



Emily Kennedy

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Tech Role Models

This series lets technology innovators share their journey as a way to inspire others. Hear Emily's story:

What sparked idea

A mission trip to the Balkans opened my eyes. In a one-stoplight town, children rushed up to our car to wash our windows in hopes of making some money. Shaken, I learned the children were likely orphans, trafficked by the mob. Witnessing human trafficking stayed with me. And as I was getting my education, I learned that countless websites made millions off advertised victims. Could we use this info to find patterns and locate victims?

Company journey

1. A project with the Robotics Institute lab turned into a full-time job for me as a Research Analyst.
2. By 2013, we had a software prototype that could cull online sex ads, find patterns, and help detectives recover victims sold on the websites.
3. Decided to spin the technology—now a platform called Traffic Jam—out of the university environment and into a startup.
4. Startup grew to a team of 12 in 7 years, and has identified thousands of survivors.



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Success builds

Company moved on to win the World Economic Forum Technology Pioneer and was a semifinalist of IBM Watson AI XPRIZE. Emily has also been named Forbes' 30 under 30.

What you're most proud of

1. Using AI to solve a real problem.
2. Helping to dismantle criminal networks by following my passion.