

NICOLE CACAL



PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Executive leader in strategy and innovation, accelerating growth and profitable operations; connecting C-Level executives to drive Hawaii’s technological future.

SKILLS

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| Innovation Consulting | Facilitation and Public Speaking |
| Operations Management | Raising Capital |
| Cross-Functional Collaboration | Financial Management |
| Revenue Generation | Public-Private Partnerships |
| Executive Leadership | Client Relationship Building |
| Budget Planning | Project Management |

WORK HISTORY

12/2024 to Current

Executive Director

TRUE Initiative – Honolulu, HI

- Lead non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to diversifying Hawaii's economy by creating tech jobs and strengthening local organizations through technology adoption and workforce development.
- Cultivate strategic partnerships with enterprise technology leaders, government agencies, and academic institutions to advance digital transformation initiatives and create pathways for workforce development across Hawaii's tech ecosystem.
- Design and implement programs that bridge academic learning with practical industry application, including the TRUE Innovation Studio (formerly Community Innovation Mentorship Program), providing hands-on experience and direct engagement with industry professionals.
- Manage diverse stakeholder committee comprising representatives from academia, enterprise, and government sectors, cultivating long-term relationships with members through regular engagement, strategic communications, and collaborative decision-making while actively recruiting new members to expand organizational reach and enhance cross-sector collaboration.
- Oversee the full cycle of programs, major conferences, and community events—such as the Hawai'i AI & Cloud Innovation Summit—from concept to implementation and evaluation.
- Develop comprehensive strategic plans aligning stakeholder interests across public, private, and academic sectors while managing organizational budget, securing grant funding, and executing sponsorships for financial sustainability.
- Serve as a key representative at conferences, workshops, and public forums, amplifying TRUE Initiative’s mission and broadening its network of supporters.

- 11/2019 to Current **Part-Time Faculty (Adjunct Professor)**
Parsons School Of Design – Remote
- Lead financial management teaching team as Course Coordinator.
 - Proposed, created, and led the course: Design for Social Innovation.
 - Participate in career advising sessions to graduate and undergraduate students.
 - Facilitate undergraduate students' learning in the areas of Business Models & Entrepreneurial Strategy, Financial Management, and Social Innovation, providing instruction to up to 22 undergraduate students.
 - Recruit renowned and progressive guest speakers to enhance student learning.
 - Use a variety of learning modalities and support materials to facilitate the learning process and accentuate presentations.
 - Incorporate instructional technologies in course delivery for both in-class and online instruction.
- 09/2019 to 11/2024 **Founder and CEO**
Forbes Ignite – New York, NY and Honolulu, HI
- Led a team in a worldwide consultancy focused on social change, creating custom digital and business strategies as an official Forbes Media partner.
 - Built startup from the ground up, establishing a culture of entrepreneurial thinking and operational excellence to reimagine the consulting model.
 - Drove revenue from 0 to 7 figures by launching 3 new offerings.
 - Facilitated design thinking workshops with 200+ C-level leaders, academics, community leaders, and Forbes 30 Under 30s to distill customized intelligence, subject matter expertise, and foster shared commitment.
 - Introduced advanced technology solutions, including AI, to cut content and report creation time by 75%.
 - Keynote speaker, moderator, and conference chair representing organization at international industry conferences and events, including largest tech conferences across three continents (AI Summit/London Tech Week, LEAP, GITEX).
 - Cultivated and maintained relationship management with key clients, including American Express, Colgate-Palmolive, and Salesforce, delivering business model solutions and thought leadership resonating with their business objectives.
- 08/2022 to 08/2023 **Visiting Associate Professor**
Pratt Institute – New York, NY
- Demonstrated strong interpersonal and communication skills, resulting in clear subject matter discussion with students, including Web3 and innovation.
 - Taught in-person Strategic Technology course to up to 25 graduate students.
 - Built strong rapport with graduate students through class discussions and academic advice with a predominantly international student base.
 - Implemented assessment tools for evaluating student progress and adjusting instructional strategies accordingly.
 - Reviewed program materials and coordinated updates to keep department materials relevant and accurate.
- 08/2016 to 01/2020 **Product Strategy Consultant**
Human Centered Consulting – Remote
- Developed product roadmaps using design thinking for increased client revenue growth and enhanced customer experience.

- Played a key role in developing long-term product vision and strategy, ensuring alignment with client goals and objectives.

08/2017 to 04/2018 **Investor Relations Associate** (Interim Head of Investor Relations)

Pembrook Capital – New York, NY

- Managed investor inquiries for an impact-focused private equity fund, playing instrumental role in the execution of investor relations strategies and maintaining positive relationships with current clients and prospects.
- Raised \$20 million by integrating marketing and sales efforts.

01/2015 to 04/2016 **Registered Private Client Associate**

Alliance Bernstein – Tampa, FL

- Developed comprehensive retirement planning strategies to help clients achieve financial goals.
- Optimized asset allocation across \$2B+ AUM for enhanced performance while adhering to each client's unique risk profile.

06/2013 to 12/2013 **Operations Manager**

Smartinvest Capital – Miami, FL

- Relationship point of contact for an international client base of \$150M+ AUM.
- Conducted rigorous due diligence on prospective investments, mitigating risks associated with underperforming assets.

02/2012 to 05/2013 **Client Services Representative**

Hewins Financial Advisors – San Francisco, CA

- Improved team efficiency by streamlining internal processes for account opening, trading executions, and account maintenance tasks.
- Provided superior regional client service support (\$1B+ client AUM).

EDUCATION

05/2020

Master of Science: Technology Management

Columbia University - New York, NY

- 3.8 GPA
- Relevant Coursework: New Business Ventures

05/2018

Master of Science: Strategic Design and Management

Parsons School of Design - New York, NY

- 3.9 GPA
- Provost Scholarship
- University Scholars Award

12/2011

BBA: Finance And International Business

University of Hawaii at Manoa - Honolulu, HI

- Best Presentation in Social Sciences, Upper Division Honors Program
- Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Certificate
- Certificate in International Management, Pacific Asian Management Institute

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Governing Board Member August 2023 – Present

International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP)

- Spearheaded Membership Committee of a global organization dedicated to advancing the field of sustainability through professional member engagement.
- Managed design and delivery of membership programs, ensuring alignment with latest industry trends and member needs for professional development.

Virtual Professional-in-Residence September 2023 – Present

University of Hawai‘i Pacific Asian Center for Entrepreneurship (PACE)

- Advised and mentored University of Hawaii students and faculty on areas such as entrepreneurship, business strategy, and innovation.

Mentor January 2025 – June 2025

Hawai‘i FoundHer

- Mentored business owners in the islands' first business accelerator dedicated to Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian American (NHPIAA) women entrepreneurs.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Pacific Business News “40 Under 40” Honoree, 2025

MEDIA APPEARANCES & PRESS

Moderated executive interview with Guillaume Pousaz, CEO of Checkout.com, on Thrive Now to Change the Future, *LEAP Saudi Arabia*, February 2022

Moderated executive interview with Peggy Johnson, CEO of Magic Leap, on Augmented Technologies: The Future of Training and Work, *LEAP Saudi Arabia*, February 2022

Moderated executive interview with Sean Garnier, CEO of Urbanball, on Deep Dive: Unlocking the Potential of Web3, Gaming, and NFTs: The Future of Online Interactions, *LEAP Saudi Arabia*, February 2023

“Impacts of AI on Hawai‘i’s business, economic futures,” *KHON2 News*, September 2024

“TRUE Initiative has big plans for Hawai‘i’s workforce: New ED Nicole Cacal,” *KHON2 News*, January 2025

“TRUE Initiative appoints new leadership,” *Pacific Business News*, January 2025

“What 3 jobs will survive AI? Nicole Cacal’s insight for Hawai‘i,” *KHON2 News*, January 2025

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

What AI Can Do for Hospitality | February 2026
HLTA Housekeeping Council, Honolulu, HI

AI for Customer Experience | October 2025
Hawaii National Bank, Honolulu, HI

AI as Tool, Design as a Mindset | October 2025
Piiku, Honolulu, HI

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Tech Career Pathways Summit | October 2025
Hawaii Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, HI

The Hospitality Advantage: How AI Ensures Every Visitor Experiences Hawaii's Best | October 2025
Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association, Waimea, HI

Leading and Learning in the Age of AI | September 2025
Pacific Century Fellows, Turtle Bay, HI

AI Strategies to Grow and Protect Your Business | June 2025
Central Pacific Bank, Honolulu, HI

AI for Social Media: A Toolkit for Entrepreneurs | June 2025
Maui Women's Business Center, YWCA Oahu, Honolulu, HI

AI 101 for Personal and Professional Growth | May 2025
YWCA Oahu, Honolulu, HI

Reimagining Customer Experience with AI for Pacific Asia Tourism | April 2025
Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA), Honolulu, HI

Mission-Driven Growth: A Business Strategy Workshop | March 2025
Profitable Purpose Consulting, Honolulu, HI

AI Essentials for Busy Entrepreneurs | March 2025
Maui Women's Business Center, YWCA Oahu, Honolulu, HI

Creating a Viable Business Model in 30 Days | March 2025
Maui Women's Business Center, YWCA Oahu, Honolulu, HI

Future-Proof Your Business with AI-Driven Goal Setting | February 2025
Maui Nui Entrepreneurs Bootcamp, UH Maui College, Kahului, HI

The Eight Hawaii Innovation Mindsets | September 2024
State of Hawai'i Office of Economic Revitalization (OER), Honolulu, HI

Discovering Customer Secrets: How Data Helps Small Businesses Grow | August 2024
Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE), Honolulu, HI

The Eight Hawaii Innovation Mindsets | August 2024
Hawaii AI & Cloud Innovation Summit, Honolulu, HI

AI for Small Businesses | February 2024
Hawai'i Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Honolulu, HI

AI for Small Businesses | January 2024
Small Business Administration (SBA), Honolulu, HI

Tech Made Simple: Customer Experience Essentials for Small Businesses |
November 2023
Hawai'i Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Honolulu, HI

Maximizing Your Potential Through Reciprocal Mentorship | June 2023
TEDxDAU, Washington, D.C.

How to Transform as a Leader Through Mentorship | January 2023
Military Mentors (Featured Keynote Speaker), Washington, D.C.