

WILLIAM JEFFREY STRAIN

Engineering Executive | Systems Integration | Real-Time Simulation | Distributed Systems

U.S. Citizen · Available for on-site work worldwide, including austere or operational environments

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Engineering executive and systems leader with 30+ years of experience building high-performance technical organizations and complex real-time systems. Founded and led engineering organizations from initial architecture and recruiting through global deployment, strategic partnerships, growth, and acquisitions by Microsoft and NC Corporation.

Technical career spans deterministic missile-guidance systems at Lockheed Missiles & Space Company; custom ASIC and embedded systems at Texas Instruments; original color-science and lossless real-time compression algorithms at Hewlett-Packard; and globally scaled real-time network and simulation platforms including Battle.net, *World of Warcraft*, *Guild Wars*, and *State of Decay*.

Deep experience in systems integration, distributed architecture, deterministic and adaptive simulation, fault-tolerant communications, and AI-enabled human-in-the-loop systems.

CORE CAPABILITIES

Engineering Leadership · Organization Building · Technical Product Strategy · Systems Integration · Real-Time Systems Architecture · Distributed Simulation · Deterministic & Adaptive Simulation · AI-Enabled Systems · Human-in-the-Loop Systems · Fault-Tolerant Communications · Embedded Systems · Hardware/Software Integration · Custom ASICs

SELECTED EXPERIENCE

BROAD TABLE INC / CLOSIVO | New Orleans, Louisiana

2024–Present

Chief Technology Officer

Led product and technology development for Closivo, an AI-centered SaaS platform for real-estate brokerages that automates complex transaction operations through document interpretation, decision support, and workflow execution.

- Defined the product and technical architecture, with particular focus on using AI to interpret unstructured information, reason over operational context, and drive downstream system behavior.
- Designed systems that combined **probabilistic AI with deterministic software**, assigning each to the problems it was best suited to solve rather than treating AI as a universal replacement for conventional engineering.
- Architected the **human-in-the-loop decision model**, determining where software could act autonomously and where ambiguity, consequence, or confidence required human review and judgment.
- Used AI-assisted software design to create detailed reference models and implementation specifications that guided **globally distributed engineering teams** through production development.
- Led integration of AI services, conventional software systems, and external platforms into a reliable production architecture with clear state, exception handling, and traceability.

PRYTANIA MEDIA | New Orleans, Louisiana

2021–2024

Founder & CEO

Founded and led a globally distributed, multi-studio game-development company with full P&L, budget, organizational, product, and technology responsibility.

- Built and operated multiple development studios across a distributed international organization.
- Recruited senior creative, technical, production, and operating leadership.

Company wound down in 2024.

UNDEAD LABS / MICROSOFT | Seattle, Washington

2010–2020

Founder & CEO / Studio Head

Founded Undead Labs from the ground up, originated the *State of Decay* product vision, built the company's organization and engineering culture, established its Microsoft partnership, and led two successful product releases.

- Personally hand-picked the founding team and initial functional leadership across engineering, design, art, production, business development, customer support, QA, and operations, establishing the company's culture and operating model.
- Originated the *State of Decay* product vision and defined its business model, publishing strategy, product roadmap, and technical direction.
- Retained final responsibility for technology direction and major architectural decisions, working directly with senior technical leaders.
- Developed an **adaptive, non-deterministic simulation architecture** in which agents, resources, events, and world state evolved dynamically in response to participant actions and changing conditions.
- Built Undead Labs from inception to a **100-person organization, including approximately 30 engineers**, with full P&L, budget, hiring, organizational, product, and technology responsibility.

ACQUIRED BY MICROSOFT IN 2018

- Continued as Studio Head, retaining full P&L, budget, hiring, organizational, product, and technology responsibility for Undead Labs.

- Reported directly to the **Head of Xbox Game Studios** and advised Microsoft gaming leadership on online systems, large-scale connected services, and emerging AI strategy.

ARENANET / NC CORPORATION (FORMERLY NC SOFT) | Seattle, Washington

2000–2010

Co-Founder, ArenaNet & President, NC Corporation

Co-founded ArenaNet, co-created *Guild Wars*, a massively multiplayer online game, and led the company's growth, product strategy, and operating organization.

- Developed substantial portions of the core distributed client/server architecture for *Guild Wars*, including a real-time latency-masking event dispatch and handling engine for variable global network conditions.
- Developed the complete world-building toolchain, including internal editing, content-authoring, simulation, debugging, deployment, and operational systems.
- Architected *Guild Wars* around a **zero-downtime live-service model**, using versioned client/server coexistence, hot-swappable services, sharded world instances, continuous deployment, and minimal-delta patching.
- Co-defined the *Guild Wars* product vision, subscription-free business model, publishing strategy, and technical direction with the other founders.
- Led ArenaNet's growth from a founding team of three to a 300+ person organization, including approximately 100 engineers.
- Co-created the *Guild Wars* franchise, which sold more than **6 million copies during my tenure** and later generated more than **\$1 billion in cumulative revenue**.

ACQUIRED BY NC CORPORATION IN 2002

- Following acquisition, reported directly to NC Corporation's global CEO, TJ Kim, while retaining broad operating autonomy and P&L responsibility for ArenaNet.
- Continued to contribute key systems, architecture, and technical direction while driving company product and business strategy post acquisition.

PROMOTED IN 2008 TO PRESIDENT, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, NC CORPORATION

- Led **all product development outside Korea** across ArenaNet, NC West, and NC Europe - approximately **14 internal studios and 500 employees** - directly leading studio heads and product leaders with portfolio responsibility for strategy, execution, organizational performance, and development resource allocation.

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT | Irvine, California

1996–2000

Senior Software Engineer / Product Director

Co-Developer, Battle.net · Team Lead & Technical Lead, *World of Warcraft*

- Co-developed Battle.net, the first major online gaming network offered as a free global service; designed fault-tolerant real-time communication protocols as the platform grew to **2.3 million active users and 50,000+ concurrent players** during my tenure.
- Served as a key contributor of the deterministic distributed simulation-state engine used by *StarCraft*, *Diablo*, and *Warcraft II* to maintain synchronized multiplayer state across unreliable, variable-latency networks.
- Pitched and initiated *World of Warcraft*, a massively multiplayer online game, established its original product and technical direction, recruited the core team, and served as team and technical lead while personally building critical architectural systems that shipped with the live service.
- The *World of Warcraft* team grew to approximately **100 people** by 2000; the product later reached **12 million worldwide subscribers** and generated more than **\$10 billion in revenue by 2014**.

HEWLETT-PACKARD | San Diego, California

1994–1996

Software Engineer

Designed original color-science algorithms and lossless real-time data compression algorithms, later implemented by firmware engineers in production systems. Work contributed to technologies subsequently protected by two patents.

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS | Temple, Texas

1991–1994

Software Engineer

Served as a firmware engineer, writing low-level software directly against custom ASIC hardware and participating in specification, bring-up, and integration. Contributed to early deformable mirror device technology that preceded TI's later Digital Micromirror Device (DMD) and Digital Light Processing (DLP) platforms.

LOCKHEED MISSILES & SPACE COMPANY | Austin, Texas

Summers 1989–1990

Software Engineer

Developed deterministic real-time guidance software for ground-based systems that received and processed satellite-derived atmospheric data and transmitted in-flight trajectory corrections to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Implemented guidance algorithms in collaboration with aerospace and controls engineers, compensating for temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity, precipitation, wind velocity/direction, and gust stability; developed high-level design language (HDL) implementations from product requirements and specifications, then implemented them under DOD-STD-2167A.

EDUCATION

Trinity University — San Antonio, Texas Bachelor of Science, Computer Science, 1991

Baylor University — Waco, Texas Postgraduate Study, Real-Time Simulation