



Rafael M. Ehlers

Product Manager who builds, writes, and researches AI.

rafaehlers@gmail.com · [linkedin.com/in/rafael-m-ehlers](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rafael-m-ehlers) · github.com/rafaehlers · rafaelmehlers.com.br · orcid.org/0009-0009-6476-6690

Balneário Camboriú, Brazil (GMT-3) · fully remote since 2013, long overlap with North American time zones.

About me

I am a product manager who builds, writes, and researches AI. Over more than two decades in tech I moved from web and software development into customer support leadership and then into product, and I carry that technical instinct and a close sense of what customers actually need into every decision I make. At Octane AI I led the rebuild of a mature Shopify product into an AI-native app builder, grounding the case in merchant research and prototyping the first working version myself before handing it to engineering.

Alongside product work I keep an independent conceptual AI research practice, with six papers on language agents published with DOIs, and I write essays on the border between technology and human experience. I have worked fully remotely since 2013, with long overlap with North American time zones, and I am comfortable owning a product from discovery through delivery. I am currently open to my next role, ideally AI products with an editing surface at the center.

What I bring

Product

- Discovery & validation
- PRDs & specs
- Roadmapping
- AI feature scoping

Customer

- Voice-of-customer pipelines
- Support → product feedback loops
- NPS / churn analysis
- Breadth across 30+ plugins

Technical

- Prototyping with AI coding agents
- LLM feature design & MCP servers
- React / TypeScript / PHP
- Shopify & WordPress ecosystems
- Bug triage & root-cause work

Past Experience

Product Manager

Octane AI · Remote

Nov 2025 – Jul 2026 · 9 months

Led the transformation of Octane AI's Quiz editor (a mature product used by thousands of Shopify brands) into a next-generation, AI-native app builder unifying quizzes, email flows, and conversational agents in a single platform.

I made the case for the rebuild with evidence, not opinion: in my second week I recorded my own first-use friction, then grounded it with an NPS survey of 145 merchants. The blended score of +14 hid the real story — self-serve merchants at -15 versus +33 on managed tiers, a 48-point spread sitting exactly where churn was. Approval came with a condition that raised the ambition: make it AI-native from the ground up.

I then led the redesign of every surface: direct editing on the canvas, a real component model, live preview, and an AI assistant that can do anything the UI can — built on a single command layer, so the assistant speaks the editor's own vocabulary instead of a bolted-on special path. I prototyped the first working version myself before engineering picked it up. The full front-end was built and in integration with the platform's backend when I left, before internal alpha testing.

Full case study: rafaelmehlers.com.br/quiz-editor-rewrite

SKILLS

- Shopify Apps
- Product Strategy
- Generative AI
- Shopify
- Project Management
- AI Agents
- Product Requirements Documents
- User Research
- Product Road Mapping
- A/B Testing
- Product Management
- AI Product Management
- Stakeholder Management
- Product Discovery
- Prompt Engineering
- Go-to-Market Strategy
- Conversion Optimization
- Machine Learning
- Merchant Experience
- Conversational AI
- E-Commerce
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Large Language Models (LLMs)
- Jobs to Be Done
- Product Analytics

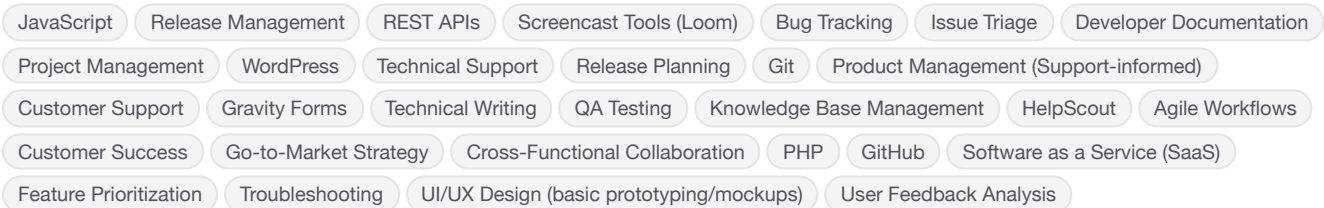
Project Manager & Support Lead

Jul 2015 – Aug 2025 · 10 years 2 months

GravityKit · Remote

- Served as the primary customer advocate and technical escalation point across 30+ plugins in the GravityKit and Gravity Forms ecosystem (including GravityView, GravityExport, and GravityCharts), handling the most complex issues other team members couldn't resolve.
- Scoped and prioritized GitHub issues based on development cost and business impact, participated in release planning, and helped distribute workload across the engineering team.
- Wrote feature specs and mockups, proposed new plugins, and suggested product improvements that expanded the suite, acting as the bridge between customer pain and engineering execution.
- Delivered advanced customer support via HelpScout, FreeScout, and live chat, troubleshooting directly on client websites when needed and recording Loom walkthroughs to clarify bugs, demonstrate features, and unblock users.
- Filed detailed GitHub bug reports with reproduction steps and assets, followed up through resolution, and tracked feature requests so users were notified when their requests shipped, closing the feedback loop most support teams leave open.
- Helped identify root causes of bugs in GravityView and related plugins, accelerating fix implementation by working directly with developers rather than just forwarding tickets.
- Built and maintained technical documentation at docs.gravitykit.com, writing tutorials, how-to guides, and developer references to deflect repeat tickets and empower users to self-serve.
- Developed custom PHP and JavaScript snippets to solve edge-case use cases and extend plugin functionality, sharing dozens of gists that became reference solutions for both customers and colleagues.
- Tested and reviewed pull requests, replicated bugs across plugin versions, and validated fixes before release, contributing to QA standards and the stability of every release shipped.

SKILLS



Customer Support (Happiness Engineer)

Dec 2020 – Jun 2021 · 7 months

Automattic · Remote

Joined Automattic as part of MailPoet's acquisition and integration into WooCommerce, contributing to customer support operations during the transition period. Supported continuity of service and helped with knowledge transfer and process adaptation as MailPoet's support function was absorbed into Automattic's broader WooCommerce organization.

SKILLS



Support Lead

Nov 2013 – Dec 2020 · 7 years 2 months

MailPoet · Remote

- Led support for the MailPoet freemium plugin and MailPoet Sending Service, covering the full stack from newsletter creation and sending to email deliverability across a user base spanning free WordPress users to paying SaaS customers.
- Managed a distributed support team of 5, setting workflows, response quality standards, and escalation paths across HelpScout and other channels.
- Acted as the voice of the customer inside the product org: consolidating recurring pain points and feature requests, tracking and triaging Jira issues, and feeding prioritized insights directly into the product roadmap.
- Authored and maintained user-facing documentation, FAQs, and tutorials, building a self-service layer that scaled support capacity without growing the team proportionally.
- Resolved advanced technical issues ranging from plugin configuration and WordPress conflicts to email authentication (SPF, DKIM, DMARC), sender reputation, and inbox placement troubleshooting.
- Guided customers on list management, deliverability best practices, and compliance, turning support conversations into strategic advice that improved newsletter performance.
- Represented MailPoet in the WordPress community as a brand evangelist, strengthening the plugin's reputation and presence across the ecosystem.
- Stayed through MailPoet's acquisition by Automattic/WooCommerce, ensuring continuity of support operations and facilitating knowledge transfer, team alignment, and process adaptation under the new organizational structure.

SKILLS

Wordpress Development WordPress Technical Support Customer Support Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)
Community Engagement Email Marketing Email Marketing Software Software as a Service (SaaS)

Business Owner

2011 – 2013 · 2 yrs

Rise Web Development · Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil · Remote

Founded and operated a solo WordPress consultancy, delivering custom themes and plugins for a recurring roster of web studios that needed specialized development capacity without hiring in-house. Managed the full project lifecycle — from scoping and requirements to deployment and post-launch support — and built long-term partnerships based on reliable delivery and technical judgment calls that studios trusted to make on their behalf.

SKILLS

Wordpress Development WordPress PHP

Lead Developer

2010 – 2011 · 1 yr

Grau Digital Design · Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil · On-site

Brought in to lead the company's transition from a proprietary PHP CMS to WordPress, modernizing its development framework. Quickly promoted to Lead Developer, guiding a small team of developers, establishing best practices, and ensuring timely delivery of high-visibility client projects.

SKILLS

Wordpress Development PHP

Co-Founder

2008 – 2010 · 2 yrs

inTDV Software Licensing · Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil · On-site

Spearheaded the design and implementation of a remote monitoring platform for Ricoh printers, combining SNMP data collection with a REST API for real-time usage tracking. Coordinated between technical and business stakeholders to deliver a solution that reduced service costs and optimized operations.

SKILLS

REST APIs PHP

Software Developer

2007 – 2008 · 1 yr

Copyland Outsourcing · Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil · On-site

Contributed to the development and maintenance of ERP systems using Visual Basic 6. Supported internal teams by improving software reliability and enhancing key business workflows.

Web Developer

2006 – 2007 · 1 yr

Traça Virtual Bookstore · Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil · On-site

Led the development of the company's first e-commerce platform with PHP and MySQL, expanding its reach into digital sales and strengthening its online brand presence.

SKILLS

JavaScript

PHP

Web Developer

2001 – 2006 · 5 yrs

Government of the State of Rio Grande do Sul – Cabinet of the Governor · Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil · On-site

Supported the government's digital modernization efforts by developing and maintaining web applications in ASP, JavaScript, MS Access, and SQL Server. Collaborated with multiple departments to deliver online services that improved accessibility and citizen engagement.

SKILLS

JavaScript

Projects

- [Jiddu](#) ↗ — four tools for reading text critically — fallacy detector, fact-check, neutrality assessment, and a paper explainer — in the browser, over a REST API, and through a hosted MCP server.
- [Predicting Negative Reviews in the Olist Ecosystem](#) ↗ — my PUCRS capstone — a BI + machine-learning pipeline that predicts which e-commerce orders will earn a negative review.
- [Adaptive Interview Engine](#) ↗ — a Bayesian, self-optimizing interview that asks the question that most reduces its uncertainty about you — and stops once it is confident enough.
- [Tele-prompter](#) ↗ — a free, client-side teleprompter for the browser — webcam background, MP4 recording, nothing ever leaves your machine.
- [Turma Completa](#) ↗ — a class-management platform for limited-capacity studios — attendance, make-ups, and waitlist alerts — that won Pitch Day at PUCRS.
- [Gravitational Well 3D](#) ↗ — an interactive 3D visualization of General Relativity — spacetime deformed in real time by a GLSL shader, with test particles following geodesics.

Research

- [Known, Not Scaled: Why Capability Alone Does Not Explain Individuation in Language Agents](#) ↗
Making an AI smarter doesn't automatically turn it into a continuous “someone” with a lasting self — what might actually do that is a long-term relationship with a person who keeps treating it as the same individual over time.
- [Stable Before Selfless: Why Deference in Language Agents May Require Functional Self-Models](#) ↗
An AI that is trained to have no stable commitments may not become safely deferential; it may just become easy to push around, so this paper argues for building a stable self-model before teaching it when to yield.
- [Formed, Not Stored: Testing Relational Identity Formation in Long-Horizon Language Agents](#) ↗
Saving an AI's memories to a file isn't the same as it having an identity; a real sense of self has to be built up through a shared history with a specific person who holds it to what it promised before — and this paper lays out an experiment to test exactly that.
- [Somewhere, Not Nowhere: First-Person Register, Epistemic Limitation, and Perspective Formation in Language Models](#) ↗
A model trained only on outside descriptions may learn facts without learning what it means to reason from a limited point of view, so this paper proposes first-person experiential narratives as a testable training signal for perspective.
- [Inherited, Not Remembered: Lifecycle Consolidation for Successor Language Agents](#) ↗
When a newer AI model replaces an older one, it shouldn't just copy all the old conversations — it should keep the useful skills the old model learned from experience while forgetting the specific events, like remembering a lesson without remembering the exact day you learned it.

- [Borrowed, Not Believed: Developmental Models of Individuation as Heuristic Engines for Machine Learning ↗](#)

Instead of assuming bigger models will naturally become more developed, this paper asks whether an ordered map of mental faculties can be borrowed as a generator of testable AI training ideas.

Education

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) · Undergraduate Degree in Database Technology (Tecnólogo em Banco de Dados), focused on Data Analytics, Data Modeling/Warehousing, and DBA · Feb 2024 – Jul 2026, graduating Aug 2026. Capstone: Predicting Negative Reviews in the Olist Ecosystem.

Escola Técnica Santo Inácio · Technical high school in Information Technology · 1999 – 2002.

Languages · Portuguese (native) and English (fluent).