ERIC TOMLINSON

Head of Product Design · Director of Design
Player-Coach Design Leadership · Regulated Platforms · Complex Workflows · Expert Users
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SUMMARY

Player-coach product design leader with more than fifteen years in product design and more than twenty-five in design, focused on expert users in high-consequence environments where being wrong is expensive: fund administration, payments, estate law, and public infrastructure. Sets direction for distributed design teams while personally designing the highest-complexity workflows, and builds the operating model that lets a team hold quality at speed. Owns product definition alongside design, partnering with product and engineering leadership on what gets built and why. Works AI-native, with a discovery method built to keep AI-generated research grounded in evidence.

AI-NATIVE DESIGN PRACTICE

- Built a repeatable method for AI-assisted product discovery that filters for evidence quality over output volume: multi-model adversarial review (Claude against ChatGPT) with human decision authority, validated through a two-round unmoderated study against pre-registered criteria for an unreleased fintech product for independent advisors.
- Designing and building a store operations app solo with AI: built the data model in Supabase and designed the full Phase 1 experience in Claude Design; now in testing with staff.
- Integrated AI into live commerce operations: merchandising copy and video for a catalog that turns over weekly, letting a five-person team keep pace with continuous inventory change.
- Built an AI-assisted market intelligence pipeline in Notion: signal capture, research specs and synthesis runs feeding an ongoing content program.

EXPERIENCE

Head of UX Design | Flowbird Group (acquired by Arrive.com)
Austin, TX · Remote | *Oct 2022 – May 2025* | *Engaged through A Stronger Idea Design at full-time capacity; role consolidated post-acquisition*
Led product design for a public mobility and payments platform operating across 6,000+ cities in 80+ countries, serving municipal agencies, city operators, field technicians and riders across consumer mobile, operator SaaS, and ADA-compliant physical terminals deployed in public space.

- Built and led a 10-person distributed design organization across France, Poland, Switzerland, India, the UK and the US, structured by platform vertical (mobile, SaaS, terminals) to create clear ownership and deep expertise.

- Retained 9 of 10 designers (90%) through an 18-month Flowbird to Arrive.com integration. Promoted one designer to Design Lead; 8 of 10 advanced skill levels during tenure.
- Stayed hands-on as player-coach: set the strategy for the operator SaaS hub, the design system spanning all four product surfaces, and white-label city apps including Detroit, Chicago and Maui, contributing design directly while coaching the designers who owned each area.
- Replaced a sales-dictated build process with a real product pipeline, partnering with the Chief Product Officer to establish scrum cadence and a prioritized backlog where none existed, so design shaped what got built rather than receiving finished specs.
- Diagnosed and rebuilt the design function itself through a 15-interview stakeholder audit: Figma standards, a shared design system, bi-weekly reviews, quarterly business presentations. Design cycle time went from 4 weeks to 2.2 weeks; OKR attainment went from 75% to 95%.
- Owned design across the platform portfolio: operator SaaS hub, core consumer app (payments, EV charging, CarPlay), 10+ white-label city apps including New York (850K MAU, 3.5M sessions/month, 4.8 stars) and Detroit (200K+ transactions/month, 4.6 stars), and ADA-compliant transit terminals.

Principal | A Stronger Idea Design

Austin, TX · Remote | Jun 2022 – Present

Independent practice providing fractional design leadership and hands-on product work for financial services, enterprise SaaS, and commerce clients. Flowbird (above) was the anchor engagement from Oct 2022 to May 2025, with Euvic and Estate Guru running concurrently at 1 to 10 hours per week each. Feathers has been the primary engagement since June 2025. Also designed and shipped two production marketing platforms end to end in Webflow, including design tokens, JSON-LD structured data, and WCAG accessibility remediation.

Feathers | Fractional CMO & Product Lead

Jun 2025 – Present · Independent retail, e-commerce and AI operations

- Designing and building Feathers' first store operations app solo with AI: data model, design system, and full Phase 1 design for scheduling, approvals, onboarding and the operations handbook, now in testing with staff. Documented as a repeatable AI-assisted sequence from data model to build, for delivering bespoke apps to other clients.
- Rebuilt the e-commerce experience and merchandising taxonomy, integrated AI into live commerce operations, and instrumented weekly measurement across Shopify, Klaviyo and Microsoft Clarity where none previously existed, giving the business its first evidence of what was actually working.

Euvic, for Alter Domus | Fractional Head of Design

Jan 2023 – Feb 2025 · CapAssure, enterprise fund administration platform

- Provided fractional design leadership for a mission-critical platform used by a global fund administrator, supporting 150+ onboarded funds with individual AUM ranging from $150M to $20B.
- Operated as player-coach: personally designed the highest-complexity financial workflows for expert users while directing a mid-level designer, leading client presentations, and owning design strategy in a compliance-heavy environment.
- Resisted simplification as the default answer, preserving expert context while removing friction through expandable data rows, standardized interaction patterns and reworked hierarchy. Delivered 45% improvement in user satisfaction and 25% reduction in time on task.

Estate Guru | Chief Product Designer, Fractional
Aug 2022 – Apr 2025 · Estate planning fintech

- Led design for a platform managing 1.2M+ legal documents in the generational wealth transfer market. A comprehensive UX audit and phased redesign improved task completion 35% and reduced user errors 50%.
- Ran the research program (15+ stakeholder interviews, prototype testing, behavioral surveys) informing the roadmap, partnered with the CEO, CPO and engineering leads on product strategy, and built the Figma design system from scratch.

Head of Design | KIRU
Remote · USA / Colombia / Poland | *Jun 2020 – Jul 2022*
Multi-sided payroll platform serving corporate clients and their employees across Costa Rica and Colombia.

- Joined as first design hire (employee #7) and built the product and design function from zero, owning discovery, definition and prioritization for a three-sided platform serving employees, employers and service providers. Scaled to 400 corporate clients and 9,000+ end users within 24 months.
- Reached NPS 80 and CSAT 83% within 24 months of launch.
- Established an international design team across the USA, Colombia and Poland, standardizing async process, critique, and quality frameworks across three time zones.
- Built a 200+ component Figma design system with tokens and documentation, improving onboarding completion 20% and reducing support tickets 15%.

Product Design Lead | PayPal
San Jose, CA | *Nov 2016 – Jun 2020*
Led product design across consumer platform initiatives serving 10M+ active users on web, iOS and Android, spanning two areas: Consumer Financial Services and Core Consumer Product.

- Consumer Financial Services: designed products extending banking access to underserved customers, including PayPal Cash Card, Virtual Card, Direct Deposit, Unified Card Servicing, wallet and spend controls, Goals, Bill Pay, mobile check capture, and Early Wage Access with Paychex and PayActiv as a direct alternative to payday lending.
- Core Consumer Product: led design through PayPal's post-eBay platform modernization, covering global navigation, settings architecture, transaction activity, multi-currency, negative balance UX, FinCEN CIP compliance, GDPR redesign and shared pattern libraries. Restructured the team from platform-specific to cross-platform feature ownership.
- Diagnosed a settings architecture failure in which the landing page absorbed 75% of traffic while containing only 25% of features, driving avoidable customer service volume. The redesign redistributed navigation and simplified access globally.
- Drove a 40% increase in feature adoption through the Unified Card System redesign and a 20% reduction in customer service calls for card loss and replacement. Partnered on hiring as the design team grew from 8 to 15; every candidate I recommended was hired. Mentored 3 junior designers, all promoted within 18 months.

Product Design Lead | Appleton Talent (RoleCall)
Contract | *Huntsville, AL · Remote* | *Jun 2015 – Oct 2016*
Designed RoleCall, a K-12 workforce management platform covering absence, substitute matching, time and attendance across three distinct user roles, built on embedded field research. Districts reached a 97% fill rate; Appleton made the Inc. 5000 in 2016 and was acquired by Spur Staffing in 2018.

Co-Founder & Lead Designer | Visualize Wealth (Viziphi)

New York, NY | 2013 – Nov 2015 · Wealth analytics for asset managers and advisors
Co-founded a wealth data visualization startup with a quantitative finance partner and led all product design: research, UX/UI, branding, and the risk, extreme-loss, diversification and correlation analytics that made portfolio behavior legible to advisors and their clients. Pitched to investors and secured acceptance into Startupbootcamp's 2016 FinTech Accelerator; covered by American Banker.

Design Director | Moxie Interactive (Publicis Groupe)
New York, NY | Apr 2011 – Jul 2014
UX/UI strategy and client presentations for Verizon, L'Oréal Paris, Google/YouTube, BBC America and Maybelline.

Earlier Career | Art and Creative Direction
1999 – 2011

SKILLS & TOOLS

Design leadership: player-coach leadership, design strategy, team building and scaling, distributed and nearshore team management, design operations, hiring and performance management, executive and stakeholder communication.
Product craft: design systems and component libraries, design tokens, mobile app design (iOS/Android), SaaS and enterprise UX, data-dense interface design, user research, usability testing, A/B testing, heuristic evaluation, WCAG accessibility, GDPR and compliance-driven design.
AI and tools: Claude, Claude Code, Claude Design, ChatGPT, Cursor, Supabase, Figma, Webflow, Notion, HTML/CSS, Jira, Agile/Scrum.

EDUCATION & WRITING

Georgia State University | Bachelor of Arts, English · Graduate coursework, Computer Information Systems
Published at erictomlinson.com: "WealthTech Design in 2026: Money Was Never the Hard Part." "AI in Product Design: Where It Helps, Where It Breaks, and What Mature Teams Do Differently." "Why Distributed Teams Expose Weak Leadership Faster."