FRAUD FIGHTER SPOTLIGHT

Robinhood's Michael Silver on building a purpose-driven career

NOVEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In our new Fraud Fighter series, Plaid is shining a spotlight on everyday fraud fighters whose work helps protect consumers from the ever-growing threat of bad actors.

This month, we're thrilled to talk to Michael Silver, whose career has spanned the Marine Corps, private investigations, and some of the biggest names in finance and tech.

After finishing his military service, Michael found himself drawn to work that shared a familiar mission: protecting people. What began as an entry-level investigation role quickly turned into a 15-year career in fraud prevention—one that's taken him from JPMorgan Chase and Capital One to MoneyGram and now Robinhood, where he serves as Detection and Prevention Lead.

Today, he carries out his work with the same adaptability and curiosity that first brought him into the field, operating at the intersection of data, technology, and trust to keep users safe in real time.

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Plaid: How did you first get into fraud prevention?

Michael: When I finished my service in the U.S. Marine Corps, I joined a program called Marine-for-Life that helped transitioning Marines find jobs. A Marine officer and retired Secret Service agent offered me an entry-level fraud investigator role with his firm in 2011.

After about 18 months, I was recruited by JPMorgan Chase as a compliance officer and AML investigator. Those roles built the foundation for my career in financial crimes and opened the door to payments, fraud, and AML investigations.

Plaid: What keeps you interested in this kind of work?

Michael: The fast pace and high stakes. In the latter half of my career, I leaned into payments and saw early on how critical data would become in managing risk and shaping the customer experience. Payments fraud has real-time implications—you have to improvise, adapt, and make tough decisions with limited data. That challenge is what I love most.

Technology has evolved so quickly that having experience across different types of companies has become invaluable. Working at places like JPMorgan Chase, Apple, Capital One, MoneyGram, Southwest Airlines, 7-Eleven, and now Robinhood has given me perspective on what works, what doesn't, and how different teams approach today's challenges.

Plaid: What's the toughest part of fighting fraud today?

Michael: Two things: data and experience. On the data side, companies need to know where their data lives, how to use it, and how to reconcile it across systems. Too often, investigators focus only on the data in front of them, but that mindset can leave you behind fast.

As for experience, investigators use to handle everything, from alert triage to customer contact and filing SARs. Today, much of that is

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automated or siloed, which makes it harder to develop well-rounded professionals who understand the full picture.

Plaid: What keeps you motivated in this field?

Michael: The constant change—and the ability to make an impact in real time. There's nothing like identifying a fraud ring or stopping abuse before it reaches users. Having the data to drill down, find the root cause, build a mitigation plan, and see it work is incredibly rewarding.

This industry evolves nonstop. If you want a job that's the same every day, this isn't it. But if you want to make an impact and constantly adapt as threats evolve, there's no better field to be in.

Plaid: What's one thing you wish more people understood about fraud prevention?

Michael: There's a lot more to it than handling debit card disputes. That's just one small piece of a much bigger picture.
Fraud professionals wear many hats. One day I'm a data analyst or product manager; another day, I'm advising data science or working on managing payment risk. And some days, I'm back on the front lines, stopping losses in real time. That's the best part—protecting users and our brand.

This field offers countless paths for growth. Working across different companies and industries has been one of the most valuable parts of my career.

Plaid: How is fraud evolving with the rise of GenAI?

Michael: GenAI is both a powerful tool and a new risk. With so much personal and financial data already exposed online, AI can now combine or fabricate information in ways that make it hard to tell what's real. That's a major concern for account takeovers, synthetic identities, and even biometric authentication.

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A few years ago, bots disrupted the industry—and they still do—but now they're supercharged by AI and massive datasets. While some companies use AI to strengthen detection, the tools are fragmented, and bad actors know it. In the end, we live and die by data and how we use it. GenAI only makes that clearer.

Plaid: How has Plaid supported your work?

Michael: Plaid's greatest asset is its data. Having access to verified banking and user information is incredibly valuable for managing payments and money-movement risk.

Plaid's fraud and risk solutions give us deeper insight into customers' financial activity and sources of funds—something we didn't have ten years ago. That visibility helps close gaps from both a fraud and AML perspective.

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Plaid has been a key partner in our detection and prevention strategy. I appreciate their drive to keep improving as the threat landscape evolves —not every platform can say the same.

Plaid: What advice would you give someone just starting out in fraud prevention?

Michael: Get involved and stay curious. Join industry groups and take advantage of free webinars and town halls. The pace of change in payments and fraud is incredible—you'll fall behind if you're not actively engaged with your peers.

Groups like ACFE, ACAMS, MRC, and IAFCI are great places to start. Many offer free resources that help you stay informed and connected.

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