

Shipping WordPress Without Shipping Code: How Project Managers Can Lead Releases



- 01 Shipping WordPress Without Shipping Code
- 02 The Historical Gap
- 03 My Contributor Journey
- 04 What “Glue Work” Looks Like
- 05 Tools, Patterns, and Gotchas
- 06 From Contributor to Leader
- 07 Practical Playbook
- 08 Takeaways & Q&A

1. Opening & Framing

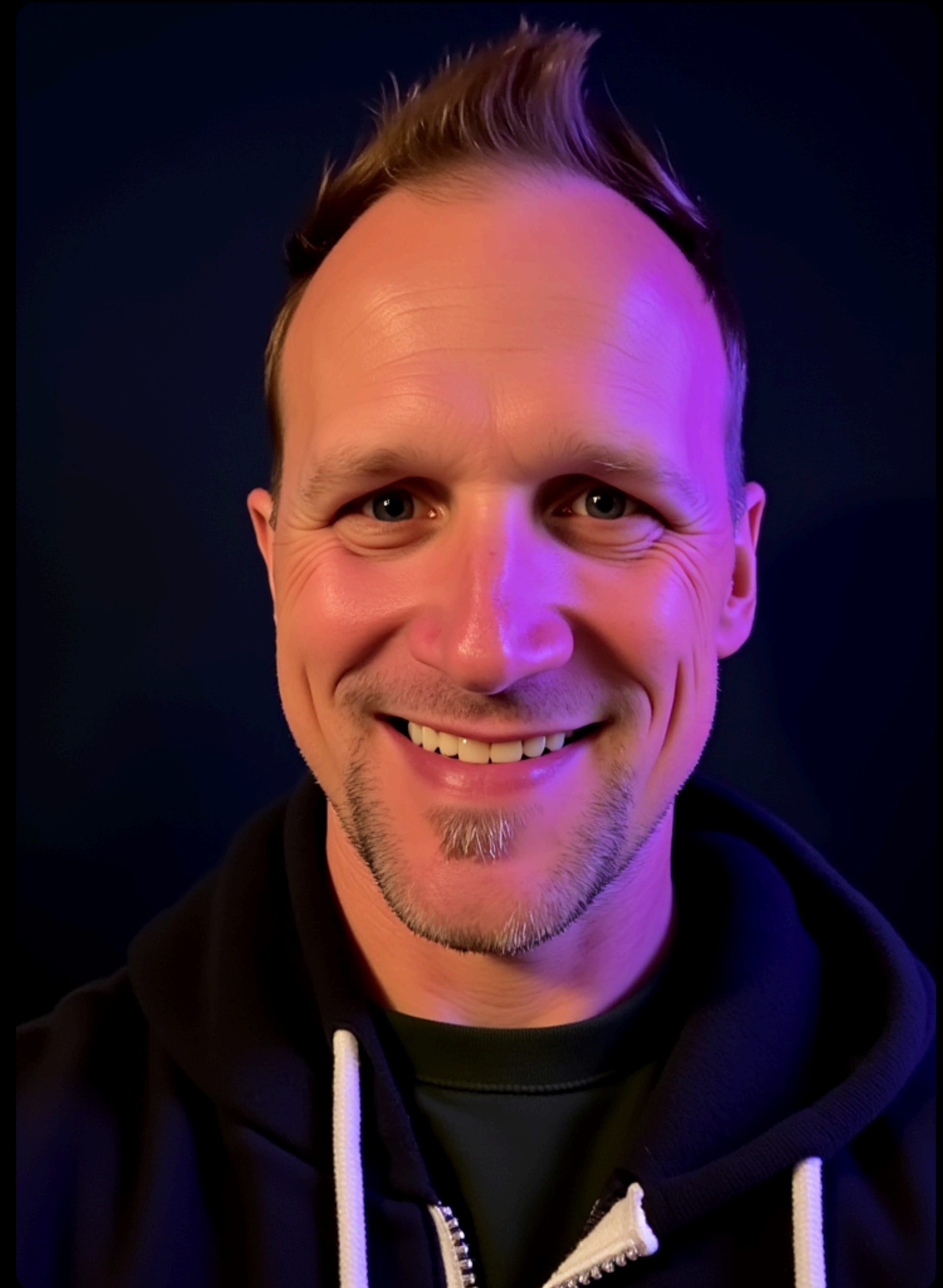
Shipping WordPress Without Shipping Code

How project managers can lead
releases

Jeffrey Paul

VP of Open Source @ Fueled + 10up

WCEH 2025

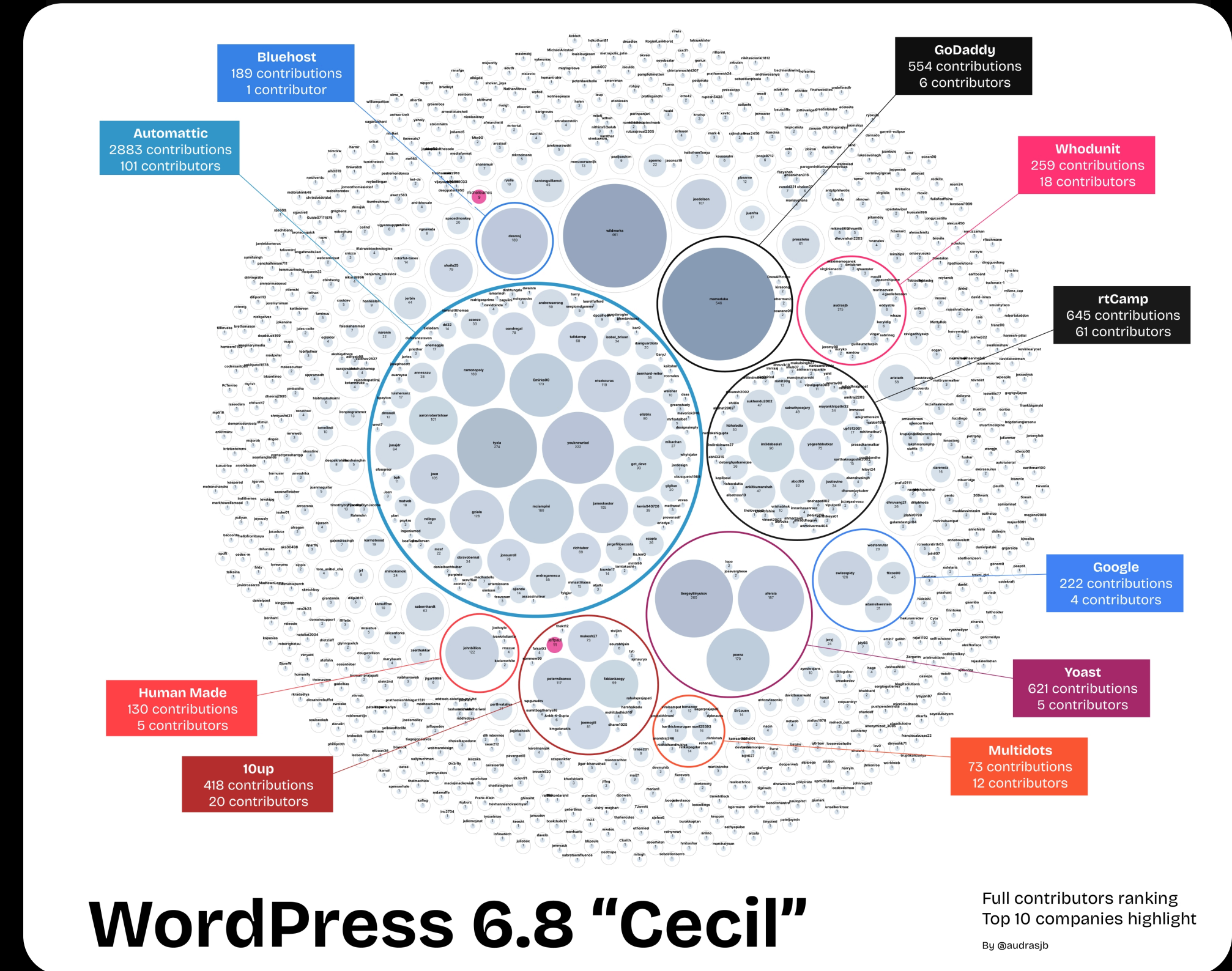


Where are the PMs?

Developer heavy, PM light

// The main focus of the release team is to lead the release from its beginning through to launch... act as connectors and facilitators.

WordPress Core Handbook



From Helper to AI Team Lead



// 466 contributors, 237 first-time.

WordPress 4.7 by the numbers

What “Glue Work” Looks Like

- Align people and scope
- Keep the queue healthy
- Coordinating feedback loops
- Build consensus in public (across Slack, GitHub, and Make blogs)
- Celebrate and retain
- Motivating global, unpaid contributors

// Triage is the practice of reviewing existing issues to be sure they are relevant and actionable.

Learn WordPress: How to do triage on GitHub by Ann McCarthy



How to Lead Without Coding

Tools

- GitHub Projects
- Make.WP.org
- Slack

// Posting agendas, running weekly chats, publishing dev notes.

WordPress Core Handbook, Release lead duties

Patterns

- Decision logs
- Scope gates
- Checklists

// ~ If it's not written down, it didn't happen.

Karl Fogel, Producing Open Source Software

Gotchas

- Burnout
- Time zones
- Invisible labor

// Maintainers simply don't have the energy to onboard every person who shows passing interest.

Nadia Eghbal: Working in Public: The Making and Maintenance of Open Source Software

Finding Your Place

Lead a release

Authority is facilitation, cadence, unblocking. Use Kubernetes shadow model as proof that mentorship is a pattern.

Own a lane

Docs lead, release notes, coordination. Use Docs team description of release responsibilities.

Start small

Take notes, triage issues/tickets, write agendas.

// Leads and shadows with role handbooks

Kubernetes Release Model

The 7 Habits of a Non-Engineer Release Lead

1

Write the agenda, end on time

2

Keep a decision log

4

Close stale issues

5

Default to public + async

7

Leave breadcrumbs

3

Guard scope with labels

6

Give credit often

Your Next Steps

Leadership lives
outside the repo

Glue work makes
shipping possible

There is a path
for PMs and
product (release
squad, roadmap
work, organizing)

Next step: Pick a
lane and show up

Thank You!

Contact

jeff.paul@fueled.com
Fueled.com

wordpress: [jeffpaul](#)
bluesky: [jeffpaul.com](#)
web: [jeffpaul.com](#)

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