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Startup Spotlight™

ProInfluence Startup Spotlight™ on Pistol Lake

Startup Spotlight™ features innovative, consumer-based startup companies and their passionate founders.



Ryan Light, CEO



What does Pistol Lake do and how did the company get started?



Pistol Lake ethically manufactures minimalist menswear all in Los Angeles. We cut, dye, sew, warehouse, and ship, all from about a three-mile radius in LA. Not shipping stuff all around the world during production gives us some inherently good eco-vibes that we're really proud of.

We started in 2012 making men's basics out of organic cotton and French Terry. Our founder, William, was formerly a tech founder but grew up in a family in Maine that made shoes. He always had an itch to start a company that made a really high-quality physical product and returned to his roots with the founding of Pistol Lake.

Where did the name Pistol Lake come from? Is that an actual place?

Pistol Lake is a beautiful place in rural Maine where our founder, William, used to spend summers camping with his family. He developed a deep love of the outdoors and nature here and has carried that passion with him into every facet of his life.

What makes Pistol Lake different than other men's athletic apparel companies?

In 2016 we did something we think is pretty interesting - we invented a fabric. It's made out of recycled water bottles, eucalyptus, and a bit of spandex to give it stretch. We call it **Eudae** (You-day) and the idea behind it is that it performs like a technical fabric - wicks sweat, fights odors, doesn't wrinkle. But instead of looking and feeling scratchy like a technical fabric - it looks and feels softer than your favorite cotton shirt. So, you can wear it anywhere without looking out of place. It's basically like supercharging your normal clothing.

What's your competitive advantage?

Eudae. Plain and simple. Guys try shirts made out of Eudae and it blows their minds'. We've had customers get rid of their entire closets and buy 10+ Minimalist Tees or One-bag Henleys once they try them.

Beyond that, our competitive advantage is the same as other great businesses: we take the time to make things right. Whether that's testing and design, our rigorous manufacturing and quality standards, soliciting feedback from customers, or fixing an issue for them. We're out to make the highest quality, most comfortable and versatile men's gear on the market.



			
RECYCLED MATERIALS	SWEAT WICKING	ODOR RESISTANT	SOFTER THAN COTTON



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Who are some of the key Pistol Lake team members and their backgrounds?

Ryan - CEO. Ryan has been a team member at three successful venture-backed startups and recently had an exit with Kinvey (Boston Techstars class). He came on as CEO 18 months ago and brings strong marketing mindset to the role.

William - Founder and VP of Product. He invented Eudae after 100s of iterations and tests. He's a product genius and obsessive about designing and making the highest quality clothing on the market. Before founding Pistol Lake, William founded and sold a tech company that went through TechStars in Boston.

Andrew - Head of Operations & Manufacturing. He's the reason all of our high-quality gear gets made to the highest standards. His rigor is unmatched and his eye for quality is impeccable.

Who is your primary target market and how do you best reach them?

We have three main customer personas, but our primary target market is men from ages 26 - 45 who believe in quality products. We are really big on Reddit. We have our own [subreddit](#) where we ask our diehard customers for feedback on what we should make next. Beyond Reddit we find that Instagram is also a great channel to find like-minded guys who believe in our ethos: "Take less. Adventure more."



Where can consumers buy Pistol Lake today?

Right now, we're 99% direct-to-consumer via our website. We're exploring other channels though. We've tested pop-ups in the LA area and we're looking to expand since they've gone so well (60% of guys who touch or try on the product, buy it). We're testing retail with a company called B8ta (<https://b8ta.com/>) right now as well. You can find our gear in their San Francisco and San Jose locations.

Do you have a B-to-B, corporate sales program?



We launched corporate swag about 6 months ago. Before we decided to get into the B2B world we did some research and found that ⅓ of all corporate swag ends up donated or in a landfill within a year. When polled, the #1 reason for given is "low quality." So, we knew there was already a need there.

So far, we've only opened up corporate orders to a beta test group but in that 20+ test companies, we've seen really promising numbers. 20% of people who receive our Minimalist Tee with their company's logo on it come to our shop to buy Pistol Lake gear for themselves.

How do sales look over the last 12 months? How are they trending?

In 2018 we spent \$2k on ads and did over \$600k in revenue. Sales are going great this year and we're on track to have our best year yet. Growth of Eudae has been really awesome and we're poised to really break out into 2020.

Any new, innovative products coming soon that you can discuss?

Joggers made from a popular fabric we carry called Eclon, are currently in production and will be released in a month. New heavier Hemp Henleys are going to drop in December. A brand-new color of our flagship One-bag Henley is coming out. New colors of our French Terry Crewneck and Hoodie come out just before the holidays. And finally, right around the holidays, our All-Around Shorts - the most versatile pair of minimalist shorts on the market - will hit our shop. We just ran a very successful Kickstarter for these over the summer where we hit 300% of our funding goal.

Are you currently raising capital?

Yes, we're currently about halfway through a round of funding right now. We plan to round out our funding with an equity crowdfund where we'll give our loyal customers the opportunity to own a piece of the business. We're really excited at this prospect as we think it will make for an awesome dynamic - giving real ownership to our guys who believe in us and have been customers since day one. Kinda like the Green Bay Packers of clothing.



What's one thing people should remember about Pistol Lake?

"Take less. Adventure more." We believe strongly that we can change the apparel world by ethically manufacturing versatile, long-lasting minimalist athleisure-wear out of recycled fabrics. You don't need to own a million pieces of cheap clothing for different occasions. Simplify, buy quality gear once, and go out and enjoy your life.

To learn more about Pistol Lake, where should people go?

We encourage everyone to visit us at <https://www.pistollake.com/> and on the following social platforms:

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/PistolLake/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/pistollake/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/PistolLake>
- Reddit <https://www.reddit.com/r/pistollake/>

#TakeLessAdventureMore



Listen to Ryan further discuss...



- Clip #1: [Eudea, Pistol Lake's proprietary material made from recycled water bottles and eucalyptus](#)
- Clip #2: [Building the DTC business by helping corporate clients reduce promotional waste](#)
- Clip #3: [Unintended Benefits - Techstars Sports accelerates team building](#)



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