

The Optics of Innovation: How Benjamin Shapiro is Reshaping Imaging Technology

Oct. 17, 2025 /Wantrapreneur to Entrepreneur/ -- Benjamin Shapiro made the bold leap from tenured professor to tech founder, driven by a desire to see his research become real-world innovation. As the CEO of Lumenuity, he's transforming the future of imaging with Light Unfolding® technology—tailored, high-performance optics powering next-gen mobile and AR devices. In this *Wantrepreneur to Entrepreneur Spotlight*, Benjamin shares how walking away from academic accolades led to deeper impact, why simplicity is strategic, and how a lean, intentional team can outpace bloated startups. His journey is a masterclass in turning vision into product, and complexity into clarity.

Hi, Benjamin Shapiro! Thanks for joining us today. Tell us about your business. Who do you serve, how do you serve them, and what's the impact that your business and work makes?

Lumenuity is a cutting-edge optics company delivering groundbreaking technology for enhanced optical performance in compact systems. Our Light Unfolding® technology unlocks new imaging possibilities across multiple applications. Lumenuity provides custom solutions tailored to partners' needs and is backed by a prestigious advisory board with decades of leadership experience at top-tier smartphone and augmented reality companies.

Tell us about the moment you finally felt like you went from wantrepreneur to entrepreneur.

The moment I gave up tenure as a full professor to join a startup company. Till then, I felt I was starting interesting research, but a university is not built to move research to products. Startups do that.

Describe the moment or period in your life/career that motivated you to make the entrepreneurial leap.

I'll give an example. With a colleague, I did years of research and we got to a cool, hard, and new result that we published in a Nature journal. After the publication, I asked him "what's next?" and his answer was "what do you mean, we just published in Nature?" That in a nutshell (not always, but often) is the trajectory at a university.

I wanted more than that. I wanted to see cool tech that I developed, in the hands of consumers and that was the drive towards being an entrepreneur.

Describe a tool, service, or software that has been a game-changer for your business. How does it contribute to your success?

We have an internal tool that we have developed that allows us to design much better optics. Think AI, but for mobile camera & augment reality (AR) optics. It's been a game-changer. With that tool, we have developed much better optics for phones, drones, and AR.

We know that success is very often a non-linear path. Tell us about a failure, pivot point, or lesson that changed your course or direction and helped to get you where you are today.

I think this is something that people, especially entrepreneurs often miss - optimize for the near term and the long-term, not the mid term. You need the near term to keep the lights on next week, especially at company start. And you need the long-term planning for strategy and overall company success. But the midterm is unpredictable, and changes month to month.

Early on, especially for financial & investor-facing planning, my team and I would spend weeks drawing up detailed plans for next 2-4 quarters. Multi-page, cross-referenced spreadsheets. Three months later they were out of date, and out of use. In a fast moving small company, I don't do that anymore, and don't ask my team to do it.

What unconventional strategy did you employ that significantly impacted your business?

Minimal effective team. ROI is a ratio, it's exit divided by amount of funds spent. Founders often hire before they've thought through what they actually need. I like flat teams, where each person can do multiple but well-defined roles - both because it reduces costs and because it keeps communication tight and fast. By design, I've created the nimble, most effective team I think can address a large market. I only increase team size if and when the added market win is clear & big.

What's something you wish you knew sooner that you'd give as advice for aspiring or newer entrepreneurs?

Keep it simple, as much as possible, at every level. The best tech answer is an elegant clean answer (which is also more likely to be manufacturable, and have better profit

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margins). The best operating, accounting, and legal oversight systems should be as simple as possible, with experienced advisors that know through decades of experience what ‘as

possible’ actually means for your space. And the best path to market has the lowest number of steps, and hence the least friction and fastest time to market.

Want to dive deeper into Benjamin's work? Check out the links below!

- Visit Lumenuity's website: lumenuityinc.com