

J. Cornelius

Senior Product Designer — Complex Workflows, Financial Products, and Design Systems

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SUMMARY

Over 30 years designing and shipping digital products across fintech, banking, hospitality, and SMB operations, including back-office tools used by global banks and touchless ATM workflows for a top-tier financial services firm at Nine Labs. Translates dense data and complex workflows into experiences that feel effortless — a discipline codified in the published product methodology Loops and applied across 40+ shipped products with clients including Fiserv and Delta Air Lines. Works best in ambiguity, owns problems from discovery through delivery, and builds with AI as a daily part of the workflow for prototyping, exploration, and iteration. Strong visual craft, strong product instincts, and a track record of influencing decisions across design, engineering, and executive stakeholders.

EXPERIENCE

Founder and President | Nine Labs

May 2012 - September 2025 · Atlanta Metro

- Designed and shipped 40+ digital products end-to-end, spanning back-office financial applications, multi-platform booking journeys, and mobile operations tools for clients including Fiserv, Delta Air Lines, InterContinental Hotels Group, UPS, and Circle K
- Simplified back-office applications used by global banks, translating high-stakes financial workflows into interfaces that reduced cognitive load and operational error at scale
- Prototyped touchless ATM workflows for a top-tier financial services firm, defining interaction models and high-fidelity concepts that aligned engineering and business stakeholders around a shared direction
- Built and led a 20-person cross-functional team across design, engineering, and strategy in four countries, mentoring designers and raising design quality across engagements through critique rituals and a shared methodology
- Codified the firm's product design approach into Loops, a published five-step methodology covering human-centered business design, research, prototyping, testing, and building at speed — now used by product teams beyond Nine Labs
- Contributed to and maintained design systems powering applications used daily by millions, balancing consistency with intentional evolution across product surfaces

Founder | Empty Nest Holdings

2025 - Present · Remote

- Define, design, and ship AI-enabled software products solo across a portfolio of ventures including Donna (restaurant management platform), Winote (wine trade knowledge platform), PizzaCart (online ordering with kitchen capacity modeling), and Socializer (AI social content generator)
- Use AI as an active part of the design and build workflow — prototyping concepts with Claude, directing AI coding agents for execution, and iterating from idea to working product in hours rather than sprints
- Design multi-step workflows and interaction models that make complex operational problems approachable for non-technical restaurant operators, including capacity throttling, multi-agent prospecting, and real-time throughput dashboards
- Architect modular, multi-brand product structures — including per-brand design configuration surfaces — that allow the product to scale across customers without redesigning the core experience

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

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

- Designed and ran a structured guest research program that generated 169 responses and an NPS of 53, then translated findings into a 90-day operational action plan addressing throughput, consistency, and value

perception

- Built brand identity, marketing systems, and POS-integrated reporting from scratch, applying the same evidence-informed design process used with enterprise clients to an owner-operated business context

Fractional Product Strategy Advisor | Independent (jcornelius.com)

October 2025 - Present · Remote

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

VP Operations | CoffeeCup Software, Inc.

February 1998 - 2012 · Atlanta, GA

- Managed product development and delivery for a consumer software company with 50 million users across a 14-year platform evolution spanning desktop software, web, and mobile applications

President | Bluedomino Web Hosting

November 2000 - July 2005 · Remote

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

SKILLS

Product Design — End-to-end product design, discovery through delivery, Interaction design and workflow modeling, High-fidelity prototyping and concept exploration, Design systems — contribution and evolution, Information architecture, User experience research, qualitative and quantitative, Data visualization and dense-data UX, Visual craft and detail execution

Product Strategy and Research — Problem framing and opportunity definition, Hypothesis design and validation loops (Loops methodology), Customer discovery and jobs-to-be-done facilitation, NPS measurement and guest research programs, Competitive analysis and market positioning, Roadmap synthesis and prioritization, Stakeholder alignment across design, engineering, and executive audiences

AI and Prototyping — AI-assisted design and prototyping workflow (Claude API, daily practitioner), Multi-agent system design, Rapid concept-to-working-product execution, Prompt engineering for design and product tasks, Applied prototyping with foundation models

Collaboration and Communication — Cross-functional collaboration across design, engineering, and business, Design critique facilitation and feedback culture, Written communication and product storytelling, Mentorship and design quality elevation, C-suite and board-level stakeholder management

ADVISORY, BOARDS & COMMUNITY

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

PUBLISHING & SPEAKING

- Loops: Building Products with Clarity and Confidence — Lioncrest Publishing, 2019. Amazon best seller. Five-step product methodology covering human-centered business design, research, prototyping, testing, and building at speed.
- Speaking topics: human-centered product design, product strategy and methodology, mobile commerce — venues include Chicago Camps

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

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