

# Michael Leonardini

Creative Director | Brand Strategist | Performance Marketing  
michaeleonardini.com

## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

I've spent 17 years connecting big creative ideas with real business results—the kind that show up in revenue reports, not just award show reels.

I've led brand campaigns for Visit California, Disney, and the Sacramento Kings that moved both perception and performance. I've taken Inc. 5000 companies from regional players to national contenders by building brand foundations that actually scale across channels.

I'm a translator between creative teams and performance marketers—an independent thinker who moves fluidly between high-level strategy and tactical execution. I understand what makes creative memorable and what makes it convert. And when I don't, I trust my gut.

## CORE COMPETENCIES

### Brand & Creative Strategy

Brand architecture • Creative positioning • Customer journey mapping • Multi-channel campaign development

### Creative Direction & Execution

Art direction • Brand identity systems • Content strategy • Copywriting • Design systems

### Performance & Growth

Performance creative optimization • A/B testing frameworks • Campaign analytics  
Media strategy • Conversion rate optimization

### Leadership

Cross-functional team leadership • Creative talent development • Stakeholder management  
Agency-client relations

## EDUCATION

B.A., Journalism - San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA  
Minor: Photojournalism

## EXPERIENCE

### 2025 - Current Fractional Creative Director & Performance Marketing Strategist, Reno, NV

Closing the gap between creative ambition and marketing performance—helping brands build strategies that drive both engagement and results.

I establish AI usage standards that protect brand integrity while helping lean teams scale output without sacrificing quality—ensuring every AI-assisted output is shaped by human judgment, storytelling instinct, and emotional intelligence. Leading AI-integrated operations that accelerate timelines and expand capacity—using AI for deep research into customer sentiment, social trends, and behavior to shape positioning and messaging strategy. Building workflows that

enable rapid voice and tone testing, competitive analysis, and benefit exploration to find differentiation and white space. Streamlining approvals and production through AI-assisted visualization (mood boards, storyboards) and fast content iteration for ad sets and social campaigns.

**2023 - 2025      Head of Brand Marketing and Creative, Sunn Stream, Reno, NV**

Led marketing for an OTT streaming platform, directing digital marketing, advertising, communications, and creative teams to drive customer acquisition and retention while optimizing for CAC and lifetime value.

Developed the brand positioning and marketing strategy for a personal development streaming platform. Built marketing infrastructure from awareness to conversion—including campaign frameworks, funnel optimization, AI-driven playbooks for affiliate programs and partnerships, content strategies, and performance measurement systems. Conducted market research to identify content opportunities and audience segments.

**2022 - 2023      Founder & Mentor, SONJOY + ADPList, Olympia, WA**

Took a strategic pause to recalibrate, invest in community impact, and build a recovery-centered brand while mentoring emerging creatives.

- Top 1% mentor on ADPList—consulting and coaching Graphic Designers, Visual Designers, and Art Directors on personal brand development, portfolio strategy, and career navigation.
- Created and led personal brand workshops for young and seasoned professionals seeking clarity and differentiation in competitive markets.
- Founded and launched SONJOY, a recovery-centered card deck and brand for people healing from hangups, habits, and trauma—blending storytelling, psychology, and spiritual wisdom into practical tools for transformation.

**2019 - 2022      Creative Director, KPS3, Reno, NV**

Transformed a PR-driven agency into a creative and content powerhouse by building an in-house content division and leading digital campaigns for enterprise, government, and healthcare clients.

Created award-winning social change campaigns on public safety, addiction, and elder abuse. Built a full content services division covering motion graphics, social, and live production. Co-managed product roadmaps, set technical specifications, and led research-driven product development that turned creative instincts into scalable systems..

**2017 - 2019      Chief Creative Officer, The Abbi Agency, Reno, NV**

Transformed a respected PR firm into an award-winning creative agency with a provocative approach that earned B Corp status and attracted major tourism and tech clients.

Led brand workshops with governments and companies that revealed competitive advantages and increased economic development—work that helped bring Google, Amazon, and the Las Vegas Raiders to Henderson, NV. Created breakthrough campaigns like Storybook of Memories that elevated Edgewood Resort Tahoe to 4-star status. Developed visual concepts and messaging for startups with global teams.

**2005 - 2015     Design Director, Shipyard, San Diego, Sacramento, CA.**

Co-founded a best-in-class design firm within a renowned ad agency, expanding capabilities beyond tourism into luxury and entertainment while crafting distinctive brand identities across tourism & entertainment, healthcare & nutrition, and CPG.

Led design for Visit California's record-breaking Dream Big campaign launch including a global TV spot and the debut Dream365 Network. The YouTube masthead generated 136 million impressions and 2.5 years of content watched in a single day. Developed global brand identities and standards in multiple languages for the nation's most desirable destinations, resorts, and sporting attractions.

**CLIENTS*****Tourism & Entertainment:***

Sacramento Kings, Visit California, San Diego Tourism, Pebble Beach Resorts, Walt Disney Company, Disney Parks, Mammoth Lakes Tourism, Monterey, Newport Beach, Carmel-by-the-Sea, North Lake Tahoe, Travel Nevada, Explore Murrieta, Visit Henderson, Pacific Hospitality Group, Destination By Hyatt, Summit Powder Mountain, Crested Butte, CO, Carbon County, UT, Las Vegas Wedding capitol of the World, Paramount Pictures, Sunn Stream

***Healthcare & Nutrition:***

SFI Health, Klaire Labs, Emerson Ecologics, NutraMedix, Himalaya, Sutter Health, REMSA Health

***CPG:***

Walt Disney Company, E. & J. Gallo (Wine & Spirits), G3 Enterprises

***Tech & SaaS:***

Amazon, Accenture, EY, Content Square, Abrigo, Stellar, Blockchains, LLC

**REFERENCES**

Greg Carson, Executive Creative Director & Partner • 62Above  
Jeffery Butterworth, Chief Creative Officer • Butterworth Collective  
Lori Bartle, Founder • Cultivagency  
Rob Rough, PMP, CSM • SunEdison  
Kimanh Nguyen • HNTB Corporation  
Jill Coyle, Founder • Colvita Creative  
Chris Brummer • CMO, Corporite Direct