

Ilia Buldin

Product executive with **12 years** across the full range of scale — from a VC-backed fintech startup to one of the world’s largest merchant acquirers, and a delivery platform operating in **65+ countries**. Now Chief Product Officer at an AI-native POS platform in MENA, running the entire product organisation — product management, design, research and analytics.

Driving business efficiency through higher self-service penetration and automation has been a consistent theme across my roles — reducing onboarding OPEX at Delivery Hero and sales and support costs at Sberbank, generating **€18.9M** in annual savings and **€4M** in annual value respectively. At Fortis, deep merchant segmentation became the product strategy; executed with sales, marketing and partnerships, it grew paying merchants **5x** and quarterly ARPPU **~10%**. Drove AI adoption on both sides: an AI-native operating model across **~80 people** in R&D, **more than doubling** delivery efficiency, and an AI assistant shipped in one month to **65%** of merchants.

I treat product strategy as the execution of business strategy — **P&L-driven** prioritisation that sets the few focuses worth funding and answers why those and not others — then shape team structure, process and the bar product teams hold themselves to, so the strategy ships.

EXPERTISE

- Fintech & Payments** · Online, offline and QR acquiring, card networks and payment infrastructure, B2B digital banking
- AI Transformation & Strategy** · Commercialising agentic products, AI-native R&D workflows, accelerating delivery efficiency, rapid LLM adoption
- SME SaaS & Merchant Platforms** · POS systems for F&B, retail and services, merchant tooling, subscription tiers, pricing
- E-Commerce & Marketplaces** · Luxury retail and food-delivery platforms — checkout conversion, fulfilment, omnichannel, vendor operations
- Self-Service & Onboarding Platforms** · Merchant self-onboarding, activation, self-service adoption, support deflection
- Platform Products & Internal Systems** · Productising shared capabilities for reuse, API, plugin and MCP ecosystems, platform consolidation and migrations, billing, admin and back-office systems

Experience

SEP 2025 – PRESENT · 1 yr

Chief Product Officer Fortis

VC-backed AI-native payments and business management platform for SMEs in MENA

SCOPE

- End-to-end ownership of industry-specific POS across F&B, Retail & Services, spanning front/back-office, growth and internal platform products.
- Reported to CEO; full product P&L, including pricing.
- Led 15-person Product org with 5 directs (3 Heads, 2 ICs) across Product, Design, Research & Analytics; ~80-person R&D overall.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Repositioned the product around a merchant segmentation model, realigning sales, marketing & partnerships on a defined ICP — paying merchant base grew **5x**, quarterly ARPPU **~10%**.
- Led hands-on product work to ship the first AI assistant in **one month**; adoption grew to **65%** of the merchant base.
- Moved the ~80-person R&D organisation to AI-native development — smaller functional pods & a redefined product-to-engineering handover — **more than doubling** delivery efficiency.



Contacts

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Education

- Master of Science, Information Systems Management**
Technikum Vienna, Austria
- Master of Science, E-Commerce**
Higher School of Economics, Moscow
- Bachelor of Science, Physics and Computer Science**
Novosibirsk State University
- ADDITIONAL
- MBA · Sber Corporate University
- Digital Payments · Mastercard Academy

AUG 2024 – SEP 2025 · 1 yr 1 mo

Head of Product
Ounass

Leading luxury e-commerce platform in MENA, part of Al Tayer Group

SCOPE

- Owned Checkout, Fulfilment & Omnichannel; accountable for completion rate, checkout conversion & operational cost structure.
- Led 5-person domain with 3 directs (2 Leads, 1 IC).

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Defined & executed the completion-rate strategy — **7% uplift** via return-abuse prevention & higher exchange adoption.
- Launched the omnichannel stream from scratch on a company-level bet, wiring pop-up stores & the new Ounass Stage concept store into the app; every activation met its P&L target.
- Built product strategy as a decomposition of the business P&L — company bets & margin structure cascaded into each team's modelled impact, prioritised by sensitivity rather than opinion.
- Authored the 2026 gifting category strategy off a quarter of demand analysis; defended it to the chairman of Al Tayer Group.

AUG 2022 – AUG 2024 · 2 yrs

Group Product Manager — Restaurant-facing Products
Delivery Hero

One of the world's largest food delivery platforms, €45bn+ GMV, 65+ countries

SCOPE

- Owned Vendor Setup end-to-end — vendor onboarding, incubation & the internal configuration a vendor needs to start operating.
- Global scope: Latin America, APAC, MENA & Europe. Led 4 PMs.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Tripled** self-onboarded vendor share; cut onboarding time **30%** and cost **20%** — **€18.9M** annual savings across sales, onboarding ops, account management & device logistics.
- Migrated vendor portal authentication onto a new stack & portal product, unblocking up to 20 dependent teams with no disruption to live operations.
- Defined the incubation quality standard for a vendor's first 30 days — menu coverage, menu health, online time — turning activation from a date passed into a measurable state.

MAR 2020 – JUL 2022 · 2 yrs 4 mos

Product Director — Payments Department, Digital Banking
Sberbank

Top 3 global merchant acquirer by transaction volume, #1 in Europe

SCOPE

- Digital banking for payments & cards — card acceptance, schemes, online & offline acquiring, in a B2B bank serving 1M+ customers.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Redesigned the merchant acquisition journey, raising self-sign-up from **12% to 50%** in under a year — **€4M** annual value, mainly from growing sales on a smaller sales team.
- Consolidated three fragmented acquiring products — QR, in-person & online — into one plugin: MAU **+15%**, team footprint **–30%**.
- Launched a new acquiring web page: conversion **+20%**.

FEB 2018 – MAR 2020 · 2 yrs 1 mo

Senior Product Manager
JustFood.pro

Top 3 healthy food delivery in Moscow

SCOPE

- Web & iOS acquisition funnels, subscription management & retention.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Raised conversion **~40%** & LTV **10%** through reactivation-flow improvements and an add-ons feature letting subscribers extend orders with individual meals.
- Launched a vending machine product stream as a new revenue experiment — closed after it failed to reach a sustainable P&L.

OCT 2014 – JAN 2018 · 3 yrs 3 mos

Product Manager
Platform LLC

Software integrator for energy and industrial clients

Acted as product owner for two major enterprise clients — defining requirements, prototyping solutions, and managing end-to-end delivery. Key project: a subsidiaries monitoring system for a large energy holding, the company's largest contract in 2016–2017.