Sam Hopkins

Minneapolis–St. Paul, MN · samhopkins.me · linkedin.com/in/samruedinger

Technical delivery lead turned AI builder. Twelve years implementing digital platforms including Shopify, WordPress, and Braze for enterprise and DTC brands; and now designing the AI systems that do the work: agentic loops, LLM-driven project tooling, and AI-assisted site builds shipped to production. Comfortable owning delivery from client conversation to working code.

SKILLS

AI/LLM: Claude API & Claude Code, agentic workflows & skills, MCP/tool use, OpenAI, OpenRouter, prompt & evaluation design, LLM memory systems (markdown + provenance DB)

Platforms: Shopify/Plus & ecosystem (e.g. Klaviyo, Rebuy, Recharge), Adobe AEP (Real-Time CDP, Target, Customer Journey Analytics), Braze, Jira/Confluence, Notion API, Figma, Zoho/Stripe

Delivery: hybrid agile/waterfall program management, roadmapping, estimation & SOW development, multi-vendor coordination, client leadership, WCAG/ADA accessibility compliance

SELECTED AI ENGINEERING WORK

- **UK storefront launch for a US brand** — After managing the full US site design and development, I personally forked the build and launched the UK storefront using Claude-driven workflows — agentically migrating product data via Matrixify and store configuration via the Shopify Admin API.
- **Shopify build for a celebrity-founded snack brand** — Personally built and populated most of the production Shopify site using Claude-driven development — theme work, sections, and content population.
- **Agentic content pipelines** — Architected multi-step agent chains for Shopify operations — e.g., product images → AI background removal (Figma AI) → staging upload → product assignment for review → production sync — solving state consistency so every asset reliably reached the right product. Ran mass content migrations across Shopify instances the same way.
- **Client feedback triage agent** — Built an agent that parsed a high volume of chaotic, unthreaded client feedback from multiple sources including our client messaging system, our QA platform, and email, reconstructing coherent threads from discrete comments and consolidating into itemized Jira tickets. The agent had the autonomy to execute tickets within its defined wheelhouse, thereby minimizing the time I spend triaging issues.
- **SOW-to-Jira scheduling skill** — Took a colleague's text-only prototype Claude skill and made it production-grade: connected it to Jira via MCP and made it interactive, and continue to tune its judgment for exceptions and ticket-creation rules. In active daily use at Barrel — input a project SOW, output a full schedule and tickets.
- **AI-native project documentation** — Established a loop where Claude documents its own completed work directly into Notion and Jira, creating per-project AI usage records.
- **Client website Q&A app (in progress)** — Building a public, client-facing NotebookLM-style app so clients can self-serve answers about their own site — a gap Google Workspace notebooks can't fill.

EXPERIENCE

Barrel — Digital Project Manager & AI Developer (freelance) 2019 – Present

E-commerce agency (Shopify design, development, and integration) — remote

- Manage up to 10 concurrent client engagements for direct-to-consumer brands, spanning redesigns, replatforms, migrations, accessibility remediation, and ongoing optimization.
- Lead ADA/WCAG accessibility remediation programs in partnership with compliance consultancy Allyant.

- Integrate AI throughout delivery: Claude-generated project schedules, AI-built dev scaffolding coordinated against contractor capacity, and automated documentation — routinely deciding which work goes to AI versus people.
- Active participant in Barrel's internal initiative to replace traditional Shopify theme projects with AI-assisted build workflows.

VML (formerly Wunderman Thompson) — Senior Digital Project Manager Apr 2021 – Present
Global marketing agency — Minneapolis, MN (remote)

- **Federal recruiting account, CRM track (2025–present).** Manage the CRM workstream for a federal recruiting account, leading teams delivering marketing creative (waterfall) alongside CRM roadmap strategy (agile). Standing up Adobe AEP components (Real-Time CDP, Target) within strict federal constraints on targeting; leading successful migration of legacy SAP BusinessObjects reporting into Adobe Customer Journey Analytics.
- **Purina (2023–2025).** Managed implementation of the Braze content orchestration platform across Purina's mobile app and purina.com, coordinating four external development teams; built a live roadmap pulling real-time data from multiple Jira projects onto a single page. Ran ongoing Braze-channel marketing, onboarding and managing a six-person team of developers and analysts from VML Mexico City.
- **The Coca-Cola Company (2022–2023).** Created the intake and work management process for analytics projects submitted by Coke lines of business and six sister agencies; prioritized and resourced a multi-person team.
- **Principal Global Investors (2021–2022).** Managed full site redesign across BA, design, development, copy, and QA; led re-estimation as requirements evolved, producing a follow-on SOW; the program finished on time and under budget.

Empower Ideas — Independent Consulting (own studio) 2008 – Present
One-person studio — Minneapolis–St. Paul, MN

- The studio I contract through, for the client work I take on directly; also where I try new tools first.

Apex Systems @ UnitedHealthcare — Product Manager 2019 – 2021

- Built intake, prioritization, and cadence processes for the Medicaid member portal team; shipped features including SSO integrations, a fitness benefit locator, and portal rollouts for new Medicaid/Medicare markets.

Barrel — Digital Project Manager 2018 – 2019

- Managed up to six simultaneous e-commerce projects at Barrel's NYC office; recommended and configured platforms and integrations with clients.

Earlier — consulting and analytics roles (ThreeBridge Solutions, Filmstrip) 2012 – 2018

- Embedded consultant and analyst for Best Buy, 3M, Wex Health, and others — including re-engineering Best Buy's cart/checkout analytics with the President of E-Commerce, driving flow changes that improved conversion 10.6%.

EDUCATION

University of Minnesota — BA, Communications; Minor, Business Management 2012