

Adam Cutler

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SUMMARY

I've spent most of my career working at the boundaries where momentum gets lost. Between strategy and design. Design and engineering. Vision and execution. The work has always been the same: help the original intent survive the journey. These days my intent ships with the code. Same crafts, same collaborators. The idea just stops losing fidelity at every border.

EXPERIENCE

Chief Product Officer · Bast.ai

2025–2026

A seven-person AI startup selling trust to the most skeptical buyers there are: universities and hospitals that were refusing to approve what they couldn't defend.

- Drove the productization of Bast so customers could run the system themselves: positioning, the admin platform, a design system, and the front end that carried them. The product, end-to-end.
- Designed for the person who bears the risk, not just the person who uses the app: executive readiness views, a human checkpoint in the knowledge workflow, versioned deployments with rollback, provenance beside every answer.
- Worked spec-first and used AI throughout delivery, with product decisions made, then built, in the same repo as the engineers. In one measured month we closed roughly 60 tracked changes against a plan of 17.
- Took CareLoops from a product brief to a working native iOS prototype in twelve days, carrying the trust principles forward: consent before every recording, patient-controlled sharing, source attribution.
- By spring 2026, live at Maryville University and Northwestern Medicine/Lurie Cancer Center, with completed pilots at Craig Hospital, MSU Denver, and Simwerx. A seven-person team could ship, operate, and explain the product as one system.

IBM · 2001–2025

Originator & Director, Carbon for AI · IBM

2023–2025

When IBM shipped watsonx and mandated generative AI across a 200-product portfolio, the assignment with my name on it was: give AI a body. One shared language, every product, ten months.

- Set the concept and held the standard: light as the identity, the AI label and intelligent layer as the machinery, recognition as the bar. Assembled the team that made it real from wherever the right skills happened to sit.
- Built adoption into the work before there was anything to adopt: a twelve-team early-adopter cohort, weekly sponsor meetings, sixty-plus office hours. Product edge cases came back as reusable patterns; every new team made the shared answer better.
- Partnered with the watsonx Assistant team to build the shared chat foundation once, as InnerSource; debuted on the THINK main stage in May 2024, eight months from no shared standard.
- Open-sourced the whole system, guidelines and code, on carbondesignsystem.com. Adoption grew to 40+ product teams, and the work won a Red Dot, an iF Design Award, and an AI Excellence Award in 2025.
- Guided the working group behind Carbon's agentic patterns, with Chris Noessel: a plan before the agent acts, a record after, a way to stop it in between.

Distinguished Designer, AI Design · IBM

2016–2025

One of the first three Distinguished Designers IBM appointed. The mission, in one sentence: define what it means to design for artificial intelligence.

- Gave up a nineteen-person team to become a team of one and built the discipline in layers for the population that would carry it, 3,000+ designers across IBM: principles, ethics, people, craft.
- Co-wrote *Everyday Ethics for AI*, IBM's first practical AI ethics guide, published free and still cited. Co-chaired the IEEE committee behind *Ethically Aligned Design for Business*, alongside LEGO, Microsoft, and BP.

- Co-founded the Design for AI Guild in 2021 with two dozen volunteers, four hours a week, no budget line; it grew past 250 members and shipped the AI skills ladder that made AI designer a role IBM hires for, plus the modules that became Enterprise Design Thinking for Data & AI.
- Co-wrote the craft shelf as the practice matured, *Building Conversational Agents* (2017) through *UX for AI* (2023). The method still onboards watsonx teams through the AI Accelerator.
- Closed the arc with *Ambient Intelligence in Enterprise Software* (April 2025), the blueprint for intelligence inside the work rather than a panel beside it. Nine years of groundwork before the LLM wave hit; when the generative wave arrived, the discipline was already standing.

Design Principal & Project Director · IBM Design

2013–2016

- **IBM Design Thinking:** co-created the Loop (Observe, Reflect, Make) and directed the 2016 release that rebuilt the method so 380,000 IBMers could carry it. Teams using the practice cut initial design time by 75%, development and testing by 33%, and design defects in half; products reached market twice as fast, at a 301% ROI. 500K practitioners and counting.
- **IBM Design Language:** co-conceived “authentically thoughtful” as the emotional spine of the language that replaced OneUI, a language instead of a library of answers. Released December 2014; adopted by almost every IBM software product, with open-source descendants from Plex to Carbon.
- **IBM Studios Austin,** as Design Studio Program Director: built 50,000 square feet around movement, collision, and reconfiguration for 350+ designers, with a first-of-its-kind rail system of sliding whiteboard walls. Google, Apple, and Microsoft came to study it; it became the model for IBM’s other studios and stayed the flagship for over a decade.

UX, Visual & Client Lead · IBM iX

2001–2013

- **OPENPediatrics,** with Boston Children’s Hospital (2009–2016): co-conceived PICU Without Walls with Dr. Jeffrey Burns, Dr. Traci Wolbrink, and Jodi Cutler, and, with two IBM iX front-end developers, took v1 from a whiteboard scribble to a working app in ten weeks. Led the overall effort: user experience, visual design, and the client relationship.
- Coordinated across IBM Software Group to build Amphitheater, the platform underneath it, later hardened into IBM Social Learning. Today OPENPediatrics serves 156,000 registered members at 3,000+ hospitals in 145 countries and has been directly attributed to saving children’s lives.
- **Accelerated Visioning** (2006): co-created, with Jodi Cutler, an eight-week engagement built on the art of the possible: the client leaves with a concept-car prototype and a roadmap. IBM iX sold hundreds, \$300M+ in sales, about \$872K saved per project; it changed how the business went to market for more than a decade. A precursor to design thinking at IBM.

Each of these is traced from the brief to the thing that shipped at adamcutler.slack.com.

WRITING & SPEAKING

- *Can we be friends with our AI?* · TED@IBM · ted.com
- *On Intelligencism* · essay · [LinkedIn](#) Calibration, provenance, recourse. A working theory of keeping AI accountable to people.
- *Know Yourself First* and *Design Moves Up the Stack* · essays · adamcutler.slack.com
- Stages: O’Reilly AI (2018), THINK (2019), Cannes Lions and AI Day New Zealand (2019).

SKILLS

LEADERSHIP Product strategy, design direction, practice and organization building, client leadership, workshop facilitation, Enterprise Design Thinking

AI DESIGN UX for AI, AI ethics, explainability, conversation design, agentic AI patterns, data literacy, responsible AI

CRAFT & SYSTEMS Design systems (Carbon, IBM Design Language), design tokens, interaction design, visual design, the front end and working code, native iOS prototyping, spec-first AI-assisted development (Claude Code, Figma)

Tell me what you’re building. ac@slack.com