

Donald Brinkman

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SUMMARY

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

Independent Researcher, Multi-Agent AI Systems

Self-directed | Seattle, WA | 2026 - Present

- Built a multi-agent LLM system that runs multiple models in parallel on the same problems and reads 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.

Director, Fortnite Developer Programs

Epic Games | Seattle, WA | Dec 2025 - Mar 2026

- 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 a company-wide restructuring.

Director, Creator Partner Program

Mojang Studios (Microsoft) | Redmond, WA | Sep 2022 - Dec 2025

- 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.)

Principal Group Program Manager, Esports

Microsoft | Redmond, WA | Mar 2018 - Sep 2022

- 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 a fraction of its earlier 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.

Senior Product Manager, Conversational AI

Microsoft (AI + Research) | Redmond, WA | Jul 2016 - Feb 2018

- 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 running the adversarial-monitoring program.
- 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.

Senior Program Manager, Bing Relevance & AI

Microsoft | Redmond, WA | Jan 2014 - Jul 2016

- 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.

R&D Program Manager

Microsoft Research | Redmond, WA | Mar 2010 - Jan 2014

- 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.

Principal

Menrva Research | Seattle, WA | Jan 2008 - Jan 2010

Research Engineer

OptiMetrics, Inc. | Ann Arbor, MI | Jan 2001 - Feb 2008

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

SKILLS

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

PUBLICATIONS AND PATENTS

- Peer-reviewed research on conversational AI user behavior, CHI 2024.
- Named inventor on 13 granted patents across data visualization, conversational AI, and machine vision.