Reflecting on a Year Leading Catchafire – and the Chapter Ahead

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As readers of this blog know, at the center of my life's work is my role as founder and CEO of Incandescent. In this capacity, I advise leaders on strategy, organization and culture, and sit on the boards of ventures we've helped build. I'm also the person my clients count on to be in the room when the questions are hardest. Fourteen months ago, without stepping back from any of those commitments, I agreed to run a second company.

Catchafire – the impact-driven tech company I'd been an integral part of for a decade as an advisor and board member, and chaired the board of since 2021 – had reached a crucible moment. It was November 2024. We faced a brutal set of challenges: we'd planned to achieve profitability earlier in the year, and after failing to do so, could see the end of our cash runway approaching. We'd seen concerning levels of customer attrition and were struggling to close new business. Health issues had forced an unplanned leadership transition. And with a new administration about to take office, the sector Catchafire serves was about to face pressures none of us had seen in our lifetimes. The mission had never felt more urgent, and neither had the risk of losing it.

I said yes because of what I believe Catchafire makes possible.

When I was a junior at Amherst Regional High School, I drafted a student-authored honor code – modeled on what students at schools like Haverford use to govern themselves. The administration created the space for debate and a vote. The honor code proposal lost, 55%-45%. But that experience, and the work I did the following year helping draft state legislation on multi-stakeholder participation in school governance – legislation that passed – taught me something I've never forgotten: people who don't have voice can do extraordinary things when they have the right access and the right support.

That's what Catchafire provides, at scale, for the nonprofit leaders who hold our communities together.

Consider New Voters. Jahnavi Rao was sixteen when she started registering eligible students at her high school. By 2020, she had an organization – led by teenagers – with a vision to register every eligible high school student in America. What she didn't have was the infrastructure to get there. Through Catchafire, New Voters connected with skilled professionals who helped them build fundraising systems, board governance, marketing strategy – 42 projects in all. They went from one school in Pennsylvania to voter registration efforts in 43 states. "Catchafire was like having a team of mentors on speed dial," Jahnavi said. "Whenever we faced a challenge, there was someone ready to help us figure it out."

New Voters is one example, but the pattern holds across the full range of organizations Catchafire serves – from community health centers and food banks to domestic violence shelters and arts organizations. These are mostly small nonprofits, advancing critical missions with resources that were never designed to match the scale of what they're trying to accomplish. Catchafire connects them with skilled professionals – in marketing, finance, technology, strategic planning – whose expertise arrives at the moment it's needed most, and whose contributions build on each other over time.

This year, the sector has needed that expertise more than ever. Sweeping changes to government grantmaking. Sudden funding disruptions. Organizational strain at a scale few anticipated. The leaders on our platform aren't waiting for the storm to pass. They're adapting, building, and finding new paths to sustainability. Catchafire exists to be the infrastructure that multiplies their powers – and 2025 has made that mission feel less like aspiration and more like necessity.

When I stepped in as CEO in December 2024, the work ahead was daunting. We made significant cuts to the team just as I arrived. We needed to achieve profitability, rebuild morale, and center Catchafire on its core, indispensable mission while accelerating our evolution in a changing world.

We have now achieved a full year of profitability and have reignited growth. This makes our mission resilient and enables us to invest with confidence. We've continued to evolve our platform to serve nonprofits who are wrestling with threats to their freedom to operate, funding challenges and the question of how AI can multiply what small teams accomplish.

What I'm proudest of isn't the financial turnaround we've achieved – it's how our team has come together. Often when people think about turnarounds, they assume it means bringing in new leaders. What's been special about Catchafire is the opposite. The most committed, longest-standing leaders had so many of the answers. Hefei Li stepped into the COO role. Alexa Rivadeneira took charge of customer relationships and revenue growth. Tyler Manley took responsibility for our entire platform. Jamie Badia leads our voice in the market. My role has been to help crystallize direction and put the company's weight behind what delivers real impact for nonprofits – which has translated into deeper loyalty and renewed growth from the foundations and corporations we serve. This team of executives has fashioned Catchafire into a tightly woven, deeply mission-driven organization.

With the turnaround achieved and a strong team in place, the time is right for a permanent leader to lead Catchafire through the next chapter that our team is already moving into. As AI reshapes what's

possible for the organizations we serve, Catchafire has the opportunity to achieve impact at greater depth and greater scale. Our vision isn't to replace human expertise, but to multiply it. Catchafire has the opportunity to become the infrastructure through which nonprofits not only access skilled people, but harness the full power of what skilled people and AI can accomplish together.

We've begun our search, working with On-Ramps, and the role is posted here. The opportunity is a profitable social enterprise and Certified B Corp with $8 million in revenue, a strong leadership team, and a sector that needs what this company provides more than it ever has.

Over the past 15 years, the team at Catchafire has built infrastructure that multiplies what nonprofit leaders can accomplish, infrastructure the world needs more than ever. Over the next five years, the next leader will build the wave.