innovation, jobs, and technology stay within their borders.

The Challenges Are Real

Of course, this is not easy. First, the energy demands. Running tens of thousands of powerful GPUs takes huge amounts of electricity and advanced cooling. Second, talent. To run this kind of "smart factory," Samsung will need process engineers, AI experts, robotics specialists, and software teams with very different skills working together. Then there are global risks: memory chip supply, geopolitical tensions, and trade rules could all create trouble.

Why Investors Are Watching Closely

For investors, the promise is huge. If AI becomes part of the factory's nervous system, costs could drop and production could speed up. That builds a very strong competitive advantage. Customers benefit too: faster chip development means quicker innovation in phones, cars, and servers. Governments also gain: this is a way to secure critical technology inside a country. But this is not a short-term play; returns will take time.

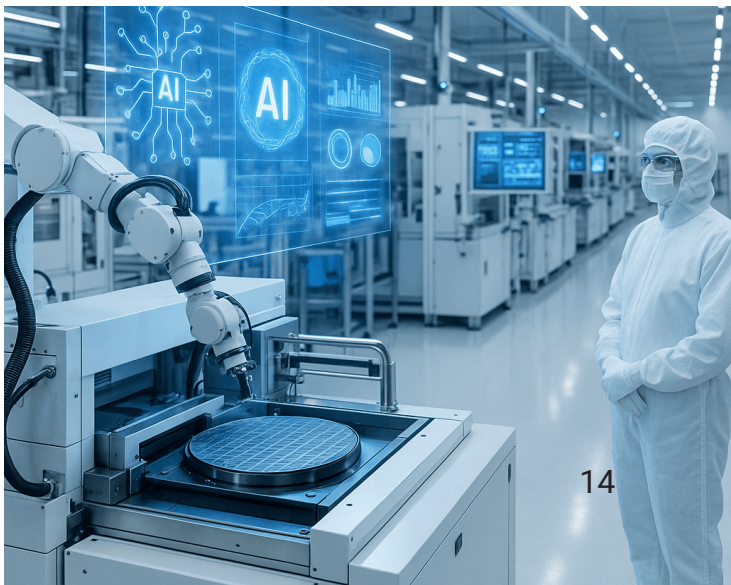
A Turning Point for Industry Culture

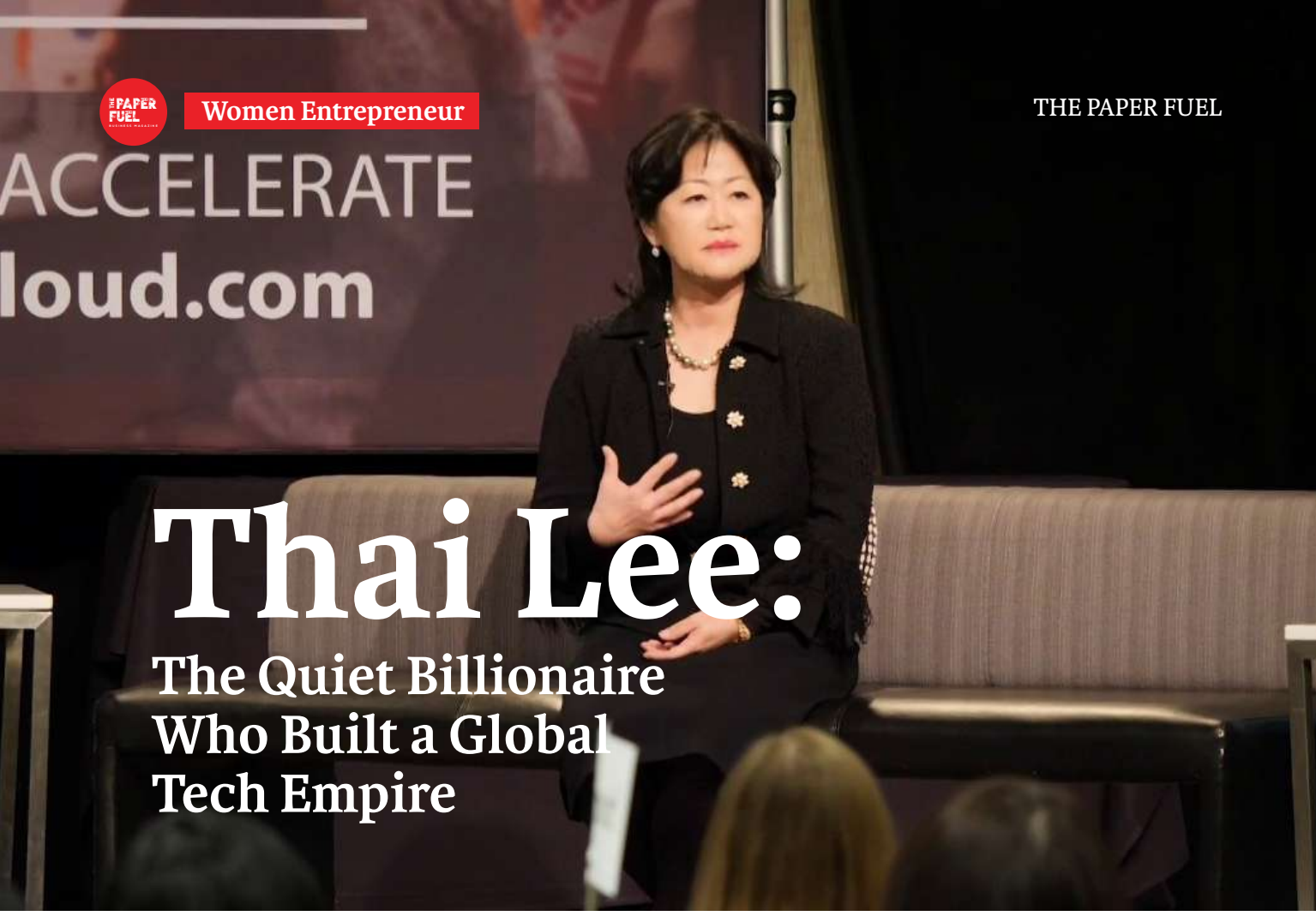
If Samsung succeeds, this could change how every factory works. Instead of treating AI as a separate tool, companies will start treating it as part of the factory itself. The question they'll ask is no longer "Can AI help?" but "How many GPUs do we need to run our factory?" Firms that don't build this kind of deep integration may fall behind.

The Bigger Picture

This announcement in October is more than just business. It is a blueprint for the future. It shows that the next big frontier for AI is not just in apps or data centres, but on the manufacturing floor where chips are made, and robots move. The real payoff will come when entire industries begin to run on continuous intelligence.

This is a story to follow closely. It will shape the future of manufacturing, define which countries stay dominant in semiconductors, and decide which companies build their future with compute, not just cash.





Thai Lee:

The Quiet Billionaire Who Built a Global Tech Empire

When people talk about global business leaders, the story often starts in Silicon Valley or with big venture capital rounds. But Thai Lee's story begins far from all that in Bangkok, with a young Korean girl who built one of the world's biggest woman-owned businesses through hard work, humility, and long-term vision.

Today, Thai Lee is the CEO and co-owner of SHI International, a global technology services company with more than $14 billion in annual revenue. It is the largest woman-owned business in America reportedly. Her journey from immigrant student to global entrepreneur is not a typical tech story, it's one of quiet determination, steady leadership, and focus on people.

Early Life: From Bangkok to Harvard

Thai Lee was born in Bangkok in 1958 to Korean parents. She moved to the US as a teenager and studied biology and economics at Amherst College. Later, she went to Harvard Business School, becoming the first Korean woman to earn an MBA there.

After working briefly at Procter & Gamble and American Express, she realised she wanted to build something of her own. In 1989, she and her then-husband Leo Koguan bought a small software resale business. They renamed it SHI International Corp. and started running it from a small office in New Jersey.

At that time, SHI was just another reseller trying to survive in a crowded market. But Thai saw a bigger picture.

The Turning Point: From Selling Software to Building Solutions

In the early 2000s, the software reseller model was changing fast. Thai noticed that simply selling licences wouldn't help SHI grow in the long run. She shifted the company's focus towards technology services, consulting, and global IT solutions.

There's a story she often shares. One of SHI's big clients was facing complex software issues, and instead of outsourcing the work, Thai sent her team directly to the client's site. They worked overnight to fix the problem. It cost more, but that act of commitment made the client stay for years.

That moment became SHI's identity: a company that puts clients first.

Building an International Business

Under Thai's leadership, SHI expanded from the US to Europe, Canada, and Asia. She opened global offices, built data centres, and added services like cloud computing, cybersecurity, and managed IT.

Unlike many founders, Thai didn't depend on flashy marketing or heavy external funding. She focused on steady growth, reinvestment, and building trust.

She also invested deeply in her employees training them, creating opportunities, and encouraging long careers within the company. She believed that if employees felt valued, customers would automatically get better service.

A Quiet Leader with Strong Values

Thai Lee is known to be private and humble. She doesn't give many interviews or attend glamorous tech events. But inside the company, she is known for being approachable and deeply committed.

After her divorce from Leo Koguan in 2002, she continued to lead SHI independently and grew it even further. Her strength comes from consistency and empathy rather than loud ambition.

She once said that she had "more chances to fail than to succeed" when starting out, but every failure became a lesson. Her multicultural background, Korean roots, Thai birth, and American education helped her understand people from different parts of the world, something that's rare in global business leaders.

Lessons from Her Leadership

In a world where most companies chase fast results, Thai Lee believes in long-term partnerships. She built SHI's business around three simple ideas:

1. Listen before selling. She always asks clients what they truly need, not what the company wants to sell.

2. Invest in people. Employees who grow with the company become its biggest strength.

3. Focus on value. Delivering real results builds loyalty and reputation faster than marketing.

Even as AI, cloud, and automation reshape the tech industry, Thai believes in staying adaptable and customer-driven. "We must deliver value, and we must be accountable," she says.

Why Her Story Matters

Thai Lee’s success carries an important message for women in business everywhere: you don’t need to fit the usual image of a powerful entrepreneur. You can lead with calm, compassion, and strategy and still build a billion-dollar company.

Her journey also gives lessons for entrepreneurs. She showed that global success comes not only from big funding but from understanding markets, respecting customers, and building systems that last.

The Final Word

Thai Lee rarely seeks attention, yet her story speaks volumes. She turned a small unknown reseller into a global IT powerhouse through discipline and vision.

Her own words capture her philosophy best:

“When we talk to a client, we don’t sell them a product. We ask what they need and how we can grow together.”

The Impact and the Future

Today, SHI serves thousands of clients, including Fortune 500 companies and government institutions. Its strength lies not in size but in relationships.

As SHI moves deeper into digital transformation, cloud services, and cybersecurity, Thai continues to lead quietly but confidently. She doesn’t run after trends; she builds for the long run.

Her leadership stands as proof that you don’t need noise to make an impact. You just need vision, trust, and patience.

Italy's New AI Law Is a Game-Changer for Europe and for Global Tech

A First Among Peers

On 10 October 2025, Italy made history by becoming the first country in the European Union to pass its own national AI law. This is not just about rules, it's about Italy choosing to shape how AI grows, carefully and responsibly.

What the Law Says

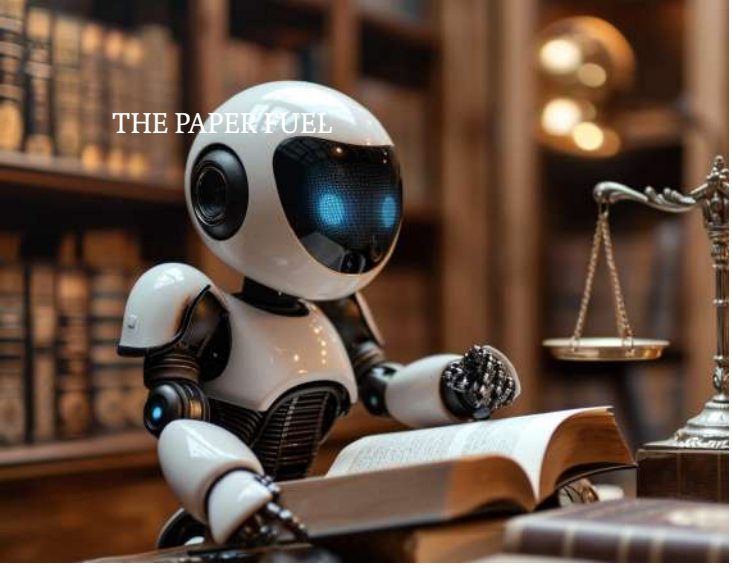
Any AI system used in important or "high-risk" areas must have a human supervising it.

The decisions made by AI must be traceable; you should be able to know how and why an AI system reached a conclusion.

Children under 14 will need parental consent before using certain AI services.

If someone misuses AI in a harmful way (for example, making deepfakes or using it for fraud), there are criminal penalties, including up to five years in jail.

New authorities at the national level will now watch over AI. But existing regulators like the Bank of Italy will keep watching over specific areas such as finance.



Money Talk: Incentives & Investments

Italy is also putting its money where its mouth is. The law plans a €1 billion fund to support projects in AI, telecoms, and cybersecurity. For Italian startups, that's a big opportunity. For investors worldwide, it's a signal: Italy wants to build real AI strength, but it's not going all-out like the U.S. or China.

Some critics say the fund is small compared to the ambition, but the idea is clear: Italy is serious about balancing control with innovation.

Why This Matters Outside Italy

1. Rule clarity. The EU's AI Act gave everyone broad guidelines. But companies still wondered: who will enforce what, and where? Italy's law fills in a lot of those blanks.

2. Global impact. Many AI services are built by global teams. Indian tech vendors working with European clients will now need to think deeply about how they build and audit AI systems.

3. New business paths. There will be demand for third-party audits, traceability tools, and "human-in-the-loop" systems. That is a potential opportunity, especially for Indian startups and service providers.

The Politics Behind It

The law is being sold as "human-centered AI." But there's more to it: Italy is also protecting its national interest in a critical tech space. It's not just regulation, it's industrial policy. This matters in a Europe where countries increasingly want their own voice in global technology.

Regulation is no longer just a burden. It's becoming a way to compete.

What Should Businesses & Investors Do Now?

For AI founders & CIOs: You need to map out how your models work. Document who oversees decisions, and plan for audits.

For IT vendors: Be ready for tougher clauses in contracts. European clients may demand more transparency and controls.

For investors: Assess your bets not just in terms of product potential, but also how resilient they are to regulation. Long-term value will likely depend on regulatory soundness.

Bigger Picture: What's Next in Europe?

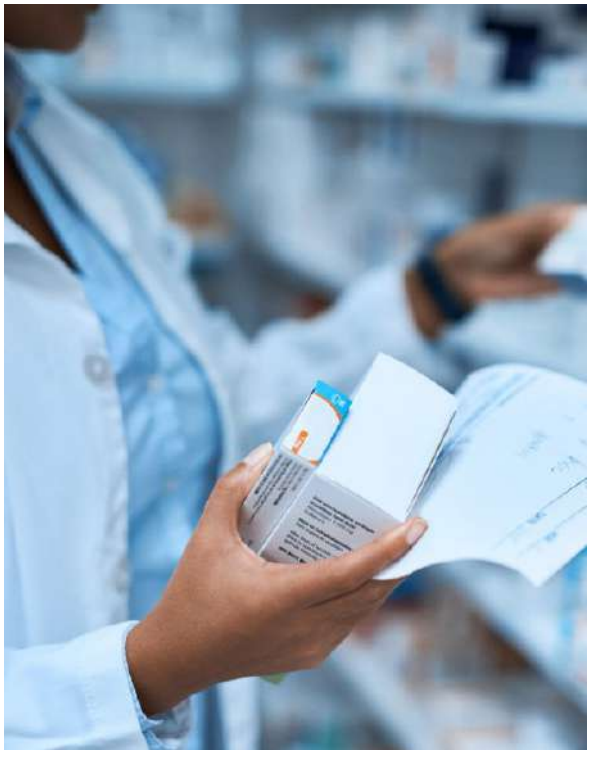
Italy may not be alone for long. Other EU nations are watching closely. Some may follow their own national AI laws. The big question: will Brussels allow a patchwork of different national laws, or force everyone to play by a single EU-wide rulebook?

Italy's new AI law feels like a turning point. It's not about stopping innovation - it's about steering it. By putting accountability, human oversight, and real penalties front and center, Italy is trying to build an AI ecosystem that is safe, fair, and globally competitive. For Global firms, investors, and tech leaders, it's the kind of development you can't ignore.

The Cannabis Gambit:

A €400 Million Bet Against Opioids

There is an ironic twist in Clemens Fischer's story. The 50-year-old German pharma entrepreneur made his money selling everyday health products, including IBS tablets, weight-loss shakes, and joint-pain ointments. Nothing glamorous, but very profitable. Now he is placing a huge bet, almost €400 million, on something that could change how the world treats pain, and on the way it treats cannabis.



From the Munich lab to a possible new medicine

Inside a clean lab in Munich, Fischer walks past a glass door labelled "VER-01 Process Suite." Scientists in white coats are fine-tuning a formula called VER-01. The promise is simple and bold: relieve chronic

pain without making patients feel high. That is the risky part. Turning an idea into a medicine is hard. Turning a cannabis product into a respected prescription drug is harder.

Fischer is not a typical biotech founder. He is a medical doctor and a serial entrepreneur who has built and sold several health companies. Vertanical, his Munich-based firm, is his moonshot. The company wants to make VER-01 a prescription drug, first in Europe, then globally. The goal is to deliver enough cannabinoids, with a tiny amount of THC, to ease pain while staying below levels that cause intoxication.

Why this matters

More than a billion people worldwide suffer from chronic pain, and many are pushed toward opioids. Opioids can help in the short term, but they often lead to dependence, tolerance, and overdose. Vertanical wants to offer an alternative for cases where opioids fail or where the risk is too high. The real test will be whether regulators, doctors, and insurers accept a cannabis-based medicine as legitimate and safe.

The long road through trials

Vertanical started eight years ago with a bold idea, that plant compounds long stigmatised could be refined into safe medicines. The team built slowly, with pharmacologists, chemists, clinical trial experts, and regulatory strategists. They focused on chronic low back

pain, one of the most common and stubborn pain conditions.

They ran dosing studies, looked at how the drug behaves in the body, and moved step by step through Phase I and Phase II trials. In 2025, they reached a turning point. Their Phase III trial enrolled over 800 patients. VER-01 showed better pain relief than placebo, improved sleep, better day-to-day function, and no big safety issues or signs of dependence. Fischer calls this vindication, but he knows the toughest work is still ahead.

Big hurdles remain

Turning trial success into an approved prescription drug means clearing many hurdles. Vertanical must satisfy regulators, meet strict manufacturing standards, and persuade doctors and payers to trust and prescribe the drug. Global cannabis laws and public stigma are additional obstacles. In Germany, the company argues the dose is low, under intoxication thresholds, yet still therapeutic. That argument will be important for regulators worried about abuse.

Vertanical is also building its own manufacturing, so it can meet good manufacturing practice standards and control quality. Fischer plans more trials for conditions like osteoarthritis and diabetic neuropathy, aiming to broaden the drug's use.

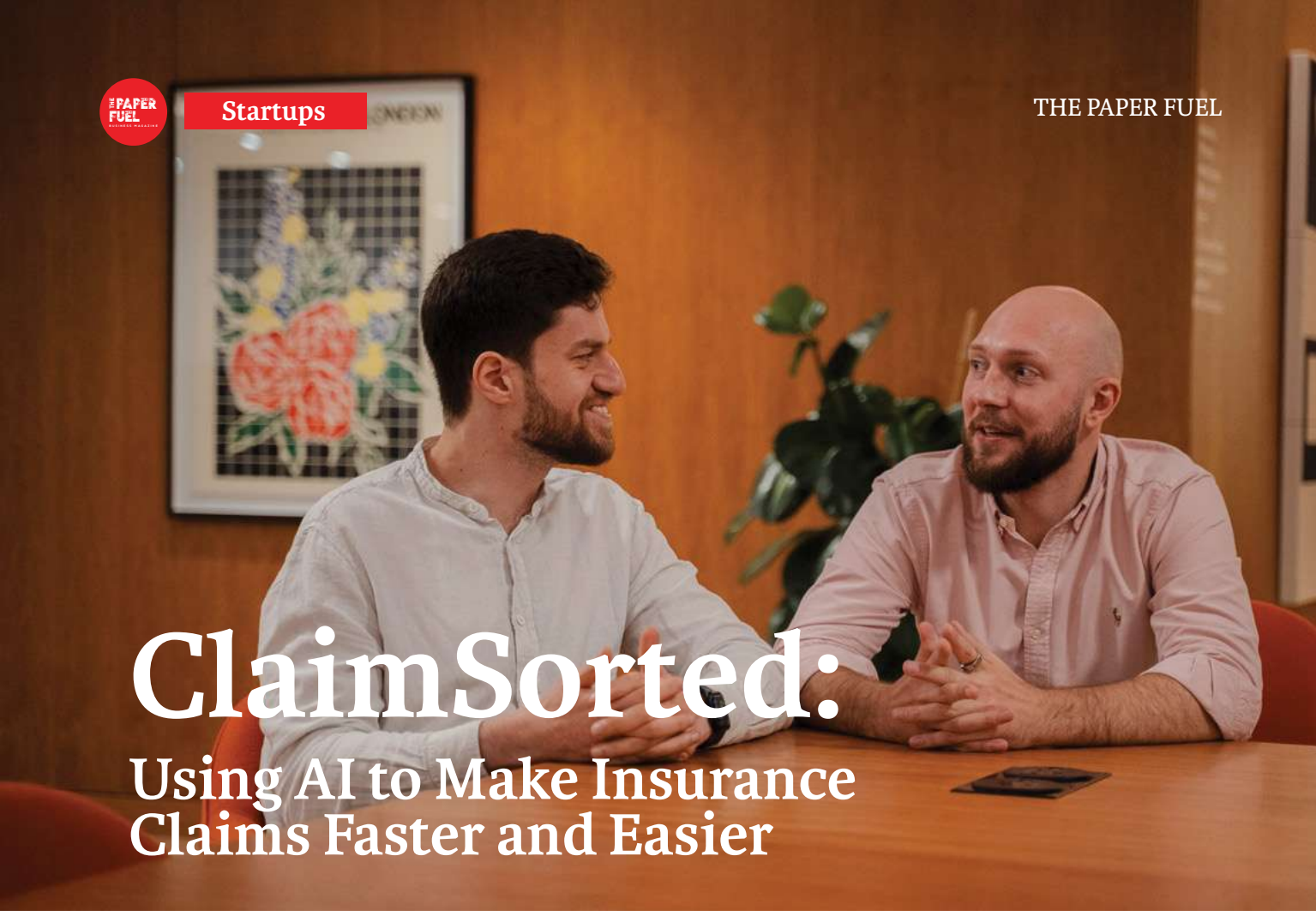
If it works, the prize is huge

If approved in Europe, Vertanical expects doctors to start prescribing the drug, called Exilby, for chronic low back pain. That would be a first, a cannabinoid therapy competing directly with opioids and other pain drugs in mainstream medicine. If insurers pay for it, adoption could spread fast across Europe, and then to the U.S. and other markets.

Why the world is watching

The opioid crisis left a deep wound in public health systems. There is now a real appetite for safer alternatives. A cannabis-derived prescription drug that relieves pain without addictive risk would be a breakthrough. Yet one misstep, a safety issue, a manufacturing failure, or political pushback could derail everything.

Fischer knows the risks, and the company stresses transparency and rigorous compliance. The story is powerful, a plant once shunned, now refined into a potential medicine, backed by clinical evidence and entrepreneurial grit. Whether Vertanical changes pain treatment or becomes a cautionary tale will depend on the next few years, one trial, one regulatory decision, one insurer's choice at a time.



ClaimSorted:

Using AI to Make Insurance Claims Faster and Easier

Insurance has always been known for being slow, rule-heavy, and full of human friction. ClaimSorted, a new-age startup, wants to change that. Its mission is simple but powerful to turn the frustrating process of claims into something faster, smoother, and more reliable. Using artificial intelligence, the company automates and speeds up claims handling, reduces manual reviews, flags fraud early, and helps insurance companies pay customers quickly.

The Problem: A Slow and Fragmented System

Insurance companies deal with massive amounts of data and strict regulations. Every claim passes through several stages, making the process long and complicated. Automating it isn't easy because each insurer has its own systems and workflows. ClaimSorted's founders understood this problem deeply they come from backgrounds in insurance operations and applied AI, and built their solution around it.

The Solution: AI That Supports, Not Replaces

Instead of trying to replace human adjusters completely, ClaimSorted chose a smarter route. It designed an AI system that supports human decision-making. The company's technology focuses on document understanding and decision support, helping adjusters with quick triage, accurate data extraction, and trusted suggestions. This "augmentation" approach earned them credibility because it helps humans work faster rather than removing them from the process.

Strong Market Response and Funding Boost

The approach worked. In October 2025, ClaimSorted raised $13.3 million in fresh funding. The new capital will help them scale their product, enter new markets, and deepen partnerships with major insurers. Investors were impressed not just by the idea but by the company's early results. Insurers want automation that's reliable, compliant, and enterprise-ready. ClaimSorted proved it can deliver that balance.

What Makes ClaimSorted Stand Out

Two main things helped ClaimSorted rise above the noise:

1.Deep domain focus: They didn't sell a one-size-fits-all AI tool. They built specialised modules that fit directly into insurance workflows and integrate with existing systems.

2. Clear, measurable results: ClaimSorted tracks outcomes like time to settlement, error reduction, and fraud detection accuracy. These numbers show real business value and directly improve insurers' return on investment.

Competition and the Road Ahead

Competition in this space is intense. Many established insurance tech companies and new AI startups are also racing to automate claims. But ClaimSorted's success shows that deep industry knowledge and trust matter more than flashy technology. Their next steps are to practically expand into markets where

regulations are favourable, cover more languages and document types, and strengthen their reliability metrics to win trust from cautious insurers.

Impact on Global Markets

The global insurance sector could benefit massively from AI-driven claims automation. In countries where insurance coverage is increasing but paperwork still slows things down, ClaimSorted's system could bring real change. Faster claims mean happier customers and better reputations for insurers. It's both a financial and emotional win for the industry.

The Bigger Picture

ClaimSorted isn't chasing hype. It's tackling a stubborn, high-value problem with focus and measurable impact. By choosing depth over buzz and execution over promises, the startup has shown it understands both technology and trust. With new funding and growing momentum, ClaimSorted could redefine how insurance claims are processed worldwide.

ClaimSorted's story is about turning one of the most frustrating parts of insurance into something fast, fair, and efficient, proving that the right use of AI can make a real human difference.

n8n: The Workflow Platform Connecting AI to the Real World

When most small teams get stuck, they add more meetings. The Berlin-based startup n8n did the opposite. It built a platform to solve the messy reality of automation, how to make different apps, data sources, and AI models actually work together. With a few simple visual steps, n8n lets both engineers and non-engineers connect systems easily. For companies trying to make smart technology truly useful, n8n has become an essential tool.

From Developer Tool to Business Enabler

n8n started as a developer-first product. Its founder, Jan Oberhauser, was frustrated by rigid integrations and vendor lock-ins that limited flexibility. They decided to create an open and extensible workflow engine that developers could fully control. Over time, they added a visual interface so even non-technical users could automate tasks.

This mix of technical depth and user-friendly design became n8n's biggest strength. Instead of forcing companies to change their systems, n8n allows them to connect legacy software, cloud platforms, and modern AI tools in one place. Businesses can now automate processes without rewriting everything from scratch.

Finding Product-Market Fit

The company's early breakthrough came when e-commerce and fintech firms started using n8n to automate manual handoffs between CRM, finance, and customer support systems. Tasks that used to take days were reduced to minutes.

These small wins soon attracted larger enterprise clients, who demanded advanced

security, scalability, and compliance. This was the turning point. n8n evolved from a developer tool into a mission-critical automation platform for global businesses.

The Big Leap: $180 Million Funding

In October 2025, n8n secured a Series C funding of around $180 million, led by Accel, pushing its valuation close to unicorn status. But the funding wasn't just about prestige. It reflected investor confidence in n8n's potential to become a core link between enterprise AI and real-world business operations.

The new capital will help n8n expand its global presence, strengthen compliance and security, and accelerate product development, especially for industries that handle sensitive data and operate under strict regulations.

The Culture Behind the Code

Beyond the product, what makes n8n stand out is its culture. The team listens closely to the needs of developers who want flexibility and business teams who want simplicity. This has helped the company grow in a balanced way.

Its business model, a mix of subscriptions and enterprise add-ons, ensures steady recurring revenue, something investors love. It also reflects a long-term vision: making automation accessible and scalable without losing control.

Standing Out in a Crowded Market

The workflow automation space is highly competitive, with big legacy players and new AI-driven startups fighting for attention. But n8n's open, composable, and integration-first approach gives it an edge. It's not trying to replace existing tools-it's helping them work together more intelligently.

If n8n keeps building on this strategy, it could become a key foundation in enterprise automation, much like how cloud infrastructure became essential a decade ago.

A Global Solution with Local Relevance

The need for smarter, connected systems is global. Businesses across Asia, Europe, and North America face similar integration challenges. For enterprises, which often juggle legacy systems and new cloud tools, n8n offers a bridge-one that connects AI capabilities with real business workflows.

With strong funding and a clear vision, n8n is well-positioned to power automation across industries, driving productivity and innovation at scale.

The Bigger Picture

n8n's journey from a side project for developers to a globally recognised platform shows how solving one real problem well can lead to massive growth. Its $180 million funding round is more than just a financial milestone. It's proof that workflow automation is no longer just backend plumbing; it's the track on which the future of AI will run.

David Sacks

Cofounder and Partner, Craft Ventures

Age - 53
Residence - San Francisco, California
Citizenship - United States

Source of Wealth - software, Self Made
Notable Deal - SpaceX
Ranks: 85 The Midas List: Top Tech Investors (2025)

David Sacks, co-founder and partner at Craft Ventures, is one of Silicon Valley's most respected founders and investors. For over two decades, he has built and backed some of the world's most iconic tech companies, with investments in over 20 unicorns including Airbnb, Slack, SpaceX, Uber, Twitter, Reddit, and Palantir.

Sacks began his tech journey in 1999 at Confinity, later known as PayPal, where he served as COO and the company's first product leader. He played a key role in shaping PayPal's business model and product direction, helping it pivot from Palm Pilot payments to web-based transactions. When PayPal went public in 2002, Sacks was just 29, part of the legendary "PayPal Mafia" that went on to define a generation of tech innovation.

In 2008, he founded Yammer, one of the earliest SaaS companies to bring viral consumer growth tactics into enterprise software. As CEO, he grew Yammer to 500 employees and $60 million in annual revenue before selling it to Microsoft for $1.2 billion in 2012. His "Bottom-Up SaaS" approach, combining product-led growth with B2B sales, became a defining model for modern SaaS startups.

Beyond investing, Sacks co-hosts the All In podcast with Chamath Palihapitiya, Jason Calacanis, and David Friedberg, covering tech, business, and global issues. Known for his sharp product sense, AngelList's Naval Ravikant once called him "the world's best product strategist." True to form, Sacks prefers to start every pitch meeting with a product demo.

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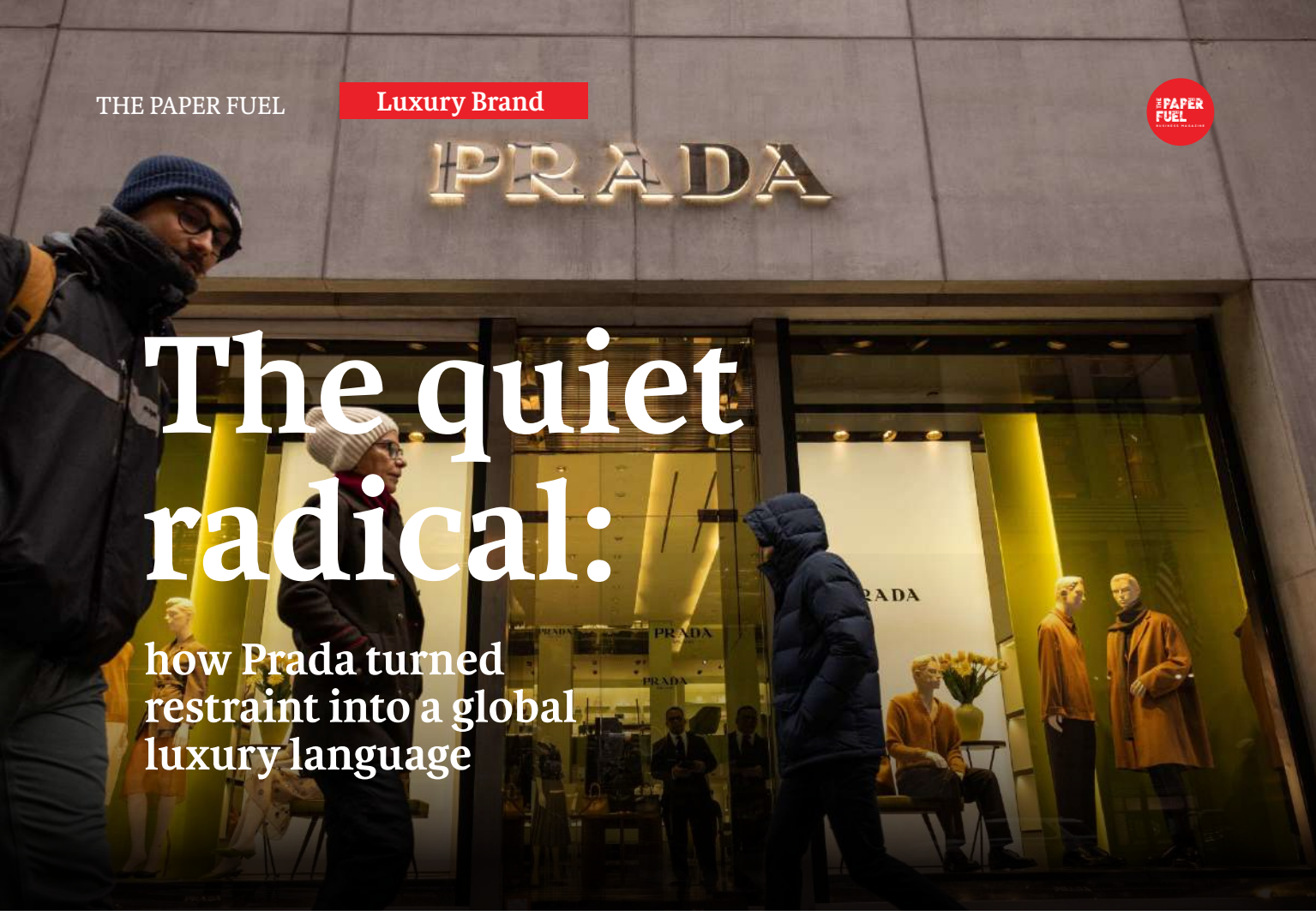


The quiet radical:

how Prada turned restraint into a global luxury language

From a Milan shop to a global idea

Prada started in 1913 as a small leather goods shop in Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. For many years it remained a quietly admired name, not the loudest in luxury. The real change came when Miuccia Prada, who trained as a mime and had been active in left-wing politics, joined the family business and met Patrizio Bertelli in the late 1970s. Their partnership combined Miuccia's creative curiosity with Bertelli's strong business sense, and together they reshaped Prada into a modern luxury brand that values subtlety and intelligence over show-off glamour.

The aesthetic that disarmed the world

Prada's style was never about big logos or loud branding. Instead it offered a quiet kind of elegance: clean lines, unusual materials, an "ugly-chic" twist that made people think differently about beauty. One landmark moment came in 1985 when the brand launched a black nylon bag practical, tough and yet luxurious. That bag helped change the idea of what "luxury" could be: it did not have to mean ornate trimmings. It could be smart, purposeful and modern.

Turning points that mattered

Several decisions changed the course for

Prada. In the late 1980s the brand moved from just accessories into ready-to-wear fashion. It listed publicly and started expanding globally. More recently, the 2020 appointment of Raf Simons as co-creative director signalled a fresh chapter: it showed Prada could maintain its intellectual edge while opening to new styles, and also hinted at succession planning as the founding duo considered what comes next.

Business grit behind the glamour

Prada's growth has not been a straight upward line. The brand faced dips in demand, pressure from fast-fashion and consolidation in the luxury world. But through careful retail investment, clear product focus and reading market trends well, Prada bounced back. In 2024 the group reported revenues of about €5.4 billion, marking several years of strong growth even while parts of the luxury market were cooling. With that steadiness Prada acquired the luxury fashion house Versace in 2025, showing its ambition to lead in Italian luxury.

A house that bets on responsibility

Prada's comeback is matched by a shift in materials and processes. The "Re-Nylon" project, which remakes plastic from oceans and landfills into nylon, is more than a marketing line: it shows Prada wants sustainability built into its product story. By making the material part of the conversation, the brand steps away from being luxury for luxury's sake and asks what luxury means in a changing world.

Anecdotes that reveal character

Patrizio Bertelli is the kind of CEO who once bought a key supplier just to ensure production quality rather than depend on market promises. Miuccia, meanwhile, still runs Prada's cultural wing, Fondazione Prada, as if the brand should always be in dialogue with art and ideas. Together they've been described as a power couple who argue about craftsmanship over breakfast and agree on business discipline by lunch. Those everyday habits tell us why Prada stayed daring while grounded.

What's next

Today Prada stands at an interesting crossroad. Strong growth gives it options from stepping up sustainability to investing in digital experiences to growing through new brands. The Versace acquisition shows big ambition, but with that come bigger challenges: how to preserve Prada's thoughtful edge while managing a multi-brand group. Whether the house remains a "quiet radical" or turns into a standard corporate giant depends on how it handles this chapter.

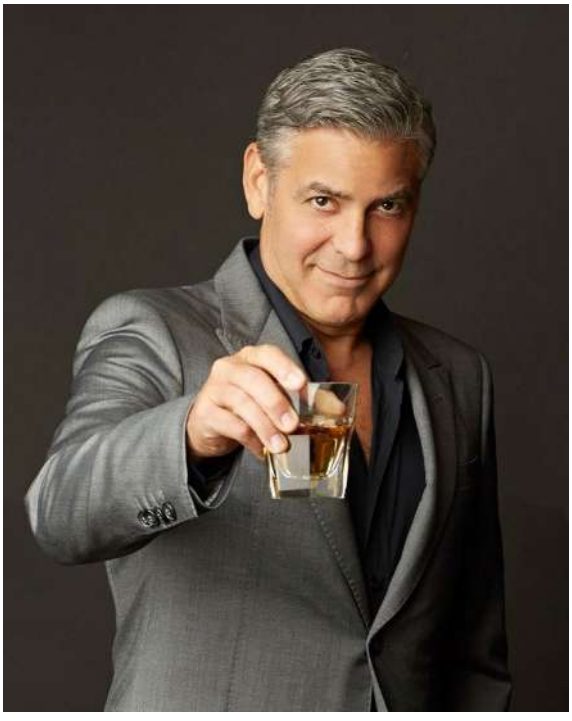
Final note

Prada's story matters because it shows luxury isn't only about price tags and glitz. It's about an ongoing conversation with culture, taste and meaning. For a brand that began in a Milan arcade, Prada now writes its own rules across culture, business and responsibility and does so with the same restless intelligence that Miuccia Prada brought from the stage and the streets.

George Clooney:

The Hollywood Star Who Turned Friendship and Taste into a Billion-Dollar Empire

George Clooney didn't set out to become a global businessman. He just wanted a good tequila that he and his friends could enjoy straight, without the usual salt and lime routine. That small idea turned into the brand Casamigos, and then into a big business move that redefined how a famous actor could make money beyond films.



From living-room idea to global brand

In 2013 Clooney, along with friends Rande Gerber and Mike Meldman, started making tequila for their circle of friends. They called it Casamigos, meaning "house of friends." It was purposefully informal. They wanted a drink that was smooth, easygoing, and meant for enjoyment. That origin gave the brand a

character in a crowded market of celebrity endorsements.

The big turning point

Just four years later, the global spirits giant Diageo bought Casamigos for up to $1 billion. The deal surprised many because the brand had grown so fast. For Clooney it was a turning point: this wasn't just a product, it was a story one that began with friends and grew into something worldwide. Even after selling, Clooney and his partners stayed on board to keep the brand true to its roots.

Walking the line between actor and entrepreneur

Clooney doesn't do flashy ad deals for the sake of fame. For example, with Nespresso he has been a long-term brand ambassador, not just a face for a short campaign. This shows that when a celebrity picks partnerships carefully and sticks around, the association becomes more authentic and valuable.

He didn't stop with drinks. In 2006 he co-founded Smokehouse Pictures with Grant Heslov. The aim was to produce films and content the way a startup sets up a business find partners, build assets, control rights, and grow value over time.

The purpose side of business

Of course business isn't only about profit. In 2016 Clooney and his wife Amal launched the Clooney Foundation for Justice. It works to support human rights, fight for accountability, back journalists and legal aid. For him, business and social purpose go hand in hand his brand doesn't live in isolation from what he stands for.

Scaling up had its challenges

The rapid success of Casamigos brought good and bad attention. As the brand entered global markets, issues around sourcing and labelling were raised. A lawsuit alleged misleading claims about composition. Whether the case holds or not, the lesson is clear: when you scale fast, you become vulnerable. For celebrity-driven brands especially, the back-end systems need to be solid too transparency, compliance and governance matter as much as front-end stories.

What business readers should take away

Authenticity wins: Casamigos succeeded because it began with what the founders genuinely wanted.

Reputation is an asset: Clooney's long-term careful partnerships helped him borrow trust rather than buying it.

Running things like a founder: He trusted experts to handle operations while staying true to the vision.

Purpose gives depth: His foundation work isn't marketing, it adds to the brand's story.
From a living-room experiment in Mexico to boardroom deals in London and legal scrutiny in New York, Clooney's journey is rich with lessons. It shows how a celebrity can become a real entrepreneur, one who balances storytelling and discipline, value and integrity. For those tracking business, culture, media or branding, his path offers a real-world case of converting fame into enterprise.

George Clooney will still act, sip coffee, maybe enjoy tequila with friends. But the business lesson is clear: in today's world, stories create value, but only execution makes them last.

When Robots Step Into Real Factories

From Lab Idea to Real Steel

In October 2025, robotics saw a big change. It felt like robots were not just toys for researchers anymore. A startup called RoboForce made the shift. They had been showing smart robot demos in labs. But now, with their robot TITAN, they say they are ready for real work on shop floors, in factories, and even in mines.

At NVIDIA's GTC conference, CEO Jensen Huang brought TITAN on stage. This wasn't just for show: RoboForce says they already have more than 11,000 letters of intent from big businesses that want TITAN for logistics, manufacturing, mining, shipping, and data centers.

What Makes TITAN Different

TITAN is not just a fancy robot model. It runs for 8 hours, can handle things with its two arms, and has a smart brain (RF-Net) that helps it understand where things are, in very fine detail. These are not lab demo specs, but real-world working specs. For companies that have tried robots before and failed, that matters a lot.

A Shift in How Robots Think

Robots are not just about hardware now. The big change is in "physical AI" software that helps robots feel and reason, not just move.

NVIDIA's Isaac toolset, plus their new GRooT N1 robotics model, makes this possible. The idea is to build a software base which different robot makers can use. This reduces the cost and time needed to build a working robot.

Real Money Is Coming In

Big money is flowing into this shift. NVIDIA and Samsung announced a joint AI factory to build robots and AI hardware for industrial use. At the same time, companies like Johnson & Johnson are using NVIDIA's tools for robot-assisted surgery. These show that this is not just academic promise, real companies are betting on robot infrastructure.

Hard Questions, Big Challenges

It's not easy. Robots like TITAN are designed for difficult work tasks that are risky or boring for humans. Logistics firms are already testing humanoid robots for work that does not fit traditional automation. But there are big challenges. The robot hardware is costly. Certifications for safety will take time. And making these robots reliably at scale is hard. Also, putting robots in messy, real-world places is far harder than doing demos in clean labs.

What's Next: The Important Turning Points

There are some key things to watch:

1. Manufacturing at Scale: Can RoboForce and others make robots cheaply and reliably?

2. Safety and Rules: Regulators will want strong testing. Clients will demand robots be explainable and safe, especially when they move and lift things.

3. Workforce Impact: Robots are being pitched as helpers. But companies will need real plans for training staff, shifting roles, and addressing people's fears.

Why It Matters for Business

For companies and investors, the bet is becoming more serious. They are not just funding research anymore. They want robots that can be bought, maintained, and used like machines on the production line. The October announcements of new models, factories, and big customer interest suggest we are building real infrastructure for physical AI.

A Real Chance But Also Responsibility

Robots are finally stepping off the stage and into real work. If things go well, this could become a major industrial shift. But the test will be in real-world results: how much uptime these robots deliver, whether companies get consistent returns, and how well integration and maintenance work.

This is more than a technology story. It is a business story, a labour-market story, and a future-of-work story. And over the next year, we will see whether this is a true turning point or just a more polished repeat of old promises.

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