

Nikole Grad Pool

Product Design Manager

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WORK EXPERIENCE

Independent Product & Brand Designer—Burlington, VT

April 2025-Present

- Designed and launched a professional website for an early-stage cybersecurity firm, strengthening client credibility and contract opportunities, while delivering brand and campaign design for mission-driven organizations that increased community engagement and raised \$3.8K for local initiatives.

Staff Product Designer & Manager—**Broadcom**, Washington DC & Hybrid

August 2016-April 2025; Pivotal acquired by VMware in 2020; VMware acquired by Broadcom in 2023

Product Design Practice Lead—**Defense Innovation Unit** (2021-2025)

- Leveraged experience navigating complex workflows in enterprise contexts to drive mission-focused outcomes in government, delivering solutions that balanced compliance, user needs, and operational impact.
- Led strategic design across 14 product teams within the Department of Defense for over 3 years, shaping UX strategy and prioritizing high-impact initiatives while driving MVPs from concept to launch—enabling rapid validation and iteration.
- Designed a clear, mission-aligned career progression framework for government product designers, mapping skill growth, leadership opportunities, and impact metrics to mirror industry best practices—enabling designers to advance their craft while driving measurable mission outcomes.
- Built and scaled a cohesive product community of up to 20 product designers grounded in 508 compliance, modular design systems, and shared workflows, improving consistency, cross-functional collaboration, and quality across distributed teams.
- Partnered with product, engineering, and ops leadership to scale teams by embedding core practices through a recurring workshop, enabling new ICs to make autonomous, collaborative decisions within our balanced team model.

Product Design Manager —Pivotal Labs, Public Sector (2017-2021)

- Led and scaled a product design practice focused on Public Sector customers by, building and standardizing a national hiring program in collaboration with partner offices that grew the design org from 8 to 14 designers in Washington DC alone—improving team capacity and delivery consistency to clients
- Standardized the end-to-end interview process and developed interviewer training for senior designers, increasing hiring velocity and ensuring consistent, high-quality candidate evaluation across teams.
- Co-created and delivered a recurring cross-functional training program with product and engineering partners (4 sessions over 2 years), driving alignment on team operating models and improving consistency across multiple teams.
- Strengthened team and client outcomes by coaching designers on complex problem spaces (where multiple workflows, users, and data layers interact), improving product clarity, cross-functional collaboration, and client trust during high-pressure engagements.

Staff Product Designer—VMware Tanzu Labs, Select Clients (2016-2021)

- Led a design initiative to scale a contract reporting tool using AI rapid prototyping and designing a WCAG 2.1 compliant and complex user-validated navigation which increased users by 100%.
- Drove discovery research and product definition for a mission reporting tool of a team of designers, engineers, and data scientists. I balanced stakeholder and user goals with technical input by creating user personas, building complex user flows, and running lean experiments which reduced processing time from 20 hours to less than 1 hour.
- Led a cross-functional team in product discovery for a large credit union membership application, driving research, problem prioritization, and mobile-first experimentation; designed a WCAG 2.1-compliant component library that increased desktop conversions 70% and mobile conversions 530%.
- Led a 14-person cross-functional team (engineering, design, product) to deliver a real-time aviation data platform for the Federal Aviation Administration, reducing analysis time from days to under 2 hours and transforming Traffic Manager Officers from passive reporters into decision influencers through rapid drill-down into complex data for faster, more informed airline delay decisions.
- Designed a collaborative cross-portfolio effort to determine the process for scaling products for mission-critical, Department of Defense Enterprise systems; led discovery and cross-functional tradeoff conversations for spinning up new code bases between stakeholders and engineers. .

Senior Product Designer — Oracle, Washington DC

July 2015-July 2016 (Oracle acquired Opower in 2016)

- Led design and cross-functional collaboration with designers, engineers, product marketing, and content to rebrand Opower and launch a new website and user conference which helped enable Oracle's attraction to buy Opower in summer 2016.

Senior Product Strategist — Downtime, Washington DC

March-September 2018

- Led user research, product strategy, and MVP scope definition for community expansion and engagement

Product Designer—Sunlight Foundation, Washington DC

January 2014-June 2015

- Drove design and product discovery on a cross-functional team for a political visibility tool.

Product Designer—NAV, Washington DC

December 2012-December 2013

- Designed and user-tested various websites and products for commercial and nonprofit organizations.

EDUCATION

Salisbury University 2004-2008; BFA Graphic Design

AWARDS

Recognized with VMware's "At Our Best" award for redesigning navigation in a US Navy acquisition tool, improving scalability and user experience by assessing existing decisions, proposing a new layout, and partnering with engineers and PMs to implement with minimal disruption. (June 2021)

SKILLS

Strategic Leadership · Systems Thinking · Cross-Functional Collaboration · Mentorship · B2B Design · Human-Centered Design · Design Operations · 0→1 Product Design · IWorkflow Optimization · Adaptability

TOOLS

Figma · FigJam · Miro · Notion

Case studies and professional references available upon request.