

**Builders + Innovators 2021**  
**Joe Kudla, CEO & Founder, Vuori**  
**Filmed on: September 23, 2021**

**Joe Kudla:** I grew up in Seattle. The year I left town, it rained every day for six months, and I used to dream about what it would be like to be on the beaches of Southern California and surfing.

Vuori was built for the Encinitas community. That's our backyard right here in Southern California. So our customer loves being outdoors. They love being active. They're surfing. They're running. They're training. They're into living a healthy lifestyle. What I think aligns and unites a lot of Vuori customers is just a deep curiosity and passion for living an extraordinary life.

The journey of starting Vuori began, gosh, about ten years ago when a friend suggest I try yoga to heal my back. And I fell in love with the practice, and that was about the time I started paying attention to the clothing that I was wearing for athletic performance.

When I go back to the early days, the biggest challenge that we faced was raising money for a clothing company when I didn't have any experience in the clothing industry. Once we got the money, challenge number two was identifying the right product market fit. We didn't get it right out of the gates. And our first little friends-and-family money was running out, and we hadn't really defined our successful engine of growth. And we had to make a big pivot and make a big decision to kind of change the brand point of view, the messaging, the DNA.

We learned that people loved the product, but they didn't really understand how we were marketing it through this lens of, like, men's yoga. And so we started broadening the aperture. We started speaking to the way our customers were really using the product every day. And when we did that, it just kind of clicked. And we started bringing the community together, hosting fitness classes, art shows. We would bring different Encinitas vendors together to curate these awesome experiences, and the community showed up. And they loved it. It was, like, events thrown by the community for the community. And Vuori was just a conduit for that, and people started checking out our clothes and they started wearing them around town. And

it really grew from this place outwards.

So we opened our first flagship store about a year and a half after we launched the business in March of 2016. And that's still our flagship today in Encinitas, and it's still rooted in those same principles forming around community building.

So five years later, our business is still largely organized as an ecommerce business, but we have 11 stores today. We'll open four more before the end of the year. We have a goal to open 120 stores over the next five years with a concurrent plan to be expanding internationally.

Vuori's always been inspired by the natural environment. We felt a deep responsibility to make the product in as responsible way as possible and to minimize the environmental wake that we leave when we operate our company. And that's why we've chosen to work with sustainable fabrics. It's why we've chosen to go plastic neutral in our supply chain. And it's why we've chosen to invest in going carbon neutral. It's kind of part of our 3-tiered approach to building sustainable product.

We want customers to buy from Vuori not because we claim to be sustainable but because our product is built to last, and they will love living in it.

This video was filmed on September 23, 2021.

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