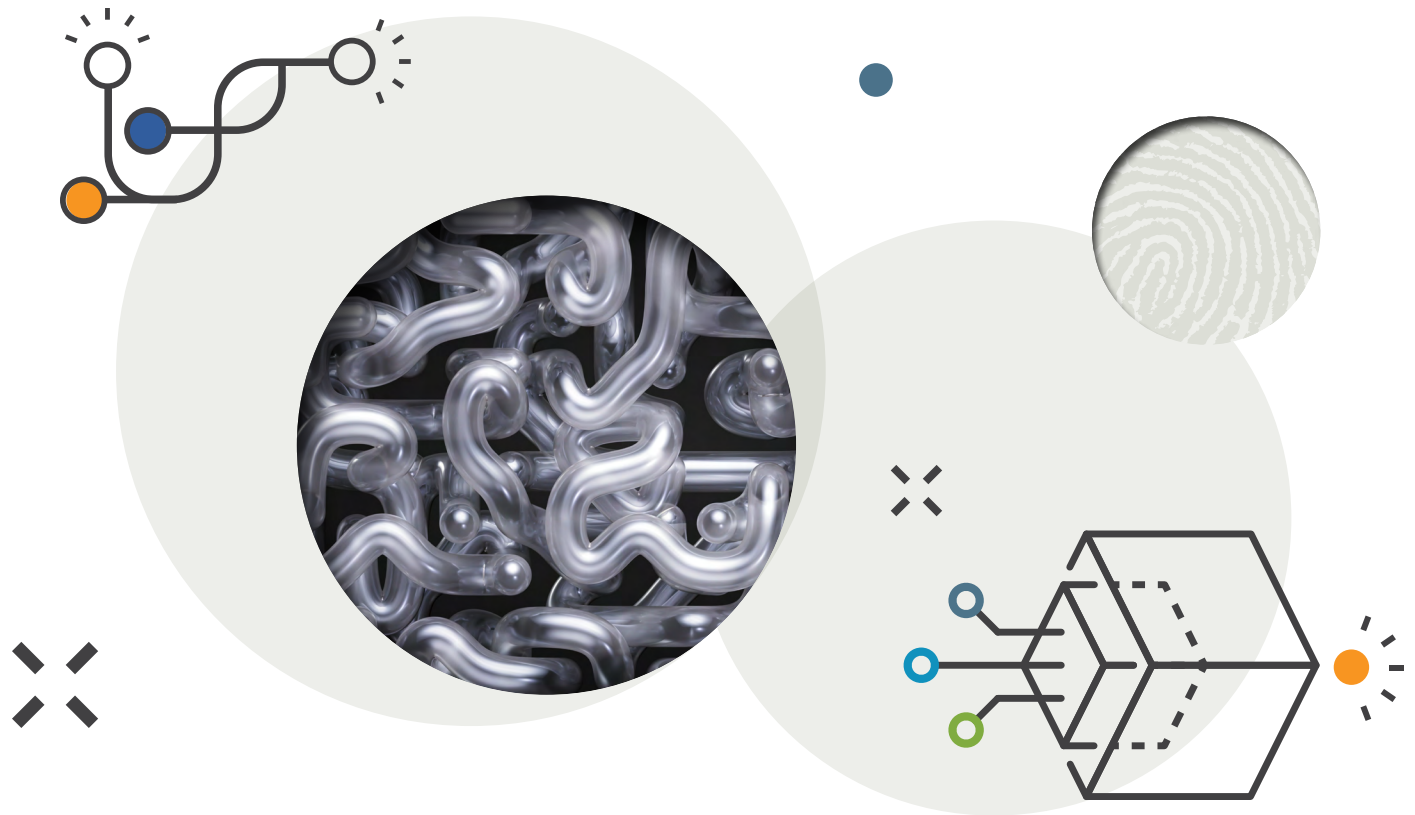




August 28, 2025

Where Constraints Meet Vision

TECH SPOTLIGHT

Written by: Max Hoaglund, Senior Technology Lead

As a software designer, I've always appreciated the interplay between constraints and goals. To me, design is about responding to those two forces – not about personal preference. What makes software especially interesting is how people, effort, and time complicate that balance. Have you ever mistaken a constraint for a goal, or vice versa?

It's almost impossible to build quality software without a pragmatic mindset, and our execution model is built on that foundation. But pragmatism alone isn't enough. Without the opportunity to share in someone's dream and be invited to assist in building it, a purely pragmatic model becomes nothing more than a solution in search of a problem.

Good software design strikes a balance: honoring lofty, goal-driven aspirations while working within constraint-driven realities. That balance is what allows us to execute predictably toward an objective worth achieving. Here are three key aspects of design that help us build to constraints without sacrificing goals:

- **Investing in the core.** We spend more time anticipating the future in the central aspects of a system. That might mean making space in a database schema for features not yet proposed or tuning the core architecture to the level of extensibility we expect. Even if some features fall to the bottom of the backlog, the design can accommodate them when needed.
- **Treating everything as a product.** Every digital solution is a product. It has a producer, a consumer, a purpose, and a vision. Without all four, there's no reason to create a repository or draft an architecture diagram. We aim for total clarity in articulating these from the start.
- **Using design as a compass.** During delivery, forks in the road are inevitable. We always tie decisions back to the vision and design. Because vision will evolve, the design must be legible enough to support reinterpretation and discussion. That requires clear expression of component purpose and relationships – not just for the engineers, but for all stakeholders.