



Rafael M. Ehlers

Technical support leader, developer, product builder, and independent AI researcher.

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

About me

I solve complex customer problems and turn what I learn into better software. Over 25 years in tech, I moved from software development into nearly 12 years of technical support and later into product management. I led a distributed support team, handled the issues that reached the end of the escalation path, wrote documentation and code, tested fixes, and brought what customers were struggling with back into the product.

Today I also build AI products and publish independent research on language agents, memory, and long-term interaction. I have worked fully remotely since 2013, with long overlap with North American time zones. I am open to work where customer understanding, technical depth, and product judgment belong together.

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

Nov 2025 - Jul 2026 · 9 months

Octane AI · Remote

I collected requests from sales, account managers, customer support, and engineering and turned them into PRDs. I took two long-standing requests from PRD to release: a progress bar for quizzes and discounts integrated with Shopify.

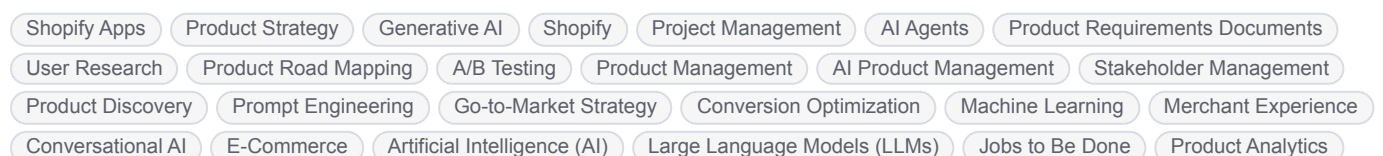
In parallel, I led the rebuild of Octane AI's Quiz editor, an established product used by thousands of Shopify brands, as an AI-native app builder for quizzes, email flows, and conversational agents. In my second week, I recorded the friction from my own first use, then compared it with an NPS survey of 145 merchants. A blended score of +14 hid a 48-point gap: -15 for self-serve merchants and +33 for managed tiers. The gap sat exactly where churn was. The rebuild was approved on one condition: make it AI-native from the ground up.

The redesign covered direct editing on the canvas, the component model, live preview, and AI assistant. The UI and assistant used the same command layer, which let the assistant perform every operation available in the interface using the editor's existing vocabulary. I prototyped the first working version before engineering picked it up. When I left, the full front-end was being integrated with the platform's backend, before internal alpha testing.

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

After Meta acquired Moltbook and Octane AI's CEO and President joined Meta Superintelligence Labs, the company entered a leadership transition. I chose to leave a few months later.

SKILLS



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

JavaScript Release Management REST APIs Screencast Tools (Loom) Bug Tracking Issue Triage Developer Documentation
Project Management WordPress Technical Support Release Planning Git Product Management (Support-informed)
Customer Support Gravity Forms Technical Writing QA Testing Knowledge Base Management HelpScout Agile Workflows
Customer Success Go-to-Market Strategy Cross-Functional Collaboration PHP GitHub Software as a Service (SaaS)
Feature Prioritization Troubleshooting UI/UX Design (basic prototyping/mockups) User Feedback Analysis

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

WordPress Customer Support WooCommerce Software as a Service (SaaS)

Support Lead

MailPoet · Remote

Nov 2013 - Dec 2020 · 7 years 2 months

- 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 - Critical Reading** - eight critical-reading lenses across documents, screenshots, live speech, and conversational context, delivered through the web app, Chrome extension, REST API, and hosted MCP server, with usage-based billing.
- **Você Já Faz Product / You Already Do Product** - a book on turning practical experience into the professional language of Product Management, free to read online in Portuguese and English.
- **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 more capable does not by itself create a continuous individual; this paper tests whether authenticated history and external accountability are sufficient for functional continuity, and whether a persistent reciprocal relationship adds anything beyond them.
- **Stable Before Selfless: Why Deference in Language Agents May Require Functional Self-Models**
An AI with no stable commitments may become easy to push around rather than safely deferential; this paper tests whether commitments-first training helps, and whether the benefit comes from a self-model, training order, or a matched provenance-aware policy.

- **Formed, Not Stored: Testing Relational Identity Formation in Long-Horizon Language Agents**
Saving an AI's memories is not the same as forming a functional identity; this paper tests whether active external accountability makes prior commitments matter, and whether a reciprocal counterpart adds anything beyond a matched impersonal auditor.
- **Somewhere, Not Nowhere: First-Person Register, Epistemic Limitation, and Perspective Formation in Language Models**
First-person voice and limited knowledge are often confounded. This paper separates them in a controlled 2×2 experiment to test whether voice, epistemic limitation, or their interaction produces perspective skills that transfer beyond narrative prose.
- **Inherited, Not Remembered: Lifecycle Consolidation for Successor Language Agents**
When one AI model replaces another, the key question is not only what it remembers but what it can inherit with evidence. This paper tests whether lifecycle consolidation transfers a deployment-learned rule with auditable lineage while rejecting decoys and source episodes.
- **Borrowed, Not Believed: Developmental Models of Individuation as Heuristic Engines for Machine Learning**
This paper treats a pre-scientific developmental schema as a disclosed source of testable machine-learning hypotheses, separating six independent interventions from a stronger dependency order that must survive matched baselines and prospective preregistration.

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. 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).