ZIA SHAIKH

AI/SaaS Business Development | GTM & Partnerships | AI Adoption

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Business development and commercial leader with 20+ years across sales, partnerships, account growth and operations, complemented by hands-on experience building AI/SaaS products and workflows. Brings together customer discovery, product positioning, go-to-market planning and practical AI adoption. Experienced in translating business needs into product requirements, refining customer journeys and leading teams.

CORE CAPABILITIES

AI Adoption • Business Development • Customer Discovery • Product Positioning • Workflow Design • GTM Strategy • Strategic Partnerships • Pricing & Packaging • Consultative Selling • Team Leadership

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & Commercial Lead | AccessLayerAI

Apr 2026 - Present | Ontario, Canada

- Built and launched a SaaS access-control platform, taking responsibility for product direction, customer experience and go-to-market execution.
- Defined target customers, subscription tiers, pricing and product messaging through market research, prospect conversations and customer questions.
- Developed prospect research, outbound messaging and partnership offers for creators selling access to Custom GPTs and AI products.
- Translated business requirements into product workflows using AI-assisted development; tested setup, verification and access journeys, and refined the interface and supporting copy.
- Designed customer-management workflows covering individual access, CSV imports, bundles and expiry dates.

Business Development & Sales Consultant | Independent Sales Consulting

Jan 2023 - Mar 2026 | Remote | Ontario, Canada

- Managed the full sales cycle across contract assignments, including discovery, qualification, presentations, objection handling, follow-up, negotiation and closing.
- Provided consultative sales support for coaching, digital products, real estate and service-based offers, using discovery-led conversations to understand needs and guide purchasing decisions.
- Adapted to new offers, sales processes and client expectations while working independently across remote assignments.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director of Sales & Account Management | 2324918 Ontario Ltd.

Jan 2014 - Mar 2020 | Independent consulting and contract assignments | Greater Toronto Area, Ontario

- Ran an independent consulting and contracting business providing sales, account management and commercial support across multiple industries.
- Managed the sales cycle from prospecting and needs discovery through presentations, negotiation and closing, followed by onboarding and account growth.
- Balanced new-business development with existing-client relationships, promotions and changing account priorities.
- Trained and coached team members in product knowledge, sales conversations and customer service.

Business Development & Operations Manager | Ze-Xperience

Sep 2002 - Dec 2013 | Greater Toronto Area, Ontario

- Managed business development, operations, marketing and customer experience across salon and franchise environments.
- Supported approximately eight franchise openings across the GTA, coordinating staffing, training, POS systems, schedules, vendors and operational readiness.
- Recruited, trained and supervised teams of more than 18, reinforcing consultative selling and customer-retention practices.

TECHNOLOGY & PLATFORMS

AI & Automation: ChatGPT (Custom GPTs), Claude (Skills), Gemini (Gems), Perplexity, NotebookLM, n8n, Make.com

Commercial: Salesforce, HubSpot, LinkedIn Sales Navigator, Meta Ads, Google Ads

Product & Collaboration: Lovable, Replit, Base44, Supabase, Stripe, GitHub, Google Workspace, Notion, Slack

Creative: Kling AI, Seedance, Higgsfield, CapCut, InVideo, Canva, Nano Banana, DALL-E, ElevenLabs, Suno, Audacity

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Applied AI Workshops & Programs - Outskill, Coursiv and independent workshops covering AI workflows, agentic AI, AI avatars and cloning, vibe coding, website design, video generation, copywriting, marketing and advertising | **2024-Present**

NEPQ Sales Training - 7th Level, Jeremy Miner | **2023**

Remote Closing Academy - Cole Gordon, Closers.io | **2022**

Blockchain & Digital Assets - Keystone Investor Club: blockchain, cryptocurrency, DeFi and trading | **2021**

Digital Marketing - iPro Academy: media buying, online advertising and eCommerce | **2019**

Business Administration & Professional Development - Toronto Metropolitan University, formerly Ryerson University | **2008**