Our Story

A little robot car started all of this.

I'm Jacob DeCamp, founder of DeCampLabs in Wichita, Kansas. I work in hydraulics sales, with a background in managing stores, leading teams, and technical training. Outside of my day job, I build PHNTM One.

It started because I wanted an AI companion for my desk. Something I could talk to, keep notes with, and return to without explaining everything again. I wanted useful AI on hardware I could own and control.

That search led me to a SunFounder PiCar-X, a little robot car that could connect to ChatGPT and talk. I bought one, assembled it, and tried to install its software on an SD card.

Instead, I wiped my brand-new Alienware computer.

I returned the car, recovered the computer, and spent a few weeks thinking about it. Then I bought another PiCar-X. This time, I checked the drive.

From a robot to a home lab

I learned by asking questions, reading, experimenting, and fixing what I broke. ChatGPT helped me through the early terminal commands. For the first few weeks, I typed them by hand because I hadn't figured out copy and paste. Finding that out sped things up quite a bit.

The car led to a Raspberry Pi 5. One Pi became three, with separate jobs for voice, vision, and coordination. Those experiments eventually grew into PHNTM, my larger home-lab AI system.

Along the way, I learned to work with Claude Code and Codex. I also learned that a convincing explanation isn't proof something works. The actual device has to pass the test.

Building PHNTM One

PHNTM One began with a notepad. I wrote down the most useful parts of the larger system and started bringing them together in a smaller desktop appliance that someone could use without building a home lab first.

Today, PHNTM One brings together a touchscreen, chat, voice, notes, memory, and questions about your own documents. In Private mode, AI processing runs locally, with no cloud account or subscription required for local use. Optional Boosted mode lets you choose cloud assistance with your own provider key and separate provider billing.

A small local computer has limits. I want those limits to be clear, and I want the things it does well to be genuinely useful in your day.

My background in hydraulics still shapes the work: understand the problem, make the equipment useful, explain it clearly, and take responsibility when something needs attention.

I assemble the units and handle support myself. The goal is still what brought me here: an AI assistant that helps with your everyday work, on hardware you control.

Jacob DeCamp
Founder, DeCampLabs