

# Ben Burns

Somerville, MA | (412) 417-4217 | benjamin.burns.10@gmail.com  
benburns.xyz | linkedin.com/in/benjaminburns

## Hardware Product Leader

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Collaborative, decisive end-to-end product leader with 11 years of experience developing, launching, and scaling consumer hardware and software products. Launched 8 category-defining Bose earbuds and speakers, with millions of units sold globally. Reinvented earbuds for an open-ear, spatial, all-day-AI future with the new Bose Ultra Open Earbuds.

Expert at making nuanced tradeoffs between dozens of technical, design, and business disciplines while rallying 100+-person teams around customer-centric product visions. Close partner to marketing and PR, including delivery of high-production-value press event demos. Adaptable, reliable leader with experience hiring senior PMs, leading PMs in strategic projects, and running turnarounds. Seasoned research stakeholder; co-invented and commissioned numerous wearable audio, comfort, and noise management features.

## Key Strengths and Specialties

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Deep Customer Empathy       | • Hardware Technical Fluency   | • PM Hiring and Mentorship        |
| • Qual & Quant User Insights  | • Software, Firmware, Mobile   | • Productizing AI/ML Experiences  |
| • Innovation Funnel Design    | • Product/Category Roadmaps    | • Proactive Strategy Development  |
| • Concept Validation          | • Requirements Definition      | • Market & Competitive Analysis   |
| • Product Marketing and Story | • Prototyping and Beta Testing | • BOM Cost, Dev Budgets, Volumes  |
| • Polished Press Demos        | • Scale Manufacturing          | • Accountability to Board & Execs |

## Experience

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### Bose — Boston, MA

July 2015 – February 2024

Leader of large and small teams across the organization. Ultimate responsibility for every element of my products, including mechanical, electrical, acoustics, silicon, firmware, app software, physical and virtual UX, industrial design, legal, price/cost/margin, manufacturing, safety, schedule, packaging, etc.

Scope steadily increased over 9 years, from single-product ownership to driving category roadmaps, hiring senior PMs, and reporting directly to the CEO and CPO.

### Principal Product Line Manager, Earbuds (2022-2024)

Leader of earbuds product managers, headphones strategy team, and cross-functional leads team of 12.

- **Category creation:** led the launch of the Ultra Open Earbuds – earbuds that don't go in your ear. Novel design for unrivaled forget-it's-there comfort, natural awareness, and rich sound. Setting up for a future as an all-day audio AI wearable merging your digital life into your physical world. Beating sales forecast by 2x.
- **Productizing AI/ML features:** embedded with Research to turn ML prototypes into valuable experiences.
- **Proactive project initiation:** identified needs and created teams to tackle them. Ex: new Bose sound profile, spatial audio UI, spatial 10-year strategy, earbuds innovation funnel, and new product families.
- **Category turnaround:** launched the QuietComfort Ultra Earbuds and QC Earbuds II, with the world's most powerful noise cancelling. Reversed share trend and lifted revenue to the hundreds of millions.
- **Software feature ownership:** launched spatial audio, CustomTune ear personalization, auto volume, etc.
- **Invention:** Patent granted for new Bluetooth ease-of-use innovation (US11601996B2).

### Product Line Manager, Speakers (2020-2022)

Product lead for Bose Bluetooth and Smart Speakers portfolio, owning roadmap, strategy, and leads team.

- Supervised the SoundLink Flex, deciding key tradeoffs (size, UX, price, shape) that make it a top seller.
- Initiated a portfolio extension to build the SoundLink Max, a powerful speaker launched in May 2024.
- Interim turnaround role launching the Sport Open Earbuds, a first test of truly wireless open-ear audio.
- Invented SW experiences: one-button sync, TV-headphone link, PositionIQ auto-tuning, earbud volume UI.
- Co-led a company-wide stage gate process redesign, resulting in clearer, faster decisions.
- Completed Global People Management Initiative training in manager best practices.
- Key Talent award as top ‘Rising Star’ in the Product organization.

#### **Senior Product Manager, Smart Speakers (2018-2020)**

Product lead for Bose smart speakers family, delivering voice assistant experiences with amazing sound.

- Launched the Bose Portable Smart Speaker, a top-selling smart speaker across 2019-2024.
- Launched SoundLink Mini II SE and Home Speaker 300.
- Co-led a company-wide product naming strategy reset for better usability and cleaner marketing.

#### **Product Manager (2015-2018)**

Product lead for individual Bose smart speakers.

- Launched the Home Speaker 500, the best-sounding smart speaker for Alexa and Google Assistant. Among the first large-scale implementations of smart voice assistants on 3<sup>rd</sup>-party speakers.
- 0-to-1 development of Bose’s voice strategy, including UX, partner choice, and lean test launches.

#### **Intuit** — Mountain View, CA

**Summer 2014**

##### **MBA Intern, Product Management**

Led a team prototyping a mobile app that would offer young professionals a simpler budgeting interface than Intuit’s Mint.com. Concept, iterative in-person user research, and design.

#### **ThinkEco** — New York, NY

**2010-2013**

Software, Mechanical, Electrical, and Process engineering for a start-up inventing smart power outlets that monitor electricity use and intelligently reduce idle energy waste. Employee #11.

##### **Senior Product Engineer**

- Software + Hardware: C# code and electromechanical test fixture design to run assembly lines.
- Scaling: Brought eight products from prototypes to 100k-unit production and three utility partnerships.
- Product and UI: Installed in >100 homes to identify customer needs and iterate. Designed thermostat UI.
- Manufacturing and Operations: Built manufacturing processes from scratch for eight hardware products.

## **Education**

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#### **Harvard Business School — MBA**

Boston, MA

Top grades in practical team leadership and entrepreneurship.

Focus areas: product management, innovation strategy and disruption, soft leadership, tech ventures.

#### **Harvard College — BA in Physics with Honors, Astrophysics minor**

Cambridge, MA

Research: CERN Large Hadron Collider search for a 5<sup>th</sup> dimension; micro-robots; black holes; Steven Pinker lab.

MIT 2.009 (mechanical engineering product design capstone): elected as product manager, led first-place team.

## **Personal**

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Drummer, hiker, skier. Enjoy live music, travel, fiction, and teaching astronomy. Volunteer experience including Awesome Foundation micro-philanthropy and mentoring hundreds of students as a career advisor.