

JAMES KELLY

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Multidisciplinary executive with 20+ years of proven performance across Fortune 50 media operations and bootstrapped startups, building, scaling, and integrating complex organizations in environments defined by ambiguity, speed, and high stakes. Managed a 250+ person hybrid global team across Los Angeles, Silicon Valley, New York, and London, including significant change management through both rapid growth and organizational downsizing. Co-founded two companies from zero: an internationally ranked immersive experience (Hatch Escapes, #7 globally) and a highly regulated California housing design-build firm (Cassette Systems, current). Navigated complex regulatory environments, built cross-sector stakeholder coalitions, and delivered on ambiguous mandates without close oversight. Demonstrated capacity and interest in AI safety and governance, with the judgment, operational range, and execution track record to build operational infrastructure through rapid scaling.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- ▶ End-to-End Initiative Ownership
- ▶ Autonomous Execution in Ambiguous Environments
- ▶ Cross-Sector Stakeholder Coordination
- ▶ P&L Ownership & Budget Management
- ▶ Org Design, Change Management & Integration
- ▶ Startup Founding & Large Enterprise Operations
- ▶ Strategic Planning & Risk Assessment
- ▶ Public-Facing Campaign & Partnership Strategy

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cassette Systems | *Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer* | May 2024 – Present

Launched and operated a licensed California modular and manufactured housing design-build firm - a domain requiring rapid mastery of complex regulatory frameworks (HCD, HUD), multi-party stakeholder coordination, and end-to-end operational build-out from scratch.

- Obtained California HCD dealer license and served as dealer-of-record for regulated residential factory-built housing transactions statewide - a legal and operational accountability with no room for error.
- Built all legal, contracting, escrow, and sales documentation infrastructure from zero, navigating a heavily regulated public-interest domain with no prior industry experience.
- Identified an opportunity in an unfamiliar, complex space; defined strategy; built the operational scaffolding; and executed autonomously.

Yahoo / Verizon Media | *Sr. Director, Head of Yahoo Studios* | Nov 2021 – Sep 2023

Led all business operations, finance, HR, and production functions for Yahoo Studios - a \$45M annual operation delivering 60+ hours of original live and VOD content weekly across news, finance, sports, entertainment, and lifestyle verticals.

- P&L ownership for \$30M annual operating budget; led financial reporting cadence directly to CFO team and senior leadership.
- Managed 250+ person hybrid global team across Los Angeles, Silicon Valley, New York, and London - including significant change management through both rapid growth and organizational downsizing.
- Oversaw all vendor, contract, and partner relationships across a complex multi-stakeholder production ecosystem.

Verizon Media / RYOT Immersive Studio | *Sr. Director, Strategy & Operations* | Dec 2018 – Nov 2021

Owned strategic planning, business operations, and post-acquisition integration for RYOT - an immersive media and product design agency absorbed into Verizon's media portfolio.

- Led full post-acquisition integration of RYOT into the Verizon Media ecosystem: merged content and product organizations, eliminated redundancies, and delivered \$10M in annual cost savings (~35% reduction) - a high-stakes, ambiguous mandate executed without a previous playbook.
- Built all business processes, strategy, project management, and legal/contracting frameworks for the merged entity.

- Content operation produced two Academy Award-nominated films, a Sundance Directing Award winner, and an Emmy-nominated series.

Verizon Media | *Director, Business Planning & Operations* | Aug 2015 – Nov 2018

- Led content studio integration across AOL, HuffPost, and Yahoo Content organizations during Verizon Media's media rapid growth and acquisition wave.
- Designed and delivered quarterly business analysis and content reviews across Verizon Media's full brand portfolio.
- Oversaw creation of the flagship Verizon 5G Lab content studio in Playa Vista, CA - from concept through operational launch.

Yahoo Studios | *Director, Technology Lead & Music Producer/Engineer* | Jan 2009 – Jul 2015

- Led technology design and build of a flagship NYC broadcast studio facility; opened on schedule in 2012.
- Deployed digital asset management systems migrating all media assets to distributed off-premises storage.
- Produced and engineered thousands of music performances globally, including A-list clients at Skywalker Sound.

Hatch Escapes | *Founder, Designer & Builder* | Jul 2017 – Dec 2019

- Co-founded, designed, and built an escape room company ranked #7 globally in its category - from concept through operation, entirely bootstrapped. Exited cash positive in 2019.
- Demonstrated end-to-end ownership across a complex physical/experiential domain with no prior template.

EDUCATION

BlueDot Impact - Frontier AI Governance (certificate) - 2026

BlueDot Impact - AGI Strategy (certificate) - 2026

Bluedot Impact - Future of AI (certificate) - 2026

UCLA Anderson School of Management - M.B.A. - 2017

Amherst College - B.A., English / Film - 1999