Donovan Thomson

Head of Product @ UtilityWarehouse

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With over 11 years of experience at the intersection of product leadership and software engineering, I specialize in designing, developing, and launching impactful products that achieve business outcomes and delight customers. My career highlights include driving the growth of a B2B startup to secure $170M in funding and contributing to the expansion of a FTSE-250 B2C platform with 1M+ customers.

Education

Computer Science (Hons) - University of Cape Town 2009-2012
Cape Town

Values

Customer obsession

Outcomes over outputs

Passionate curiosity

Test and learn

Radical candor

Empowered engineering

Interests

Rugby

Kite surfing

Surfing

Mountain biking

Investing

Tools

Jira, Productboard, Linear, Loom

SQL, Looker, Tableau, Optimizely

OpenAI, Delighted, Braze, Contentful

Experience

UtilityWarehouse - FTSE 250	**April 2023 - Present**
Head of Product - Platforms	London/Remote

🔗 https://uw.co.uk/

As Head of Product Management I lead the strategy, development, and execution of a UW's Platform product portfolio which spans the Fintech, Developer Platforms and legacy platforms domains. This role involves hiring, managing and mentoring 6 product teams, collaborating with cross-functional stakeholders (engineering, design, marketing, sales), and ensuring products meet customer needs while driving business growth.

Fintech Platforms (3 Product teams)
Enabling UW to efficiently bill, take payments and manage debt for more than a million customers every month. Some key initiatives in this area included:
1. Developing a credit scoring capability driven by ML which enabled UW to safely increase conversion while controlling debt levels. This drove more than £20M in revenue over the financial year.
2. Adopting OpenBanking capabilities to enable customers to pay by bank App which reduced transaction costs by 80% resulting in £2M of cost savings per year.

Developer Platforms (3 Product teams)
Scaling a multi-service offering requires coordination across 23 product teams. To enhance their efficiency, we've established a dedicated product domain focused on delivering tools that address repetitive challenges and ensure a seamless, consistent customer experience. The three pillars of this domain are data capabilities, communications platform and legacy platforms. Key initiatives in this area included:
1. Providing product teams with the tools to monitor, manage and optimise communications. The application of these tools enabled our marketing teams to optimise the cost of our communications by more than £1.5M while improving customer experience (reducing call propensity).

2. Providing data infrastructure and tooling enabling UW to adopt a data mesh approach to publishing and managing data across our domains.

Zappi.io	**July 2020-March 2023**
Senior Product Manager - Flexible Research Platform and Integrations	London/Remote

🔗 https://www.zappi.io/web/

During my time at Zappi I contributed to scaling the company from 14 to 330 employees, achieving annual revenue growth of 20–35% to reach $65M. Key milestones include securing 13 enterprise customers with $1M+ annual spend and a $170M growth funding round in 2022 from Sumeru Equity Partners.

As the Senior Product Manager for the flexible research platform I was responsible for defining and executing a flexible research platform offering that enabled enterprise customers to create tailored automated research methods matching their internal advertising and innovation philosophies. This involved leading a cross-functional team to refine the value proposition, sales enablement, operational processes, and working across 5 product teams to ensure the correct capabilities were in place.
Some key outcomes in this area included:
1. Launching the offering, achieving product market fit with 20 large western enterprise companies, and achieving more than 136% of our $1M revenue target.
2. The delivery of 2 standardised solutions which achieved a further $2.5M in additional revenue.

Zappi.io	**April 2017 - July 2020**
Zappi.io — Product Manager - Analytics Platform	London/Remote

🔗 https://www.zappi.io/web/

As a Product Manager for an analytics platform, I drove the strategic vision, development, and optimisation of tools that delivered actionable insights to our customers. This involved working across 3 engineering teams, careful prioritisation of features, enhanced usability, and ensure data quality while aligning with customer needs and business objectives. The platform included various tools in the Market Research analytics space including norms, crosstabs, data modeling, and exports with a generative AI interface for assisting customers in interpreting insights.
Some key outcomes from this period included:
1. Delivering a flexible analytics capability which was adopted by more than 70% of our user base.
2. Improving the speed of the platform by 20x, resulting in a 10x adoption of the online capabilities by customers.

Zappi.io	**March 2015 - April 2017**
Software Engineer - Analytics Platform	Cape Town, South Africa

🔗 https://www.zappi.io/web/

As a platform Software Engineer in the core analysis platform team I was responsible for supporting the underlying platform which powered analytics in our automated solutions. A significant focus was on enabling performant calculation using various techniques like async scheduling, database optimisations, caching, etc.

Key technologies involved with this role were Ruby/Ruby on Rails, Python, PANDAS, MySql, InfluxDB, and React.

Business Systems Group (BSG)	**Jan 2013 - March 2015**
Software Engineer	Cape Town, South Africa

🔗 https://bsg.co.za/

As an consultant engineer I developed on various web-based projects for large enterprise customers across finance, insurance, and HR systems. My main takeaways from this role were good software development and quality assurance processes.

Key technologies involved with this role were Java, Spring, Mysql, C#