Chetan Ankola

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Four internal AI products solo-built at Yahoo · Echo built in four days to replace a six-figure vendor contract · 300+ apps published by colleagues on DROP

SUMMARY

- **Profile:** Product leader who turns internal workflow friction into AI tools and self-service platforms. Combines customer discovery, cross-functional requirements and hands-on delivery with the experience of operating a product after launch.
- **Yahoo:** Since 2012, from front-end and iOS engineering to Principal PM; co-inventor of four US patents (AI email summaries, AR interfaces).
- **Independent:** Ships App Store apps and playable 3D worlds, with 4.5M+ observed views and features from OpenAI, ChatGPT and Three.js.

EXPERIENCE

Yahoo | Product Management and Engineering

June 2012–present · Mountain View, CA

Principal Product Manager, Yahoo Mail · 2022–present

Earlier at Yahoo: iOS Engineer, Yahoo Mail, 2016–2021, leading product and engineering for AR ads from 2017 · Front-end Engineer, Yahoo Search (JavaScript, Node.js, React), 2012–2016.

- **DROP, internal app publishing:** Built a platform where an employee drags in a site or app and it goes live with no GitHub or GCP setup: identity, a real-time database, files, collaboration, access controls, usage statistics and a Claude CLI workflow. Colleagues across Mail, Sports and Finance had created 300+ DROPs by November 2026.
- **Ran DROP as a product, not a project:** Per-app subdomains, cloning and sharing, reference apps, templates and developer guidance. Turned a colleague’s external-sharing request into deployed, permission-restricted links in under two hours, and built guided recovery for broken drops, sign-in failures and stale previews.
- **CUSS, customer insight agent:** Solo-built a self-service customer insights platform and AI agent that unified 370,000+ feedback records from five sources, including both app stores, so product managers and engineering leads can investigate issues and verify findings against customers’ own words, with automated weekly reports for desktop, iOS and Android. Built a 29-case golden evaluation set to check whether AI answers used the right platform, reported accurate counts and quoted customers faithfully, and validated a release candidate with 3,463 passing regression tests. Fixed five Severity 1 security findings to secure sign-off from Security.
- **OCEAN, Mail insight agent:** Solo-built an agent that consolidates 27 squads and 30 knowledge repositories into daily reports of what shipped, what was blocked and who owned the next decision, with Q&A on the web, in Slack and as a Claude plugin. Designed its evaluation framework across 15 workflows, combining automated citation checks with independent model grading to flag unsupported claims; user thumbs-up and thumbs-down feedback feeds prompt improvements. It handled 291 question submissions from July through September 2026.
- **Knowledge inside existing workflows:** Delivered scheduled briefings, repository-triggered refreshes and a searchable training center with video transcription, captions and progress tracking, so squads could onboard themselves.
- **Echo, built in four days:** Solo-built an in-house customer-feedback, feature-request and roadmap-tracking web app to replace UserVoice and its six-figure contract, owning the frontend, backend and GCP deployment. Deployed the internal pilot with automated staging deployments, verified rollback and database recovery, and secure routing with Production Engineering.
- **Portfolio operations and security:** Established weekly reviews of the four internal AI products to track adoption, reliability, release readiness and decisions requiring leadership input. Restored endpoint protection across three Signal production servers, repaired Nessus vulnerability scanning on affected cloud hosts and patched OCEAN’s production runtime while keeping the service available.
- **Team enablement:** Standardized squad planning updates with Program Management, created a beta-testing template adopted by other product managers and built a retrospective tool that organized 174 team notes across 13 topics.
- **Customer research and experimentation:** Used funnel analysis to find where users dropped off when trying a new inbox feature and directed experiments that raised adoption from 3% to 16% of weekly active users, exceeding a 10% target. Translated a 30-participant study and eight follow-up interviews into launch requirements for Yahoo Mail Premium Home, defining first-release scope and ownership across Product, Design and Engineering.

- **GenAI enablement (2023–2026):** Seeded Yahoo's early generative-AI and Claude Code communities through live demos and knowledge-sharing channels, and personally built working prototypes to align product, engineering, design and data partners around a concrete experience.
- **Mail Home:** Led the Home initiative to explore how Yahoo Mail could work as a conversational assistant. Translated user research into requirements and prototyped which actions people wanted to confirm or undo.
- **Mobile product leadership:** Led Mail's Inbox & Organize mobile team as the iOS app reached 20M daily active users in 2024 (4.7 stars across 4.9M App Store ratings). Led cross-functional launches of Catch Up, swipe-based inbox triage with AI previews (~19% iOS and ~16% Android weekly actives in 2025; revenue per user up 1.6% and 2.1%), and Mail's first native mobile Calendar (~10% of Mail's weekly actives in 2025) with LLM-based event extraction.
- **AR creative authoring tools (2017–2021, product and engineering):** Built Yahoo Mail's iOS AR ad experiences and the authoring tools, SPAARC / AR Ad Composer and AR Ad Generator, that let creative teams assemble 3D scenes, textures and animations without writing JSON. The work supported $2M in AR ad sales across advertisers including Home Depot, Macy's, Pottery Barn, HP, Walmart and Vodafone.
- **Engineering foundation:** Owned the Yahoo Search Assist front-end library used in production by multiple Yahoo properties, then led the rewrite of mobile search in Node.js and React with reusable, high-performance interaction libraries. Moved to native iOS, building Swift prototypes and Yahoo Mail features including AR, notification settings, onboarding and privacy.

Nokia Siemens Networks | R&D Engineer, Wireless Systems

July 2008–July 2010 · Bangalore, India

Built C/C++ and Python simulation, automation and performance-testing tools for WiMAX, W-CDMA and LTE networks.

INDEPENDENT PRODUCTS AND CREATIVE WORK

- **DexRelay (iOS App Store):** Designed, built and shipped an iPhone-to-Mac control plane for steering Claude Code and Codex projects, approvals and builds: SwiftUI app, installable CLI, QR pairing, LAN-first WebSockets with Tailscale fallback, and a self-healing launchd Mac runtime with health, repair and wake controls. Shipped before OpenAI launched its own Codex remote control.
- **Saffron, self-service recovery:** Designed actionable connection diagnostics and one-tap repair for invalid endpoints, stale conversation IDs, timeouts and incomplete handshakes, pairing an explanation of what failed with a verified reset and fresh-session recovery.
- **AppTruffle and Polly (iOS App Store):** Shipped a market-research app backed by a Python and SQLite collection pipeline (12,084 apps and about 1.98M ranking snapshots in an August 2026 snapshot) with Cloudflare delivery, and a retro camera app built on AVFoundation, CloudKit backup and StoreKit subscriptions.
- **Recognition and collaborations:** Moonlit Swamp was featured by OpenAI and ChatGPT on Instagram and TikTok; Cozy Creek reached 369K views on X and was shared by @threejs and reposted by OpenAI Developers. Invited paid collaborations with ElevenLabs (Foldline, a driving and music game for the Chroma Awards campaign) and Tripo AI (Arctic Waters).

RECOGNITION

- **2026 Co-inventor, US Patent 12,783,570:** AI-generated email summaries shown in the inbox without opening the message.
- **2020–2022 Co-inventor, US Patents 10,679,414, 10,997,791 and 11,367,261:** "Presenting an augmented reality interface."
- **2018 Lumiere Technology Award, Advanced Imaging Society:** Recognized for RYOT / Yahoo Mail AR.
- **2026 Featured by OpenAI and ChatGPT; shared by Three.js and OpenAI Developers** for independent 3D worlds.

SKILLS

Enterprise: Slack integrations, security review, Okta / IAP, knowledge retrieval, workflow automation, adoption measurement, operating products after launch.

AI and agents: Claude Code, Codex, retrieval and source provenance, evaluations and feedback loops, multi-model routing, MCP connectors, prompt and agent-workflow design.

Product: Discovery, customer-research synthesis, interaction design, rapid prototyping, experimentation, adoption and revenue metrics, roadmaps, cross-functional delivery.

Engineering: Swift / SwiftUI, JavaScript / TypeScript, React, Node.js, Python, SQL / BigQuery, REST, WebSockets, GCP, Cloudflare Workers.

EDUCATION

University of Southern California, M.S., Computer Science, 2010–2012
PES Institute of Technology, Bangalore, B.E., Information Science, 2008