



OBI FELTEN

Innovation expert, technologist, entrepreneur, board member, speaker, mother

Co-founder of Flourish Labs mental health startup. Fmr head of moonshot projects at Google X.

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Photo: Rainer Hosch for Vogue

Obi Felten is an entrepreneur and innovator who is behind some of the most transformative technologies of our time. Obi moved from Europe to Silicon Valley in 2012 to join the nascent Google X, Alphabet's innovation lab. Obi built out X's non-engineering functions and helped to turn the seemingly impossible into reality: Waymo self-driving cars, Wing drone delivery, internet access from balloons, computational agriculture, and energy storage using molten salt. Obi has worked on practical applications of AI for 15 years, most recently in healthcare. She started and led [Amber](#), a project using brain-based biomarkers and machine learning to measure anxiety and depression, before leaving Alphabet to found her own company. Obi co-founded and served as CEO of Flourish Labs, a mental healthcare company on a mission to scale peer support with telehealth and AI to address the youth mental health crisis. Peers.net is now part of WellSpace Health, a community health system in California. She is also a venture partner with Vitruvian Partners, a private equity and growth investment firm.

As Director of Consumer Marketing for Google in Europe, Middle East and Africa, she was responsible for launching and growing Google Maps, Chrome and Android from zero to a billion users. Her team won Cannes Lion awards for their work. She oversaw an annual budget of \$500M and was named #4 on the UK [Marketing Power 100](#). Obi began her career in the early days of online banking and e-commerce during the first dot-com era, so she is no stranger to downturns as well as good times. She worked on the launch of the UK's first online bank, took online retailer eToys.com to Europe, set up and ran the e-commerce business of jewellery retailer H. Samuel (Signet Group, SIG) and advised large European retailers on their multichannel strategy.

Obi is an independent director of [Springer Nature](#), a global academic and educational publisher (SPG.DE). She is an advisor to [WellSpace Health](#), a community health system in California, and to the Chelsea & Westminster NHS Trust in the UK. She previously served on the board of [Marathon Health](#), a leading primary healthcare provider for employers, where she was a comp committee member, on the board of [CreativeX](#), a venture-backed creative analytics startup, and [BfBLabs](#), a digital therapeutics startup. She was a trustee of [Shift](#), a social innovation charity, a founding board member of the [Healthy Brains Global Initiative](#), and a strategic advisory board member for mental health at the [Wellcome Trust](#), one of the largest funders of scientific research globally.

Throughout her career, she has navigated competitive environments and tough regulatory landscapes in consumer internet, retail, financial services, telecoms, transportation, energy and healthcare. Known for her sound judgement around business and technology risk, investment and resource allocation, Obi has started dozens of ventures but is not afraid to shut down failing initiatives. Harvard Business School turned one of her failed X projects, [Foghorn](#), into a [case study](#) of radical innovation culture. Her experience of managing through a crisis dates back to 2001 when she wound down eToys Europe at age 28.

Obi was honoured for her innovation work with the [German Innovation Prize](#) "Future Thinker" award. She was named a [Financial Times Woman Changemaker](#) by the Financial Times, a leading Woman in Tech by FOCUS magazine and [Top 100 most influential German woman in business](#) by Boston Consulting Group. She speaks on innovation, mental health, and how to apply novel technologies in business. She has spoken at Fortune's Most Powerful Women Next Gen Summit, Chautauqua Institution, Wired UK, Milken Institute's Global Conference and Health Summit, Skoll World Forum, Falling Walls, Lesbians Who Tech, London Tech Week, numerous academic and private exec gatherings. She is a regular guest lecturer at Stanford University, INSEAD, Northeastern University and UC Berkeley. She was on the cover of [Vogue](#) Germany's business edition and has been featured in [The Financial Times](#), [Fortune](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Atlantic](#), [Bloomberg](#), [Handelsblatt](#), [Wirtschaftswoche](#), [Fast Company](#), [Wired](#), [MIT Technology Review](#), the [BBC](#), [NBC](#) News and on Steve Levitt's [Freakonomics](#) podcast.

Obi grew up in Berlin and saw the wall come down, has a BA in Philosophy and Psychology from Oxford University and lives in California with her family.