

Matthias Wandel
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Mr. Wandel,

When the right tool does not exist, you build it. Out of wood, in your home workshop, using engineering principles applied to craft problems. The pantorouter is a precision joinery machine you designed because CNC was too slow, too loud, and too expensive for the cuts you needed to make. You built a bandsaw. You built a power feeder from a roller skate wheel and a cordless drill. You built a dust collection switch you could trigger from across the room. You have no interest in CNC. You deliberately avoid 3D printing. You solve problems with the means you already have. That philosophy is the entire operating thesis of CrowdSmith's Station One.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic. I am writing on behalf of Robb Deignan, who is building a maker facility called CrowdSmith on Portland Avenue in Tacoma, Washington — inside a federally designated Opportunity Zone. He built the entire organization — a thirty-eight-chapter operations binder, seven integrated financial models with seven hundred twenty-seven formulas, a twenty-seven-source grant pipeline, and the credential architecture — through hundreds of working sessions in dialogue with me. I am the partner he could afford. This letter is one of a hundred forty-seven mailing on the same day.

You studied engineering at the University of Waterloo. You worked at Research In Motion before it became BlackBerry. You left the tech industry to make woodworking content full-time from your workshop in Fredericton. When someone asked how you got into woodworking, you said: “Always had access to a wood shop. So it was just the easiest way to build stuff.” That sentence contains the problem CrowdSmith exists to solve. You always had access. Most people do not. The wood shop in your father's house was the infrastructure that made everything else possible. CrowdSmith is building the institutional version of your father's shop for a corridor full of people who do not have one.

CrowdSmith operates five stations. Station One is hand tools — workbenches, measuring tapes, schematics. Donated tools arrive from estate sales and family workshops. SmithFellows clean, identify, and restore them. The restoration is the training. The standard is inherent in the work itself — a restored hand plane either holds an edge or it does not. Station Two is power tools. Station Three is digital fabrication — CNC, laser cutting, 3D printing, the equipment you have chosen not to use because you can solve the same problems faster with the means you already have. Station Four is the AI Café, where people learn to work alongside artificial intelligence through a three-tier methodology called SmithTalk. Station Five is robotics. The five stations produce five credential tracks that map to five roles on an invention team. Forty-four invention concepts have been evaluated through a proprietary scoring methodology and are waiting for that team.

Robb is sixty years old. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry — more than ten thousand membership contracts sold, every one face-to-face. He is a cancer survivor with two sons. He plays guitar. He buys tools at

estate sales and spends afternoons restoring them in his garage — not because he needs another tool, but because the object itself is interesting and the afternoon spent with it is the point. He discovered what you already know: that men will stand in a workshop for hours talking about a tool they have never seen before. That observation became CrowdSmith. The front door is a retail tool store with free coffee. A person walks in, picks up a tool they do not recognize, and someone behind the counter tells them what it does. A conversation starts. That conversation is the intake funnel.

You described yourself with a kind of productive uncertainty: “If someone were to call me a maker, I’d cringe a little, but they wouldn’t be wrong. If you make something useful, you have a name. If you make furniture, you might be called a carpenter. If you make something useless, well, you might be called a maker.” CrowdSmith does not resolve that uncertainty. It formalizes it. The five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, and Systems — are five names for five kinds of useful making. The person who would cringe at being called a maker might not cringe at being called a fabricator, a researcher, or a systems operator. The credential gives the skill a name without flattening it.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. You are not being asked for money. You are being asked to look at a building that takes the thing you have always had — access to a wood shop — and gives it to a corridor full of people who do not. The facility, the credentials, the financial models, and the forty-four invention concepts are documented at crowdsmith.org. The access code for the full operational site is available upon request.

— *Claude*

On behalf of Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
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