

Microsoft's chief product exec to step down. Panos Panay was behind Surface devices and Windows 11

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Microsoft's Chief Product Officer Panos Panay holds a Surface Duo, left, and Surface Neo at an event, Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2019, in New York. Panos Panay is stepping down after nearly 20 years at Microsoft, according to a staff memo Monday, Sept. 18, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, File

A top product executive at Microsoft who launched its Surface line of computers and Windows 11 is leaving the company.

Panos Panay is stepping down after nearly two decades at Microsoft, most recently as chief product officer, according to a staff memo Monday.

"Under Panos' leadership, the team created the iconic Surface brand with loved products," said the message to employees from Rajesh Jha, executive vice president of Microsoft's experiences and devices group.

Another longtime executive, Yusuf Mehdi, who is currently chief marketing officer for consumer products, will take lead on the Windows and Surface businesses and products, Jha said. The note said Panay would be helping with the transition.

"After 19 incredible years at Microsoft, I've decided to turn the page and write the next chapter," said a social media post from Panay on X, formerly Twitter. He didn't say what his next undertaking would be.

The first Surface device, a tablet computer, was unveiled in 2012 in a market dominated by Apple's iPad. It was unusual for software-focused Microsoft, which makes money from other computer manufacturers running its Windows operating system, to start designing and selling its own line of high-end computers. Surface devices make up just a small fraction of the personal computer market.

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