

J. Cornelius

Product Manager with 30 years of discovery-to-delivery practice across SMB SaaS, payments, and merchant-facing software

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SUMMARY

Shipped software products across 40+ engagements at Nine Labs and a current portfolio of self-built ventures, with a consistent pattern of starting from the problem before reaching for the solution. At Lucky Hare and Night Train Pizza, designed and ran a 169-response guest research program, translated findings into a 90-day operational action plan, and built the product roadmap for Donna, an AI restaurant management platform, entirely from that firsthand operator discovery. Authored Loops, a published product methodology covering discovery, hypothesis design, roadmap prioritization, and building at speed, applied across Fortune 500 clients and lean founding teams alike. Works comfortably in a small, high-trust team environment, embedded in engineering rhythm, writing clear specs and user stories, and owning launch readiness from partner communications to documentation.

EXPERIENCE

Founder | Empty Nest Holdings

2025 - Present · Remote

- Define, spec, and ship a portfolio of AI-enabled software products solo, from concept to working release, targeting independent merchants and operators priced out of enterprise platforms
- Apply a consistent discovery pattern across each venture: identify the problem through direct operator experience, synthesize inputs into a clear problem statement, then build and measure
- Maintain product roadmaps across four active products, balancing new features, platform improvements, and technical debt against revenue and retention outcomes
- Coordinate launch readiness across each product including documentation, partner communications, and post-launch support preparation

Founder | Donna Says / Empty Nest Holdings

October 2025 - Present · Remote

- Built an AI-native restaurant management platform for independent operators, with Square API integration, kitchen-capacity modeling, and a multi-agent prospecting module
- Translated firsthand restaurant operating experience and 169-response guest research data into the initial product roadmap and feature prioritization decisions
- Structured modular pricing across three tiers to serve both standalone operators and consulting pipeline, balancing merchant acquisition and revenue growth goals
- Wrote product specs and user stories that directed AI-assisted engineering execution, keeping discovery and solutioning clearly separated throughout development

Owner and Operator | Lucky Hare Bar and Grill / Night Train Pizza

January 2024 - Present · Marble Hill, GA

- Designed and ran a structured merchant-side research program collecting 169 guest responses, producing an NPS of 53, and converting findings into a 90-day operational action plan addressing throughput, consistency, and value perception
- Built POS-integrated reporting and real-time kitchen throughput dashboards to track operational metrics and inform product decisions
- Launched breakfast and grab-and-go service for Night Train Pizza based on usage data and customer feedback, expanding revenue without adding significant overhead

Founder and President | Nine Labs

May 2012 - September 2025 · Atlanta Metro

- Founded and led a 20-person cross-functional product strategy and design consultancy across offices in four countries, shipping 40+ software products for clients including Delta Air Lines, Fiserv, IHG, UPS, and Circle K

- Managed stakeholders from product teams to C-suite on enterprise engagements, translating customer needs and business goals into clearly articulated requirements and roadmap decisions
- Codified the firm's product methodology into Loops, a published framework covering discovery, hypothesis design, prototyping, and building at speed, applied as the operating model across all client engagements
- Shipped a proprietary CRM and reporting platform for internal use, overseeing requirements, design, and engineering delivery end to end

VP Operations | CoffeeCup Software, Inc.

February 1998 - 2012 · Atlanta, GA

- Managed product development, QA, and customer success for a consumer software company with 50 million users, shipping major releases across 14 years of platform evolution from desktop to web to mobile
- Coordinated cross-functional delivery across engineering, design, and support teams, maintaining product quality and release readiness through rapid iteration cycles

President | Bluedomino Web Hosting

November 2000 - July 2005 · Remote

- Grew Bluedomino from concept to 20,000 customers globally in under a year, then led the company through a successful acquisition by Endurance International Group

SKILLS

Product Management — Discovery and problem-space framing, Roadmap prioritization and stewardship, User stories, specs, and PRD authoring, Launch readiness and cross-team coordination, Agile delivery and sprint participation, Feature adoption analysis and data-informed prioritization, Hypothesis design and validation loops (Loops methodology), Jobs-to-be-done and human-centered design facilitation

Research and Data — Merchant and customer interviews, Survey design and NPS measurement, Pendo-style usage analytics and behavioral data synthesis, Support ticket and feature request analysis, POS-integrated reporting and throughput modeling, Findings-to-roadmap translation

Cross-Functional Collaboration — Engineering team integration (standups, refinement, sprint planning), Stakeholder management across C-suite, product, and partner teams, Partner and reseller communications, Marketing and operations alignment, Documentation and team training on new features

Tools and Platforms — Square POS API, Stripe, Supabase and PostgreSQL, Tailwind CSS, Claude API and AI-native product architecture, GitHub, Cloudflare

ADVISORY, BOARDS & COMMUNITY

- Georgia Tech ATDC: Branding and UX mentor; co-taught Customer Discovery workshops with member companies (2011-2014)
- Founder Institute: Mentor on product strategy, brand strategy, and UX for early- and growth-stage companies (2015-2024)

PUBLISHING & SPEAKING

- Loops: Building Products with Clarity and Confidence, Lioncrest Publishing, 2019 — Amazon best seller, five-step product methodology covering discovery through launch
- Speaker at Chicago Camps and other venues on human-centered product design, product strategy, and mobile commerce

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

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