

Craig McWherter

CHIEF PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY OFFICER · PRODUCT & ENGINEERING EXECUTIVE

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25+

YEARS BUILDING
PRODUCT & PLATFORMS

70+

ENGINEERS, PMS, AND
ANALYSTS IN LARGEST
ORG BUILT & LED

15+

MAJOR CORPS TO WHICH
PRODUCTION SYSTEMS
WERE DELIVERED

4

CONSUMER STREAMING
BRANDS SHIPPED TO
MILLIONS OF USERS

Global

LAUNCHES ACROSS NA,
EUROPE, LATAM & ANZ

Product and engineering executive with 25+ years turning fuzzy, front-end ideas into shipped, scaled production software for Disney, Turner, HBO, Mattel, Riot Games, Microsoft, the NBA, the NFL, Mercedes, Honda, Verizon, McKesson, and Ascension St. Vincent's. Built and led distributed engineering teams of 70+ and delivered high-scale streaming, data, analytics, and interactive product platforms. I build AI-native products and run an AI-assisted delivery organization. AI is both what I ship and how I ship it: machine-learning personalization in consumer apps at Disney, and agent-assisted research, specification, and software delivery in my own practice. Strong fit for founder-stage CPTO roles that need one leader to own product strategy, platform architecture, and a disciplined delivery org, and to make a deliberate bet on AI from day one. Equally effective in architecture reviews, product strategy, executive communication, customer discovery, and hands-on prototyping.

HOW I ADD VALUE

Ship AI-native products: build personalization, automation, and agentic workflows into products where they compound: a deliberate bet on AI, not a feature bolted on.

Productize service-heavy operations: turn expert consulting and fragmented human workflows into repeatable software products.

Lead product and engineering together: move from ambiguous opportunity to roadmap and delivery with cross-functional partners.

Run an AI-assisted delivery org: use agent-based workflows for research, specification, and software delivery, so a small team ships like a larger one.

Build integration-first platforms: across media, data, analytics, cloud, devices, partner APIs, and enterprise systems.

Operate in trust-sensitive domains: consumer platforms, enterprise consulting, healthcare-adjacent clients, data pipelines, and QA.

CORE CAPABILITIES

Product & Technology Strategy · Platform Architecture · SaaS / Product Operating Models · AI & Automation Strategy · Data & Analytics Platforms · Integration Strategy · Security & Compliance-Aware Delivery · Engineering Leadership · Hiring, Mentorship & Org Design · Customer & Stakeholder Discovery · Executive Communication

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Thought-Stuff

Founder & Principal, Product and Engineering Strategy

Cotati, CA
2026–Present

- Founded an independent product and software strategy practice focused on helping organizations convert ideas, workflows, and domain expertise into software products and scalable delivery systems.
- Developed advisory positioning around product discovery, technical strategy, AI-assisted workflows, platform architecture, and founder/operator guidance.
- Built internal agent-assisted product development workflows for research, specification, software delivery, and content / product operations.

The Walt Disney Company

San Francisco, CA

Senior Engineering Manager, Client Product Experience & Interaction

2022–2026

- Led applied R&D and product incubation for interactive experiences within Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN+ playback, including Disney eXperience Engine initiatives.
- Managed and hired distributed teams of 40 full-time and contract employees across North America and Europe.
- Partnered with Product, Design, and Client Engineering to clarify opportunities, define requirements, create roadmaps, prototype solutions, and transition successful concepts toward production.
- Drove decision-making across streaming playback delivery, acting as a senior technical and organizational leader for cross-brand platform work.
- Conceived, designed, and implemented prototypes to test product and architecture feasibility inside existing consumer applications.
- Led delivery of packaged playback and interactive renderer components for web, mobile, and living-room platforms including PlayStation, Xbox, Smart TVs, Roku, and tvOS.
- Directed research into hosted and streamed interactivity, AR / VR, game engines, and machine-learning personalization for consumer experiences.

Engineering Manager, Client Playback Experience

2017–2022

- Founded and grew the client streaming engineering organization from 11 engineers, delivering the Disney+, Hulu, ESPN+, and Star+ apps to a global subscriber base that grew past 160M (Disney+), from pre-launch through peak.
- Created and evolved the technical vision for a multi-tenant codebase serving multiple streaming brands across diverse device platforms.
- Served as architectural authority for patterns, practices, quality, reliability, and delivery across client engineering.
- Collaborated with Product to create roadmaps, triage backlogs, resolve delivery risks, and align engineering output with business priorities.
- Reported risks, quality issues, status, technical challenges, and delivery impediments to executive stakeholders.
- Launched Disney+ on PlayStation in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand; launched Star+ in Latin America across PlayStation and partner set-top platforms.

Thought-Stuff

Atlanta, GA / San Francisco, CA

Software Architect, Engagement Lead, Product & Engineering Strategy

2015–2017

- Specified, designed, and implemented a content management system and sports-data ETL pipeline using Go, GCP, Kubernetes, and Cloud SQL.
- Designed and implemented an analytics application for major sports-league franchises using Node.js, Angular, Elasticsearch, PostgreSQL, and AWS.
- Converted data, content, and operational requirements into scalable application architecture for media and sports organizations.

Vertigo Software

Point Richmond, CA

Development Manager, Director

2011–2015

- Conceived, implemented, and led the Program Management function.
- Led consulting delivery teams building consumer software across video-game, streaming-media, sports, entertainment, and cross-platform application domains.
- Delivered products and engagements for Mattel, Riot Games, Microsoft, HBO, Cartoon Network, Turner Sports, and the NBA.
- Managed client expectations, team delivery, architecture decisions, implementation quality, and release execution across high-visibility brands including League of Legends, HBO Go, March Madness Live, and NBA GameTime.

ComFrame Software

Birmingham, AL / Nashville, TN / Beijing, CN

Engagement Lead / Software Architect / GM & VP, Beijing Studio

2001–2011

- Led enterprise software consulting engagements for clients including Mercedes, Honda Motor Corporation, Verizon Wireless, McKesson, and St. Vincent's Hospital System.
- Partnered with clients across industries to define requirements, architect solutions, lead delivery teams, and deliver production enterprise systems.
- Developed the business plan for a 70+ engineer offshore software development center and relocated to Beijing (2007–2009) to implement the plan.
- Delivered web, Java / Spring, C# / .NET, messaging, database, and integration systems across complex enterprise environments.

Early Career: Software Engineer, Southern Company · Atlanta, GA

1997–2001

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- End-to-end product and engineering leadership, from discovery, roadmap, and prioritization through architecture, delivery, quality, and team-building, across 100M+ scale consumer apps and enterprise production systems.
- Cross-industry range, delivered across eight domains: streaming media, gaming, sports analytics, enterprise software, automotive, telecommunications, healthcare, and data platforms.

SELECTED TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

TypeScript / JavaScript, Node.js, Angular, HTML / CSS, C#, .NET, Java, Spring, Go, SQL, PostgreSQL, MySQL, SQL Server, ElasticSearch, AWS, GCP, Kubernetes, Cloud SQL, CI/CD, Unity, and web / mobile / living-room device platforms.

EDUCATION

B.S. Business, Management Information Systems

University of Phoenix · 2001

Stanford LEAD Certificate (coursework)

Stanford Graduate School of Business · 2013–2015

M.S. Computer Science (OMSCS), Interactive Intelligence

(coursework)

Georgia Tech · 2024–2025