

David Nelson

LEARNING ENGINEER · CANDIDATE, LEARNVECTOR

I teach adults
for a living, and I
build the products
that teach them
when I’m not
in the room.

Fifteen years in adult behavior change. Fourteen of them at Crucial Learning, the company behind Crucial Conversations, where I helped the authors build the flagship courses and taught them at Google, NASA, and American Express. All that teaching shows you one uncomfortable pattern: **people leave a class able to do things they couldn’t do that morning, and by Monday most of it has faded.** Everything I’ve built since as Head of Product at Lone Rock Leadership is aimed at that gap: the courses, the assessment software, the production standard, and the agentic pipeline that makes it all.

01 At a glance

Expertise in teaching	5,000+ people a year, on stage and on camera, for clients like LinkedIn, Costco, Steelcase, and Sutter Health. I also teach the people who teach: 1,300+ trainers certified since 2011.
The products ship	I designed and built the Core Four assessment, our instrument for the four leadership skills the courses teach, as working software: 56 items that each name an observable behavior and measure the leader twice, once for personal proficiency and once for organizational need, then score the gap. A leader’s first coaching conversation starts from data instead of a hunch.
Pedagogy is a hard gate, not a garnish	I wrote the 100-point production standard every artifact must pass before it ships, including a learning-transfer gate that asks one question: can the learner do this on Monday?
AI-native by default	My production stack is agentic end to end. The content pipeline, the video system, and the assistant that runs client operations are agent-operated, and I built them.

02 Experience

Lone Rock Leadership

HEAD OF PRODUCT · OCT 2023 – PRESENT

Leadership development firm serving LinkedIn, Costco, Steelcase, Sutter Health, ezCater, Kumon, CommonSpirit Health, and 25+ other organizations.

- Carry the teaching load in person: live classes, virtual cohorts, executive sessions, and keynotes and webinars for audiences of **1,000 or more**. I certify and develop the facilitators who deliver our courses
- Built **four complete leadership courses end to end** (Lead In 30, Decide In 30, Power In 30, Adapt In 30): slides, workbooks, video scripts, facilitator guides, and full LMS builds
- Authored the **Production Quality Standard** with five hard gates (source fidelity, learning transfer, learner psychology, voice, and medium fit) plus ten style guides, so course quality is reproducible instead of depending on any one person, including me
- Shipped the **Core Four assessment** end to end: item design, gap scoring (leader proficiency vs. organizational need), interpretation logic for tricky profile shapes, and individualized PDF reports with embedded charts (Next.js, Supabase, Vercel)
- Designed **post-training reinforcement** built on spacing, retrieval practice, and implementation intentions, including a multi-week roadmap and email sequence deployed for LinkedIn's leaders
- Ran a **two-wave learner measurement system, week one and course end, across 1,000+ learners in 33 organizations**. 68% reported using the skills in their real role within the first week. That is application evidence, not efficacy evidence, and I label it that way on purpose
- Wrote a **63-source evidence review of skills transfer** that now governs our course design. It's the reason "engaging" and "effective" stay separate concepts in everything we ship
- Built **agentic systems that do real production work**: a content pipeline with five specialized writing modes and persistent structured state; an agent-operated video stack (Runway, Remotion, FFmpeg); and "Harvey," an AI assistant that handles client context, scheduling, and CRM

§ The learner surveys above are application evidence, not efficacy evidence. I graded them against my own criteria, and that is exactly why you can trust them.

Here is the wall I keep hitting: a vendor's access to learners ends when the engagement ends, so the question that matters most, whether the skills are still in use months later, stays out of reach no matter how good the instruments are. A first-party platform is where that loop finally closes. That is the job I'm applying for.

02 Experience, continued

Crucial Learning

2011 – 2024 · 14 YEARS · OVERLAPS LONE ROCK

The company behind Crucial Conversations. Formerly VitalSmarts. The dates overlap on purpose: I stayed on the Senior Faculty through 2024 while building Lone Rock’s product function.

2015 – 2024	Senior Faculty. Lead facilitator for the company’s highest-priority customers, including Google, Facebook, NASA, American Express, Gap, and Applied Materials . Also the trainer of the trainers: taught the rest of the Faculty to deliver Crucial Learning content to brand standard.
MAY – DEC 2015	Manager, Customer Success. Led a team of 4 managing a pool of 9,000+ Certified Trainers ; built trainer- and customer-enablement content; partnered with Sales on tailored course delivery; and curated content for REACH, the annual customer conference of 400+ customers.
2011 – 2015	Master Trainer, Development & Delivery. Internal content creator working directly with the authors (Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, and Al Switzler) on Crucial Conversations, Crucial Influence, Change Anything, and Power of Habit ; also delivered courses to clients and supported Sales. First on the team to take the courses virtual (Adobe Connect, 2014), ahead of the industry.

03 Education & skills

EDUCATION	B.A., Political Science · Brigham Young University
CRAFT	Facilitation & keynote speaking · curriculum and assessment design · applied behavior-change science (transfer, spacing, retrieval practice, implementation intentions) · design systems
AI & AGENTIC	Claude (agents, skills, MCP) · Codex · Cursor
PRODUCT & WEB	Next.js/React · Supabase · Vercel · Pen.dev · OpenDesign · LearnUpon LMS · Articulate Rise & Reach 360
DESIGN & VIDEO	Figma · Adobe InDesign & Illustrator · Final Cut Pro · Descript · agent-operated pipelines (Runway, Remotion, FFmpeg) · Vimeo
DATA & AUTOMATION	Typeform, Tally · Zapier · Apollo · Firecrawl