Melissa Leide

Product Design Leader | UX Strategy, Practice Building & AI Product Design

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I build design practices and coach designers to lead complex work independently. Across 13+ years in design, I've grown teams at two consultancies, most recently founding Caylent's Experience Design practice and leading 10 designers supporting 40+ projects annually. I partner with product, engineering, and client leaders to shape roadmaps, and I stay hands-on with research and prototyping when the team needs to test a new direction.

EXPERIENCE

Caylent | Senior UX Design Manager | Remote

August 2024 – October 2026

- Founded Caylent's in-house Experience Design practice and directly managed 10 designers, including senior and lead designers. The practice supported 40+ projects annually across discovery, UX strategy, AI-native product design, and delivery.
- Coached designers through complex client decisions by asking them to explain their reasoning, weigh tradeoffs, and choose a direction. Used individual growth plans to prepare designers to lead workshops and project teams. Promoted three designers into lead roles and maintained zero team turnover over two years.
- Partnered with engineering, product management, and AI research leads on work spanning healthcare, media, entertainment, retail, public safety, and enterprise software. Represented Product and UX Design in pitches across construction, aviation, professional sports, and consulting.
- Led UX discovery for a healthcare scheduling platform across four service lines. Translated undocumented scheduling rules into product capabilities through stakeholder interviews and workflow mapping, shaping a workspace with explainable AI recommendations and human approval. Reframed the roadmap around a shared MVP foundation to clarify time-to-value. The discovery work helped secure a multi-year implementation contract.
- Built an AI-assisted workflow to identify UX opportunities in sales conversations and connect them to design support. The workflow contributed to 11 closed deals and recurring UX involvement in pursuits; transferred ongoing operation to the team.
- Reframed a national news publisher's website redesign as a discovery experience across 72 local markets. Developed the vision, pitch, and conceptual prototypes in Figma that won the engagement, proposing phased AI personalization grounded in usability testing and behavioral evidence. The redesigned approach secured additional phases of work to evolve the platform.
- Designed and prototyped an AI-native grocery shopping assistant, translating conversational interactions and emerging AI capabilities into a tangible product experience that helped secure a six-week engagement.

- Co-developed a UX evaluation framework with structured pain-point scoring and an automatically generated prioritization matrix, connecting findings to opportunities assessed by feasibility, impact, and effort.
- Developed a Customer.io web messaging strategy for a national news publisher, defining how messaging should support the user experience and providing the team with shared implementation guidelines.

Credera | Associate Design Director | Denver, CO

October 2021 – August 2024

- Shaped UX strategy for enterprise web and mobile products, translating user research, business goals, and technical constraints into user flows and prototypes. Led workshops with clients, product managers, and engineers to resolve competing priorities and document design decisions.
- Synthesized user insights, competitor research, and analytics (Amplitude, Hotjar) into design recommendations; presented the rationale to C-suite stakeholders and guided multidisciplinary teams through Agile implementation.
- For BenefitMall's insurance quoting platform, used usability research to identify where users lost their place or repeated steps. Led a designer and worked directly with the client to define a more guided workflow from plan comparison through proposal creation.
- Initiated a shared UX methods effort to address repeated reinvention of deliverables. Collected existing work, selected strong examples, and defined template ownership and training needs.

LLT Group | Creative Director | Naperville, IL

August 2013 – October 2021

- Grew LLT Group's design team to 12 and developed 18 designers over eight years. Interviewed candidates, tailored onboarding to each hire's experience, and coached designers through regular one-on-ones and individual growth plans. Paired junior designers with senior mentors to support their development.
- Directed experience strategy and creative vision for enterprise websites and digital products, partnering with clients and technical teams to define scope, conduct usability testing, and translate business goals into design direction.
- Created a discovery approach that combined competitor research, proposed site structure, inspiration, and project goals into a shared kickoff deliverable scaled to each engagement.
- Introduced Trello to coordinate project work within six months of joining. Later helped select Wrike and used capacity analysis to guide staffing and hiring decisions.
- Addressed a drop in team morale during a period of shifting client expectations and heavy workloads. Introduced regular check-ins and paired junior designers with senior mentors, helping the team share knowledge and deliver major projects on time.

SKILLS

Design Leadership & Team Development · Practice Building & Design Operations · UX Strategy & Design Direction · Cross-Functional Leadership · Executive Stakeholder Communication · Resource & Capacity Planning · Product Discovery & Research · Interaction Design & Prototyping · Design Systems & Standards · AI-Native Product Design · Human-Centered AI & Trust · Figma/Figma Make · Large Language Models (LLMs) · Prompt Engineering · Explainable AI (XAI) · AI Ethics and Responsible AI · OpenAI GPT · Anthropic Claude

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

Anthropic | Claude Associate Foundations Certification

September 2026

- Completed foundational training in AI ethics, prompt engineering, and applied large language model techniques.

Stanford Online | UI/UX Design for AI Products Certification

April 2025

- Studied how to identify where AI adds value in a user workflow, prototype human-AI interactions, and design for user trust when AI makes mistakes.

College of DuPage | Associate in Applied Science, Graphic Design

2010 – 2013

SELECTED INNOVATION WORK

Preflight Product Reasoning Toolkit

- Created AI skills for product exploration, experience review, planning, and experience architecture. Designed the workflows to distinguish evidence from assumptions, examine competing explanations, and guide what teams investigate or build next.
- Tested the toolkit against scenarios involving AI delegation, onboarding, subscription transparency, approval ownership, and retention to refine its reasoning and decision guidance.