

**Zainab** *Ghadiyali*

A READING ROOM · CURATED 2026

Curiosity, Career.

Zainab Ghadiyali is a founder, engineer and product leader who has spent the last decade turning curiosity into companies — from co-founding **Wogrammer** (now part of AnitaB.org) to leading product at **Airbnb**, shipping for two billion people at **Facebook**, and now building **Eat Cook Joy** and **Stackbirds** in Austin. This is the unofficial reading room of her work, talks, podcasts and writing — gathered in one place.

FOUNDER · EAT COOK JOY

CO-FOUNDER · WOGRAMMER

EX-AIRBNB · EX-FACEBOOK

UW-MADISON ENGINEERING

READ THE FEATURED ARTICLE →

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"Stay ignorant. Get curious. Persist."

200+

2B

PEOPLE REACHED · FACEBOOK INTERNET.ORG



WOMEN ENGINEERS INTERVIEWED ·
WOGRAMMER

10+

YEARS IN PRODUCT & ENGINEERING

2

COMPANIES FOUNDED · EAT COOK JOY &
STACKBIRDS

THE READING ROOM

Explore the *Story*

Eight chapters across two decades — from Madison engineering classrooms to Airbnb product launches, a women-in-tech publication, and an AI-powered personal-chef startup.

CHAPTER 01 · BIOGRAPHY

The Curiosity-Driven *Career*

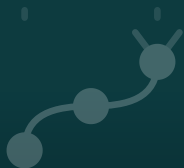




A PORTRAIT IN IGNORANCE, PERSISTENCE & REINVENTION

CHAPTER 02

The *Journey*



MADISON → FACEBOOK →
AIRBNB → FOUNDER

CHAPTER 03

First Round *Review*



DESIGNING A CURIOSITY-
DRIVEN CAREER

CHAPTER 04

Videos & *Talks*

CHAPTER 05

Podcasts & *Audio*





WARF · YOUTUBE · INSIDE
OUTSIDE



INSIDE OUTSIDE
INNOVATION EP.191

CHAPTER 06

What She's *Reading*



HBR · SPARK · YO SOY
BETTY, LA FEA

CHAPTER 07

Wogrammer *Story*



200 WOMEN ENGINEERS · I
MOVEMENT

CHAPTER 08

Eat Cook *Joy*



BIOGRAPHY

A Founder Built on *Restless Curiosity*

Zainab Ghadiyali grew up moving between continents and disciplines. She studied chemistry and public health at the **University of Wisconsin–Madison**, expecting a career in medicine — and ended up in software. The translation, she has said, was simple: both fields ask you to look at a system, find the broken piece, and design the smallest intervention that fixes it.

She entered tech the long way around — through public-health work in Latin America, then a self-taught crash course in code. By 2014 she was an engineer at **Facebook**, working on Internet.org and shipping software that, at one point, was used by close to two billion people. The scale never quite stopped feeling absurd to her, and she has talked openly about the productive discomfort of not yet knowing what you're doing — what she calls the "ignorance advantage."

“Most of the most interesting things I’ve worked on, I started without knowing how to do them. The trick is being honest about that — and then being willing to learn faster than the problem is moving.”

In 2015, alongside Erin Summers, she co-founded **Wogrammer** — a journalistic project that interviewed and profiled more than two hundred women engineers across the



industry, deliberately reframing them as makers and inventors rather than tokens or trailblazers. Wogrammer was named to the **Foreign Policy Global Thinkers** list and was eventually acquired by AnitaB.org, where it continues today.

From Facebook she moved to **Airbnb**, leading product on growth and hosting teams during the company's pre-IPO sprint. She then stepped out into a portfolio life — speaking at WARF, Mind the Product, Product School and SXSW; advising founders; and serving as Chief of Staff for several leadership teams. Conversations from that period (the *First Round Review* feature, the *Inside Outside Innovation* podcast, the Alicia Diamond chiefs-of-staff piece) remain some of the clearest distillations of how she thinks about career design.

Today she is the founder of **Eat Cook Joy**, an Austin-based service that pairs busy households with vetted personal chefs, and **Stackbirds**, an AI-agents company building tools to keep founders out of platform lock-in. Both ventures are unmistakably hers: small, ambitious, design-led, and hand-built around real problems she has lived through. She still reads three books at a time. She still recommends a Colombian telenovela transcript as a Spanish-learning hack. And she still answers her own LinkedIn DMs.

“Curiosity is a muscle. If you stop using it for a year, you’ll feel the atrophy in your work — and even more in your career.”

THE JOURNEY

From Madison to *Austin*

An unconventional path through chemistry, public health, software, billion-user products, and back into founding.



UNIVERSITY · MADISON, WI

UW–Madison · Chemistry & Public Health

Studied at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Recognized in 2018 as a **Forward Under 40** award recipient and featured in the College of Engineering's **alumni spotlight**.

2013 — 2015 · PUBLIC HEALTH

Field work in Latin America · Bolivia, Honduras

Worked on community health programs before pivoting to tech — a transition she has said taught her to listen before designing solutions.

2014 — 2017 · FACEBOOK

Software Engineer · Internet.org & Free Basics

Shipped products reaching audiences in the hundreds of millions. Featured in the original "**Meet the Wogrammers**" Engineering at Meta post.

2015 · CO-FOUNDED

Wogrammer · with Erin Summers

200+ profile interviews of women engineers, named to **Foreign Policy's 2015 Global Thinkers**. Acquired by AnitaB.org. Read her own **LinkedIn essay** on what they learned.

2017 — 2020 · AIRBNB

Product Lead · Growth & Hosting

Featured by **Product School** and as a **Mind the Product speaker**.

2020 — PRESENT · SPEAKER & COACH

Career & Founder Coaching · chiefs-of-staff, product leads

Featured in **First Round Review** and **Alicia Diamond's blog** with frameworks now used widely by emerging operators.

2022 — PRESENT · FOUNDER

Eat Cook Joy · personal chefs · Austin, TX

Pairs busy households with vetted personal chefs. **Austin Inno: Startups to Watch (2025)**.





2024 — PRESENT · FOUNDER

Stackbirds · AI agents · platform-independent founders

Featured in Crunchbase News' "the AI founder stopping platform ransom" piece.

FIRST ROUND
REVIEW

*The Secrets to Designing a Curiosity-Driven
Career*



FEATURED ARTICLE · RECOMMENDED READ

Designing a *Curiosity-Driven* Career

First Round Review's profile of Zainab is one of the clearest articulations of how she thinks about career design — built around three deceptively simple ideas: stay ignorant on purpose, follow real curiosity (not performed ambition), and persist long after the novelty fades.

She walks through the moves that took her from public-health field work to a Facebook engineering org of thousands, the framework she used to evaluate jumps (skill stretch, scope stretch, network stretch — pick two), and the questions she asks before saying yes to a role. Her advice for early operators: **chase the work that makes you ask one more question, not the work that lets you give one more answer.**

“The career you can defend in a job interview is rarely the career that ends up mattering. Build the one you can defend to yourself at 2 a.m.”

The piece also surfaces her advice on managing managers, when to leverage a Chief of Staff role, and why she thinks the most overlooked move in a tech career is **changing functions inside the same company** rather than changing companies inside the same function.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE ON FIRST ROUND →](#)



TALKS & VIDEOS

Watch the *Conversations*

Embedded talks, interviews and feature stories — playing right here in the reading room.

INSIDE OUTSIDE INNOVATION · EP. 191

On Ignorance, Curiosity, and Persistence

The full long-form conversation with Brian Arding on the moves that defined her career.



EAT COOK JOY · FOUNDER STORY

Building a Personal-Chef Network in Austin

Origin story of the company and the operating philosophy behind a service business that scales like a software one.

EAT COOK JOY · BEHIND THE KITCHEN

From Idea to Launch in San Antonio

How the chef vetting and matching system was designed — and what early customers taught the team.



WARF · INNOVATION ROADMAP · SEPT 20, 2018

Lessons in Entrepreneurship

Zainab's keynote at the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation Innovation Roadmap series — speaking as Co-founder of Wogrammer and Product Manager at Airbnb.

WARF INNOVATION ROADMAP (SEPT 2018) ↗

PODCASTS & AUDIO

Listen to the *Long-Form*

Embedded audio players for the conversations that go past the soundbite.

INSIDE OUTSIDE INNOVATION · EP. 191

Zainab Ghadiyali of Airbnb & Wogrammer — On Ignorance, Curiosity and Persistence





INSIDE OUTSIDE INNOVATION • EPISODE 191

Ep. 191 - Zainab Ghadiyali of Airbnb & Wogre



1X



00:00 | 17:59

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VOYAGE SA • COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

READ ↗

Meet Zainab Ghadiyali of Eat Cook Joy

A long-form interview from the Voyage San Antonio community series — the personal-chef thesis, what Austin gets right about service businesses, and how the company recruits.

ALICIA DIAMOND • CHIEFS OF STAFF

Advice from Zainab Ghadiyali for Current & Future Chiefs of Staff

READ ↗

Practical playbook for the role — how to scope, how to pair with a principal, when to push back, when to absorb, and how to leave on a high note.

ON THE NIGHTSTAND

What She's *Reading Now*

Zainab tends to read multiple books at once. The current rotation:



BUSINESS · COMMUNICATION

HBR's 10 Must Reads on Communication

Harvard Business Review

The classic anthology of HBR's most-cited essays on persuasion, executive presence, and clarity under pressure — a staple of senior operating leaders.

SCIENCE · HEALTH

Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain

John J. Ratey, MD

The Harvard psychiatrist's case that physical movement is the single most underrated intervention for cognition, mood and learning. Required reading for founders.

LANGUAGE · STORYTELLING

Yo Soy Betty, La Fea (transcripts)

Fernando Gaitán

Yes, the original Colombian telenovela — read as text. Zainab uses the transcripts as a Spanish-learning shortcut, and as a study in how serialized character writing actually works.



Wogrammer: Breaking Stereotypes, One Story at a Time

Wogrammer is on a mission to break stereotypes and inspire women and girls to pursue careers in STEM. Our stories profile diverse women, offering an authentic perspective while celebrating and acknowledging their accomplishments. We make an impact in through telling powerful stories, empowering women to tell their stories through our workshops and our Journalism Fellowship.

Sharing Powerful Stories

Each week we share an inspiring story of a woman in engineering who is doing amazing work. By focusing on her accomplishments and professional points of pride, we are building a positive narrative around what it means to be a woman in tech. The diverse women we profile are role models for girls and young women around the world, inspiring them to pursue and persist in STEM fields. Read and share one of our many stories on [Medium](#).

Women's Empowerment Workshops

27080549.jpg



Wogrammer — *making the makers visible.*

Wogrammer started as a side project at Facebook in 2015 and grew into one of the most cited journalistic projects about women in engineering. Instead of profiling the same handful of high-profile leaders, Zainab and Erin Summers went deep — interviewing more than **200 women engineers** about the actual technical work they do.

The project was named to **Foreign Policy's 2015 Global Thinkers**, profiled by **Engineering at Meta**, and eventually **acquired by AnitaB.org**, where it continues today. The original wogrammer.org has been retired — the snapshot above is from the Internet Archive.

[OPEN ARCHIVE SNAPSHOT ↗](#)

[VISIT ANITAB.ORG](#)



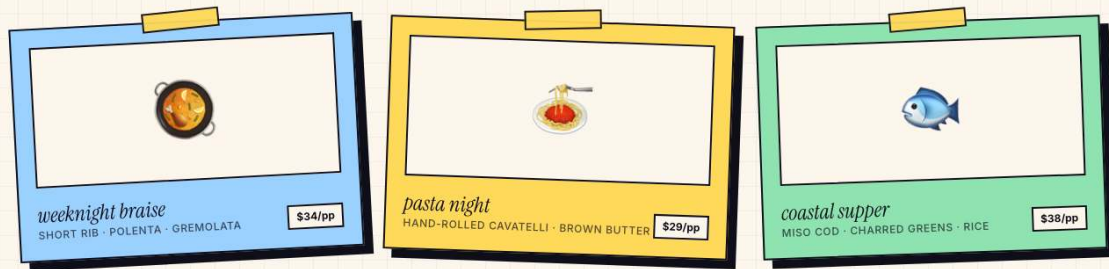
• PRIVATE CHEFS · FROM \$29 / PERSON

a *private chef* in your kitchen — without the eye-watering bill.

Real chefs. Real groceries. Cooked fresh in your home, on your night. We bundled the boring parts — sourcing, prep, cleanup — into one flat price so a chef-cooked dinner is finally a Tuesday thing, not a birthday thing.

[BOOK A CHEF →](#)[SEE THIS WEEK'S MENUS](#)

no subscription · no surge pricing · no soggy delivery bag



flat pricing ★ groceries included ★ kitchen left spotless ★ allergy-friendly ★ same-week booking ★ no tipping

HOW IT WORKS

four steps. zero stress.

We took the parts of hiring a chef that felt fancy and scary, and replaced them with a flow that feels closer to ordering takeout.

01*pick your night*

Tell us when, how many guests, and

02*choose a menu*

Browse this week's menus from

03*we shop & prep*

Your chef sources groceries, preps

04*you eat, we clean.*

Sit down, pour the wine, enjoy the

Eat Cook Joy

eatcoo

kitchen



Eat Cook Joy — *chefs in the kitchen, joy at the table.*

Eat Cook Joy pairs busy households with vetted personal chefs who shop, cook and stock a week's worth of meals on-site. The business is unmistakably a Zainab company: small ops team, hand-crafted matching, and an obsession with the customer's actual Tuesday-night problem.

Named one of **Austin Inno's "Startups to Watch"** in 2025, profiled across local press, and increasingly the case study being cited in conversations about **AI-augmented service businesses**.

VISIT [EATCOOKJOY.COM](https://eatcookjoy.com) ↗

AUSTIN INNO FEATURE



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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE • CYBERSECURITY • POLITICS AND REGULATION • STARTUPS

How I Stopped A Platform Ransom Against My Startup

Guest Author September 16, 2025



8

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Guest Author

By Zainab Ghadiyali

Earlier this year, on a morning in January, I walked into a founder's nightmare.

My company, [Eat Cook Joy](#), which builds AI-powered tools for private chefs, was two weeks away from its public launch. For two and a half years, I had been preparing and collecting the most sophisticated and comprehensive data set for the private chef industry.

But as I sat down at my computer, I was locked out of my site. Access to the platform I had painstakingly assembled and worth millions of dollars vanished.

Thanks to intelligence from the [FBI](#), I quickly learned that the attack on my company's site showed all the signs of a sophisticated international crime group that targets early-stage startups for ransom.

Featured

Illustration of a guy watering plants with a blocked hose - Global [Dom Guzman]

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE • CRYPTO • M&A • REGIONAL • SEED FUNDING • STARTUPS • VENTURE
Q1 Global Startup Funding Posts Strongest Quarter Since Q2 2022 With A Third Going To Massive OpenAI Deal

April 3, 2025 7 Min Read

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Discover and act on private market opportunities with predictive company intelligence.

GET STARTED

Stackbirds — *tools so founders never get held ransom by a platform.*

Stackbirds is Zainab's newer bet — an AI-agents company aimed squarely at **platform lock-in**, the silent tax on founders who build their entire business on top of one app store, one payments rail, or one ad network. The thesis: agents that automate the boring work of staying portable.

Zainab's own first-person account in **Crunchbase News** — "*How I Stopped a Platform Ransom Against My Startup*" — is the founding story.

[READ ON CRUNCHBASE NEWS ↗](#)

PRESS & FEATURES

On the *Public Record*

Selected coverage and features across business, founder, and women-in-tech publications.

FIRST ROUND REVIEW

The Secrets to Designing a Curiosity-Driven Career

The definitive long-form feature on her career framework.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

CRUNCHBASE NEWS

The AI Founder Stopping Platform Ransom

Stackbirds launch coverage and the thesis behind it.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

AUSTIN INNO · BIZ JOURNALS

Austin Startups to Watch — Eat Cook Joy

ENGINEERING AT META

Meet the Wogrammers — Women in Engineering



Local startup feature on the personal-chef company.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

The original 2015 feature that introduced the project.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

FOREIGN POLICY

2015 Global Thinkers

Named alongside Erin Summers for Wogrammer.

[VIEW LIST →](#)

UW-MADISON ALUMNI

2018 Forward Under 40 Award Recipient

Wisconsin Alumni Association recognition.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

UW COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Alumni Spotlight: Zainab Ghadiyali, Tech Founder

UW Engineering blog feature.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

PRODUCT SCHOOL

Zainab Ghadiyali — Airbnb Product Lead

Featured product leader interview.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

WOMEN 2.0

Wogrammer • Facebook • Airbnb

Career-arc feature on the Wogrammer co-founder.

[READ ARTICLE →](#)

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clay.earth/profile/zainab-g



about.me/breaking-stereotypes-consulting



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angel.co/u/zainab-ghadiyali



crunchbase.com/person/zainab-ghadiyali



slideshare.net/zainabg



UNIVERSITY & ALUMNI

uwalumni.com · 2018 FUF Award

engineering.wisc.edu · Alumni Spotlight

winthrop.edu/mwe



warf.org · Innovation Roadmap



uwmadison.edu · Wogrammer Profile



FIRST ROUND REVIEW & CONNECTED WRITING

review.firstround.com · curiosity-driven career



linkedin pulse · 200 women engineers



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WOGRAMMER ECOSYSTEM

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anitab.org · acquisition release



engineering.fb.com · meet the wogrammers



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STACKBIRDS & AI AGENTS

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women2.com · feature



foreignpolicy.com · global thinkers



sxsw schedule



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winwisconsin.org · speaker



austinbusinesswoman.com · directory



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Where Zainab *Shows Up*

Verified channels — DMs welcome on the public ones, especially LinkedIn.



LinkedIn



X / Twitter



linkedin.com/in/zainabg

@zainabg



Crunchbase

Person profile



Clay.earth

Aggregated profile



Product Hunt

@zainabg



Instagram

@eatcookjoy



Facebook

zainab.ghadiyali



GitHub

github.com/zainabg

Zainab *Ghadiyali*

Founder · Engineer · Coach

Eat Cook Joy & Stackbirds

Austin, Texas — and the open internet.

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EAT COOK JOY

FIRST ROUND

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