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## How an Italian-born entrepreneur conquered America with his investment platform



*Damián Ariel Scavo*

His story starts in Argentina, passes through Italy, and arrives in Silicon Valley. Damian Ariel Scavo is a serial entrepreneur and an extraordinary character. Not only has he been able to turn his ideas into reality, achieving success at a very young age, but he continues to revolutionize with his projects. Along with doing business ethically, he does it as a mission to create a better world. We had the pleasure to speak to him at his business, Streetbeat, headquarters.

### **What does Streetbeat consist of?**

Streetbeat ([www.streetbeat.com](http://www.streetbeat.com), editor's note) is an investment and trading platform for stocks, crypto, and DeFi. To create the platform, I combined my experience in algo-trading, stock trading, and research data to create a technology platform that allows people to invest,

mitigating the risk of loss. This year Robinhood customers have lost ~35% of their investments (over 50% now, editor's note), while the market is down about 20%, per Robinhood's earnings call. European research has published that 80% of those who invest in the stock market lose money. Stretbeat's clients achieve positive results by diversifying positions based on company data and verifying the information in real-time. We raised ten million dollars with our first round of funding in 2021 and we are preparing now for our Series A - \$15M. We have acquired over forty thousand customers in four months (100 thousand now as per August 1st, editor's note), organically, without marketing and we continue to grow quickly.

### **How did you come up with this idea?**

In 2019, I noticed that friends, relatives, and many other people were trading stocks and they would often ask me where to invest, but it was difficult to say. In 2020 the market was very strong, but I predicted that the collapse in 2022 would come. In my opinion, the market will be very volatile and weak until 2026. I thought that if retail investing was to be managed correctly with a next generation investing platform, we could make a significant difference for so many people.

### **In Silicon Valley, many fear being copied. Is this also the case for you?**

Several players have started copying us, but I am happy because my mission is to force changes in the market to improve results for all investors. On the other hand, brokers have a conflict of interest; they get their fees even when their clients are losing, and they encourage both trading and financial levers. That's why I want all brokers to copy us, introduce quality investments, and mitigate the risk of losing in the stock market. As an example, according to our data, the stock to buy today could be Microsoft. We buy the stock, on behalf of our clients at just the right time, and we sell it at the right time maximizing the chances of profitability. If something unexpected happens in the market, we avoid collapse.

### **Is your platform also available to European customers?**

We are registered in the United States of America, but we accept clients and companies worldwide. Most of our employees, about 60%, are in Europe, many in Poland and Italy. We foresaw the Russian attack on Ukraine and had moved some of our employees and their families, but some wanted to stay put and now work from the bunkers. We are committed to hiring a lot of staff in Ukraine and Belarus.

### **He is Argentinian but of Italian origins.**

I was born in Argentina and my parents were Italian immigrants. My mother's origins were Abruzzo and Tuscan and my father, Sicilian. From Argentina, we moved to Italy, in the province of Florence, and therefore I also consider myself also Italian. I spent nine years in Argentina, twenty-two in Italy, and over ten in the United States.

### **How did you start your career in Italy?**

In Argentina, there were excellent schools which taught me the basics of programming. However, in Italy, my family was destitute. We lived in social housing and could not afford a computer. I had one at school but not at home and in the beginning, I would write code on paper and then take them to school, where I could use the computer for a few hours a week. In high school, I chose a path in programming, although I then decided to study finance at university; however, I couldn't finish because my father died very suddenly. We didn't even have the money to pay for his burial, and I had to start working, I was twenty years old. I accepted a job as a marketing and business developer for List Group, acquired by TA associates, where I built the software used by traders.

### **Did you stand out immediately?**

At 22, I was thriving in the profession that fascinated me. At 23, I had more than 150 customers worldwide because I spoke English, Spanish, and even a little French. I gave presentations at Intesa in Italy, BBVA in Spain, Bank of America in NY, and Nomura in Japan. It was a fantastic learning experience and I will always be grateful to the team that allowed me to grow. I left when I felt ready to start something of my own.

### **What did you do?**

At 26, I created a private trading desk with some of the best traders I had as clients. It went very well and, finally, I solved my financial problems. I managed to pay the debt of all my family members and families close to ours, help my relatives in their studies, and much more. Back then, I was already earning half a million net in Italy (over 3M dollars today in the USA, considering PPP and Inflation, editor's note). I began to travel the world and do a lot of studying. By the age of 30, I had already traveled over 1M Km, but I was still seeking my breakthrough.

**It was then that Damian took a sabbatical year.**

I knew I wanted to work in the startup world, but I had much to learn. I devoted a year to do charity and microfinance in Africa and other developing countries. I collaborated with Non-profit associations, such as Emergency, L'albero della Vita and Amici di Francesco. With the latter, I conceived The Savana Bank, an initiative to apply a social business model of finance based on the idea of Nobel laureate Mohammed Yunus for a microcredit facility in Benin.

**Then you devoted yourself totally to startups.**

In the beginning, I helped Quadro Vehicles. They had invented the first three-wheeler sold by Piaggio and a four-wheeler that had potential. With them, I traveled the world to find suppliers. At that time, 2009, I managed to raise two million Euro in Italy, which at that time was a lot of money. In all, 14 million Euro was invested in startups within Italy within a year. Eventually, I sold my shares in Quadro, where I was a minority shareholder, and decided to embark on a new adventure.

**Was that when you arrived in Silicon Valley?**

Yes, I arrived in 2012, when I was 33 years old. I didn't know anyone, but I found many people willing to help me. When they met me, they asked, 'Damián, what can I do for you?' It's a question I've often heard here and rarely elsewhere. I met Fabrizio Capobianco, who gave me a lot of advice. Here, your success is everyone's success, because everyone becomes a collaborator, and therefore if you do well, everyone does well. It's a community where everyone tries to support each other. I have met people who taught me how to grow an app while in the store. I have also met a group of Irish people who lent me a million dollars worth of hardware for free to make us stronger.

**In July 2012, you founded Axwave, a media data company in Palo Alto.**

With Axwave technology, we provided very accurate data on advertising exposure. We could recognize in real time what people were watching on TV, listening to on the radio, and watching at the cinema, it was called Gsound. I was on vacation in Mexico when Amazon presented something very similar for its Fire Phone. My team got worried, immediately thinking that they had copied us. On the other hand, I understood that we were going in the right direction and decided to write directly to Jeff Bezos to offer him our help. He replied after three hours and put me in touch with Douglas Booms, who made us an acquisition proposal. I didn't accept it because I wanted to grow the business further. This led me to meet with many CEOs in the data

world. In December 2018, I sold Axwave to Samba Tv for a nice profit, and I started thinking about Streetbeat. Selling Axwave was the first company exit from an Italian in Silicon Valley since 2017.

**What do you foresee for the market in the near future?**

I expect three years of significant instability. The world markets will be pretty agitated before things begin to calm down, likely through July-August 2025. Until then, there will be problems related to both Covid and war: hunger, since we are fighting in the "granaries of Europe," inflation, cost of oil, and immigration.

**In your opinion, will there be a third world war?**

I think we avoided it otherwise, it would have already happened. We were saved by creating buffer states and the battle against disinformation, in which Russia causes much damage. I am thinking, in particular, of misinformation about Covid. There will always be tension as long as people like Putin have control of energy sources. This is why it is essential to stop dependence on gas and oil as soon as possible and focus on sustainable solutions.

**Are you also committed to the environment?**

I plan to go public with Streetbeat on the stock exchange within five years, and we are also working on investments in green credits, as there is still confusion. I plan to commit myself to the environment for the next 25 years. I want to attract capital from investment funds for environmental initiatives, and I intend to coach engineers and scientists to become better entrepreneurs. This will help ensure the problem is not left only to governments and politicians. Initial investors are needed, but this sustainability must bring productive and economic results for it to really work. I also want to fight misinformation, which I consider the 'cancer' of humanity, in addition to helping alleviate poverty, which will increase.

**You have studied philosophy, spirituality, and the mind since you were eight. You still practice meditation today. How does this help you?**

I consider spirituality very important and like to connect it to self-awareness. I am convinced that the crisis humanity is experiencing now is linked to this: we have technologies that are too advanced for the average level of self-awareness of people. TikTok and Facebook have an incredible effect on people's hearts and minds. Raising the level of awareness is another mission that humanity must pursue. Great spiritual guides, such as the Dalai Lama and the Pope, teach

us to know ourselves to understand humankind. We must realize that everything we do has both small and significant consequences. We need to develop empathy and compassion. In other words, we must not only do what is best for ourselves but also look at the bigger picture.

**You climb mountains, race cars and motorcycles, scuba dive, skydive, and drive planes and boats. Is adrenaline a stimulus in your life?**

I have always been passionate about speed and extreme sports, which teach sensitivity and attention to detail. Unfortunately, investors have wanted me to take life insurance, preventing me from being as active as I was in recent years. Now I have two sons: Gabriel, born in San Francisco, and Michael, born in Assisi, Italy during the pandemic. With my wife, Karolina - who works in biotech, we decided to spend some time in Italy during the pandemic, which was very pleasant. I think that in the future, I will split my time between Italy and Silicon Valley even more.

[www.streetbeat.com](http://www.streetbeat.com)

Translation of Forbes Italy interview. Read the original version in Italian here:  
<https://forbes.it/2022/06/09/damian-ariel-scavo-fondatore-streetbeat/>