

# J. Cornelius

## Product Design Leader | Fintech & Regulated Consumer Platforms | People Management + Hands-On Execution

Atlanta Metropolitan Area / Big Canoe, GA · 678-561-6463 · [inbox@jcornelius.com](mailto:inbox@jcornelius.com) · [linkedin.com/in/jcornelius](https://linkedin.com/in/jcornelius) · [jcornelius.com](https://jcornelius.com)

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### SUMMARY

Design and product strategy leader with 30 years of experience shipping consumer-facing and B2B products across fintech, financial services, hospitality, and SaaS. At Nine Labs, built and ran a 20-person cross-functional team delivering 40-plus products for clients including Fiserv and UPS, including back-office simplification for global banks and prototyped touchless ATM workflows for a top-tier financial services firm. Has operated at every altitude: setting design strategy, running design systems, directing creative, and shipping working interfaces. Brings a published product methodology, deep experience managing design organizations, and a direct partnering style with Product, Engineering, and Marketing that keeps execution grounded in user research and measurable outcomes.

### EXPERIENCE

#### Founder & President | Nine Labs

May 2012 - September 2025 · Atlanta Metro

- Built and led a 20-person cross-functional design, engineering, and strategy team across four countries, managing hiring, performance reviews, coaching, professional development, and succession planning across a 13-year run
- Directed end-to-end product design for 40-plus shipped products, including design systems supporting apps used daily by millions, multi-platform booking experiences for a global hospitality brand, and back-office application simplification for global banks
- Prototyped touchless ATM workflows for a top-tier financial services firm and led UX strategy for Fiserv, establishing the firm as a trusted design partner in regulated financial services
- Codified the firm's product methodology into Loops (Lioncrest, 2019), a published Amazon best-selling framework covering human-centered design, research, prototyping, and building at speed, and used it to train internal teams and client stakeholders
- Managed stakeholders from product teams through C-suite at Delta Air Lines, InterContinental Hotels Group, Fiserv, UPS, and Circle K / Couche-Tard, facilitating alignment across engineering, marketing, compliance, and executive leadership

#### Founder | Empty Nest Holdings

2025 - Present · Remote

- Directs product design, brand identity, and UX architecture across a portfolio of AI-enabled software ventures including Donna (restaurant management), Winote (wine trade knowledge platform), PizzaCart (Square-integrated online ordering), and Socializer (AI social content generation)
- Designs and ships complete product experiences solo, from concept and interaction design through working software, applying the same design system discipline and user research foundations used in enterprise client work at a fraction of the cost and time
- Built and iterated the Socializer product from concept to working MVP in a single afternoon, including multi-brand design configuration, image rendering pipeline, and per-platform content generation

#### Owner & Operator | Lucky Hare Bar & Grill / Night Train Pizza

January 2024 - Present · Big Canoe (Marble Hill), GA

- Designed all brand identity, marketing systems, and customer-facing creative for two distinct restaurant concepts from the ground up, maintaining consistent visual and messaging standards across each brand
- Ran a structured guest research program with 169 responses and NPS 53, translating findings into a 90-day operational and product roadmap that informed both restaurant operations and the design requirements for the Donna platform

## **VP Operations | CoffeeCup Software, Inc.**

February 1998 - 2012 · Atlanta, GA

- Led product development, QA, and customer success across 14 years of platform evolution for a consumer software company with 50 million users, spanning desktop, web, and mobile products
- Managed iterative release cycles and cross-functional teams through the full desktop-to-web-to-mobile transition, maintaining product quality and user experience consistency at scale

## **President | Bluedomino Web Hosting**

November 2000 - July 2005 · Remote

- Grew Bluedomino from concept to 20,000-plus customers globally in under a year, leading brand, product, and go-to-market strategy through a successful acquisition by Endurance International Group in 2005

## **Fractional Product Strategy Advisor | Independent (jcornelius.com)**

October 2025 - Present · Remote

- Partners with founders and product leaders on product strategy, brand positioning, and design direction across restaurant tech, SMB SaaS, and consumer digital products

## **SKILLS**

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**Design Leadership & Team Management** — Multidisciplinary team building and org design, Performance management and professional development, Hiring and workforce planning, Design reviews and creative direction, Executive-level presentations and stakeholder alignment, Cross-functional collaboration (Product, Engineering, Marketing, Compliance)

**Product Design & UX** — End-to-end product design, discovery through delivery, Interaction design and information architecture, Design systems (build and governance), Prototyping, concept through high-fidelity, User research, qualitative and quantitative, Brand strategy and visual identity

**Fintech & Regulated Industry Experience** — Financial services UX (Fiserv, global banks, ATM workflows), Consumer-facing digital product design at scale, Compliance-aware product development, POS-integrated product architecture, Payments and commerce product design (Stripe, Square)

**Product Strategy & Research** — Product methodology (Loops, published 2019), Customer discovery and hypothesis-driven research, NPS measurement and user research programs, Roadmap synthesis and prioritization, Go-to-market strategy and positioning, Agile and iterative delivery across 40-plus products

## **ADVISORY, BOARDS & COMMUNITY**

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- InVision Design Leadership Forum Member, July 2018 - January 2024
- Mentor, Founder Institute -- brand strategy, product design, and UX for early- and growth-stage companies, 2015 - 2024
- Branding and UX Mentor, Georgia Tech ATDC -- co-taught Customer Discovery workshops, 2011 - 2014

## **PUBLISHING & SPEAKING**

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- Loops: Building Products with Clarity & Confidence, Lioncrest Publishing, 2019 -- Amazon best seller, narrated by author
- Speaker: Chicago Camps and others -- topics include human-centered product design, product strategy, and mobile commerce

## **EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS**

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- The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania -- Executive Education, Business Administration, Management and Operations, 2016 - 2018
- Wine & Spirit Education Trust Level 3 (WSET Level 3) -- Certified Sommelier credential