



Case Study

Blue Sarah

Written by Audrey Woods

In today's digital landscape, consumers have more power than ever to voice their opinions and share feedback about companies and goods. However, many companies struggle to find, consolidate, and act on this feedback. Without concrete and structured data, it's not immediately apparent how large companies should respond to online complaints or bad reviews. To improve their products—and therefore their profits—businesses need a clear way to track what customers are saying at scale to better meet their needs.

This is where CSAIL Startup Connect Plus member [Blue Sarah](#) steps in. As a dedicated aggregator and analytics company for consumer reviews, Blue Sarah bridges this gap by centralizing and analyzing feedback from multiple platforms with their AI-powered copilot. Their aim is to give companies accurate and up-to-date data which will empower them to respond to their customers, improve their bottom line, and stay ahead in an increasingly competitive market.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Co-Founder & CEO of Blue Sarah George Manley says modern day retail is “going through an evolution.” The internet has had a massive impact on the shopping experience, turning customers away from brick and mortar and toward online stores. This, in his view, has led to a decreased focus on the customer experience and a lag in responding to feedback. In the sprawling world of online retail, it's hard to know what customers are saying or even where they're saying it. Reviews and surveys might not catch some of the complaints that are being aired on Reddit, Facebook, and other social media platforms.

Manley himself has ample business experience after thirteen years as a retail executive and seven launched startups. So when he and his wife—CRO and Co-founder of Blue Sarah Caitlin Infantino, who has a strong connection to the Boston footwear industry—were brainstorming Blue Sarah's mission, they leveraged both their industry acumen and respective networks to understand exactly what companies were looking for when it came to understanding and responding to reviews. Manley explains that the footwear world has particular challenges that Blue Sarah can tackle. For example, most people when ordering shoes will order two sizes and return the one that doesn't fit, which creates a return rate of up to 50%. This expense is factored into pricing, margins, and ultimately makes the product more expensive for the consumer. By aggregating consumer reviews, Blue Sarah aims to decrease returns and give companies some of that margin back, making the market better for both retailers and consumers.

One aspect of the problem Blue Sarah aims to solve is taking the raw information of customer reviews, scraped from multiple sources and platforms, and provide clean and actionable data which can be shared internally and create a clearer picture of how companies can proceed. He explains that historically it was hard for subjective comments from buyers, no matter how consistent, to filter back up the chain to product development or marketing.

An instance of this became evident in a pilot Blue Sarah ran with Saks Fifth Avenue, where one of their brands was selling a luxury sneaker called the Unicorn. When Blue Sarah consolidated the customer feedback on the sneaker, they found that 90% of buyers had encouraged others to size up because the sneaker didn't fit like a traditional shoe. Having this knowledge laid out so clearly gave the brand avenues to act on, like adding clearer sizing information on the product page or adjusting future iterations of the shoe.

Since first launching, Blue Sarah has trialed their AI copilot with several large customers and, modeling the ethos of the company, has been active in incorporating the feedback of their clients. But as they grow, it's critical to learn about the real-time needs of businesses and collaborate with companies actively applying technological solutions. To access those companies and the broader AI ecosystem, Blue Sarah is excited to engage with MIT CSAIL.

CONNECTING WITH CSAIL: NETWORKING, JOB SEARCH, AND COURSES

Manley says he's "always had a fascination with MIT," and when the Blue Sarah team decided to base their HQ in Boston to be close to the footwear industry they knew so well, he immediately "began investigating what options are there at MIT for startups." This search led him to CSAIL Alliances.

The biggest benefit, in Manley's view, of their Startup Connect Plus membership has been to connect with technology-focused companies who are excited to learn about and try new AI tools. This networking has taken several shapes, but Manley particularly highlights the CSAIL Alliances Annual Meeting, where Blue Sarah was able to engage with several other members who expressed interest in their technology. Manley has also been excited to attend the VC Breakfasts and startup-specific events organized by Senior Client Relations Coordinator Christiana Kalfas, who runs the [Startup Connect](#) and [Startup Connect Plus programs](#). "I read every one of Christiana's newsletters," Manley says. "I try and jump on every opportunity I can."

Another Startup Connect Plus benefit the Blue Sarah group has taken advantage of is the ability to post jobs on the CSAIL Alliances website. "We have three open to hires right now," Manley says, and they're excited to attract top CSAIL talent to join their growing team. Manley has also utilized the course discounts available to members to take [Artificial Intelligence: Implications for Business Strategy](#), a six week course created by CSAIL and MIT Sloan School of Management to educate industry leaders on how to prepare their companies for the era of AI. "I loved it," Manley says. "It was fascinating. I'm a huge fan of that particular class."

Generally, Manley says their relationship with CSAIL and CSAIL Alliances has been "wonderful," adding, **"I've met a lot of really interesting people, I've learned a lot of things, and it's helped me break into the Boston startup ecosystem."** Through CSAIL Alliances, Blue Sarah has found various ways to engage with MIT and the broader AI community, which has been helpful in shaping their strategy. In fact, the Blue Sarah team is relocating closer to Cambridge in part to be more involved with CSAIL Alliances and MIT. Manley says, "we're just all hands on deck with MIT."

For more information about CSAIL Alliances industry engagements, please visit:

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LOOKING AHEAD: GROWTH & MAXIMIZING THE MIT CONNECTION

Right now, Blue Sarah is focused on fundraising and using the fourth quarter of the year to “really focus on taking a big leap in the development of our product.” Manley explains that Q4 for retailers is usually “code lockdown” as they focus on holiday sales and getting the most out of the financial year. Since this will slow down consumer interactions, Blue Sarah plans to maximize that time to “bang out that larger wish list that we haven’t been able to tackle yet, in conjunction with filling these three open roles.” With some larger customers signed on to work with them in January, Blue Sarah intends to kick off 2025 with an improved product, larger team, and bigger presence in the Boston startup community.

With that in mind, they’re excited to engage more deeply with CSAIL and Alliances, “showing up, being available to everything we can, making sure we’re exhausting all opportunities.” They hope to give a tech talk sometime soon and Manley also aspires to give back to MIT and CSAIL by sharing his business experience with other startups, offering ideas for programs, and generally being reciprocal in the positive relationship they’ve built with CSAIL Alliances.

For his part, Manley is excited because “I do believe that AI is going to transform the way we interact with the world. It’s a great tool for making people vastly more productive. That’s why we’re working in AI, because we want to ultimately make our customers a lot more productive.” As an entrepreneur, Manley loves the idea of solving problems by building brand-new products, creating something where nothing existed before. “I think the idea of creating value from nothing is fascinating, and if you do that ethically and responsibly and you do it time and time again, that’s how you ultimately make a great company where people want to work.”