

Chris Barton

Chris Barton, inventor of Shazam and pioneering technology entrepreneur, inspires organisations to challenge conventional thinking, overcome obstacles and turn ambitious ideas into reality. Drawing on his experience at Shazam, Google and Dropbox, he shares practical lessons in innovation, resilience, creativity and the transformative potential of AI.

KEY TOPICS

- Build the Vision You See (But Others Don't)
- Bring Impossible Ideas to Life
- Overcome Obstacles with Imagination
- Eliminate Effort to Unlock Explosive Growth

BIOGRAPHY

Introduction

Chris Barton is a pioneering technology entrepreneur, inventor of Shazam and innovation expert who demonstrates how seemingly impossible ideas can become world-changing businesses. Having overcome extraordinary technical challenges, years of financial uncertainty and widespread scepticism to create one of the world's most recognisable apps, Chris brings a compelling perspective on innovation, resilience and creative thinking. Through his keynotes, he inspires leaders and organisations to challenge assumptions, embrace unconventional ideas and develop the mindset needed to turn ambitious visions into reality.

Professional Background & Credentials

Chris Barton's entrepreneurial journey began in 2000 with an idea that experts considered impossible: identifying any song simply by using a mobile phone. At a time when the necessary technology did not exist, and years before smartphones and app stores transformed the industry, Chris set out to create Shazam. Despite being told by experts at MIT and Stanford that the required pattern-recognition technology was impossible, Chris persisted. He helped develop groundbreaking technology, build an extensive music database and create a service that could operate on the most basic mobile phones. Shazam initially launched as a telephone-based service, but faced six years of financial uncertainty before the arrival of Apple's App Store in 2008 unlocked its potential. In 2018, Shazam was acquired by Apple for a reported $400 million. The app has since surpassed two billion downloads and attracted more than 300 million monthly users, fundamentally changing how people discover and interact with music. Widely regarded as an early example of mass-market AI technology, Shazam demonstrates the power of pursuing ideas that others believe cannot be achieved. Beyond Shazam, Chris has played influential roles in the growth of other major technology companies. As an early member of Google's Android Partnerships team, he helped establish the mobile operator partnership framework that supported Android's global expansion. He subsequently joined Dropbox as one of its first 100 employees, spending four

years leading carrier partnerships. An inventor with 12 patents, including technology incorporated into Google's search algorithm, Chris continues to explore how emerging technologies can solve complex problems. His latest venture, Guard, is developing an AI-powered system designed to detect drowning in swimming pools, applying innovation to a potentially life-saving challenge. Chris also invests in technology start-ups spanning artificial intelligence, healthcare and medical innovation, and teaches innovation and entrepreneurship at four universities. Central to his achievements is a distinctive approach to problem-solving shaped by his personal experiences. Having struggled academically with dyslexia and ADHD, Chris came to recognise that his unconventional thinking could be a significant advantage. What once appeared to be obstacles became strengths that enabled him to question established assumptions and identify possibilities others overlooked. Drawing on these experiences, Chris developed **Start From Zero Thinking**, a five-step framework designed to overcome barriers to innovation. Rather than accepting existing limitations, the approach encourages individuals and organisations to reconsider problems from first principles, challenge conventional thinking and discover new opportunities for breakthrough ideas. Before entering the technology industry, Chris worked as a strategy consultant and earned master's degrees from UC Berkeley and the University of Cambridge.

Speaking Style & Audience Value

Chris Barton's keynotes combine inspiring personal stories, engaging storytelling and practical insights into the mindset required to achieve extraordinary results. Using music, video and compelling visuals, he takes audiences behind the creation of Shazam, revealing how creativity, persistence and unconventional thinking helped transform an impossible idea into a global phenomenon. His presentations go beyond the traditional entrepreneurial success story. Chris explores how individuals and organisations can overcome resistance to change, challenge established ways of thinking and maintain resilience when faced with uncertainty and setbacks. Through his Start From Zero Thinking framework, audiences discover practical approaches to breaking through perceived limitations, unlocking creativity and developing innovative solutions to complex challenges. Drawing on his experience across Shazam, Google, Dropbox and emerging AI ventures, Chris also offers a valuable perspective on technological disruption and the opportunities artificial intelligence presents for businesses willing to rethink what is possible. Whether delivering a keynote presentation, participating in a fireside chat or addressing senior leadership teams, Chris brings energy, authenticity and a strong focus on actionable ideas. His message is particularly relevant for organisations seeking to foster innovation, build entrepreneurial cultures and inspire teams to pursue ambitious goals despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Awards & Recognition

- Inventor and co-founder of Shazam, acquired by Apple in 2018 for a reported $400 million.
- Creator of one of the earliest mass-market AI-powered consumer applications, with more than two billion downloads.
- Holder of 12 patents, including technology incorporated into Google's search algorithm.
- Early member of Google's Android Partnerships team and one of Dropbox's first 100 employees.

Teaching & Academic Roles

Chris teaches innovation and entrepreneurship at four universities, sharing his practical experience of building breakthrough technologies and businesses. He holds master's degrees from UC Berkeley and the University of Cambridge.

Innovation & Social Impact

Through his latest venture, Guard, Chris is developing artificial intelligence technology designed to detect drowning in swimming pools. The initiative reflects his commitment to applying breakthrough thinking to real-world challenges, demonstrating how innovation can extend beyond commercial success to create meaningful social impact. **Contact us now** to learn how Chris Barton can inspire your next event with powerful insights into innovation, artificial intelligence, resilience, creativity and turning seemingly impossible ideas into reality.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

> "*"We recently had Chris Barton speak at our 40th anniversary celebration. He delivered what was by far the best one hour keynote that our clients and staff had ever seen. Chris was insightful, energetic, and entertaining speaker with thought-provoking ideas."*"
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> **— CEO, Costa Rica, Porter Novelli**

> "*"Chris customized a powerful keynote that delivered significant value for Coca-Cola. His messages sparked action among our executives and inspired our bottler partners toward our goals. Chris's energy and enthusiasm really stands out. He is an inspiration with truly eye-opening insights and stories."*"
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> **— VP Customer & Commercial Leadership, Coca-Cola**

> "*"Chris embodies inspiration from head to toe. We loved his stories and insights on the core mindsets that lead to game-changing innovation. His delivery was fun, genuine and honest, both during his speech and as our "guest star" at my leadership team's offsite dinner."*"
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> **— CEO, Mexico, L'Oréal**