

# Donald Brinkman

*Design with AI. Refine by hand.*

PRODUCT & TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP · AI SYSTEMS · CREATOR ECOSYSTEMS

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You are going to skim this, six seconds, maybe ten. So let me spend them well.

For a decade I have walked into systems drowning in low-quality signal: search spam, a creator marketplace that punished good and bad alike, an AI learning the wrong things from the open internet, and built the teams, the tooling, and the judgment that surface what actually matters. I have run a nine-figure creator economy, stood up AI safety operations before the industry had a name for it, ended stalemates nobody else would touch, and bet on content three teams told me to kill.

## EXPERIENCE



### 5 Director, Creator Partner Program

Sep 2022 - Dec 2025

Mojang Studios (Microsoft)

*Trust, safety, policy, and a nine-figure creator economy of hundreds of studios.*

- Led a team of 2 PMs, 5 contractors, and 4 embedded partners across a **\$260M** creator ecosystem of 300+ studios.
- Built Minecraft's first creator-enforcement system; partner confidence rose **23% to 87%**, and monthly scorecard reviews cut content rejection **26%** in 90 days.
- Drove **\$17M** in new directly attributable revenue in a single fiscal year via a publisher program, an IP-lite licensing framework, and an emerging-creator pipeline. **\$48.86M** total FY25 contribution.
- Championed a project that three internal teams wanted to kill; it became the **#1 selling** Marketplace content for nearly a year.
- Produced the Minecraft National Park with The Nature Conservancy: 75 studios, **\$500K+** raised. (The studios made me build and sail a real Minecraft boat on Lake Sammamish to earn their time. I did. [Watch.](#))

*Ending a stalemate, owning the fallout.* A security decision about modding files had sat unresolved in a Slack thread for over two years, because the debate had become a way of not deciding. I reframed it as a binary, unship the files or bless them as our supported framework, and since no one would bless a security risk, the decision made itself. Then I owned the fallout: I took the public backlash, ran a channel with the harshest critics, and helped displaced modders move to the Marketplace.

### 6 Director, Fortnite Developer Programs

Dec 2025 - Mar 2026

Epic Games

*Developer programs and an AI pipeline refactor, cut short by a restructuring.*

- Mapped the full developer-program landscape across engineering, publishing, partnerships, and creator relations in three months.
- Proposed, got approved, and began building an AI-powered refactor of the creator feedback and bug pipeline with Google on Gemini and BigQuery; reached 40% of a targeted 70% workflow automation in 3.5 months before the role was eliminated.

### 4 Principal Group PM, Esports

Mar 2018 - Sep 2022

Microsoft

*Esports programs, an acquisition closed cheap, and the largest hackathon in Microsoft history.*

- Ran programs across Windows, Xbox, Bing, Edge, and MSN with no direct authority over any partner teams.
- Drove the Smash.gg acquisition, revived after an initial pass and closed at **~1/3 the original valuation** when the in-person esports market collapsed during the pandemic; ran 18 FTEs through migration, rebrand, and a pivot to online events.
- Patented and productized a machine-vision livestream analysis pipeline in collaboration with Microsoft Research, shipping to **40M+ MAU**.
- Stood up a 200-person cross-org hackathon team that shipped **80+ ML models** in three days and won first place, Growth. **Largest hackathon team in Microsoft history.**

### NOW Independent Research, Multi-Agent AI Systems

2026 - Present

Self-directed

- Built a multi-agent LLM system that routes tasks by model strength and treats cross-model divergence as a confidence signal; applied it to an agent that automates parts of my job search, documented in a public essay series.

### 3 Senior PM, Microsoft AI & Research

Jul 2016 – Feb 2018

Microsoft

*AI safety and evaluation for an early conversational AI, before the industry had a name for it.*

- Led quality and safety for an early conversational AI (**2M+ users**) before the industry had a name for it; built the evaluation infrastructure from scratch.
- Established self-harm and suicide detection with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- Managed nine analysts from psychology, history, and law-enforcement backgrounds; the adversarial-monitoring work became peer-reviewed research at CHI 2024.
- Ran live A/B experimentation across Bing, AI & Research, and Esports: designed flights, allocated traffic, and read significance and lift directly; built a live-data retention table from scratch for cohort tracking.

*Seeing the signal early.* For years I championed Reddit inside a company fixated on Twitter and Facebook. The wedge was conversational data: higher fidelity than anything the others could offer, and exactly what model training needed. I worked connections into Reddit's BD team, built the internal case to co-founder Alexis Ohanian, and structured a true win-win. Reddit's content surfaced on the Bing front page; Microsoft Research got the data and a younger audience. It shipped, renewed for years, and closed revenue-neutral, at a company whose reflex was to dump wheelbarrows of money on partners. It ran for the better part of a decade and only ended when Google paid a reported \$60M a year for the access I had secured for nothing.

### 2 Senior PM, Bing Relevance & AI

Jan 2014 – Jul 2016

Microsoft

*Search relevance, an Office speller at scale, and a spam problem turned into a product.*

- Shipped a contextual speller into Microsoft Office for **100M+ users**.
- Turned "free Robux" search spam into a legitimate Roblox gift-card offer; a 30-day supply sold out in **48 hours**.

### 1 Researcher & PM, Microsoft Research

Mar 2010 – Jan 2014

Microsoft Research

*Digital-humanities research and large-scale cultural preservation.*

- Drove full product lifecycle for ChronoZoom, which let users explore 14B years of history in-browser and on mobile; won the **SXSW award for Best Educational Technology**, 2013.
- Directed digital-humanities and games-for-learning research with Harvard, Stanford, Berkeley, CMU, Tsinghua, and other top institutions; responsible for **~\$1.7M** annual funding.

*The AIDS Memorial Quilt.* I led its digital preservation: three interactive experiences that let the public explore 50,000 panels, 100,000 names, and 23 acres of fabric in the browser, on phones, and on touch tables, making the entire Quilt searchable for the first time. We brought it to the National Mall while the physical Quilt was displayed, where visitors used it to find the panels of people they had lost. The work was featured by Wired, The Verge, and ABC News.

### Research Engineer, OptiMetrics

Jan 2001 – Feb 2008

OptiMetrics, Inc.

*DARPA-funded research in quantum computation, cryptography, and signals intelligence.*

- DARPA and OSD-funded research in quantum computation, cryptography, and signals intelligence. Held TS/SCI security clearance.

#### WHAT I AM LOOKING FOR

AI infrastructure, trust and safety, or creator platforms at scale, somewhere the product problem is genuinely signal versus noise. A hard problem, a high technical bar.

Every system on this page was the same job wearing a different costume. Find the signal. Build the thing that keeps finding it. Hand it to a team that can run it without me. I build the antenna, not the noise, and after ten years I have gotten very good at telling which is which. I would rather show you the work than describe it. So:

*Ask me anything.*

#### KEYWORDS

Product Strategy · Product Leadership · Technical Leadership · Trust & Safety · Creator Ecosystems · Marketplace Design · Generative AI · LLM Evaluation · Platform Partnerships · M&A Integration · Data Partnerships · Acquisitions · Developer Relations · Revenue Programs · Live Operations · Cross-functional Leadership · Managing PMs · Program Management · Stakeholder Management · SQL / Kusto · Power BI · Experimentation

*Author or co-author of 12 patents across AI, data visualization, and UX.*