

# Derek Darby

UX & Product Design Leadership · Complex Workflows  
Business & Engineering Fluent · Design Systems · Enterprise SaaS  
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## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

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UX and product design leader with 20 years of experience simplifying complex workflows and driving measurable outcomes across enterprise SaaS, FinTech, ecommerce, and education technology. Integrates product strategy, research, and engineering to turn ambiguity into scalable, high-impact systems, leading when needed, executing when it matters. Combines front-end development foundations with an MBA and deep UX expertise to bridge design, engineering, and business priorities with credibility. Experienced in scaling design systems, maturing UX practices, and delivering measurable improvements in workflow efficiency, usability, and product quality. Known for bringing structure to complex, high-stakes problems while staying hands-on to deliver results.

## CORE COMPETENCIES

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UX Leadership & Strategy · Product Design Leadership · Interaction Design · UX Research & Synthesis  
Design Systems & DesignOps · Enterprise SaaS & B2B · Engineering Collaboration · Data-Informed Design  
Cross-Functional Leadership · Team Building & Mentorship · A/B Testing & Experimentation · Accessibility (WCAG)  
Journey Mapping & Service Design · Customer Discovery · Information Architecture · Workflow Simplification

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### Director of User Experience – Digital Product Systems & Operations

Nov 2023 – Dec 2025

**Grey Dog Media** · *West Des Moines, IA*

- Managed and developed a UX team of 4 to 8 across a multi-client agency environment, introducing modern processes and operational structures that improved speed, quality, and consistency across digital production.
- Reduced rework and review cycles significantly by establishing component standards, reusable patterns, and aligned workflows, enabling scalable digital production without proportional staffing increases.
- Delivered analytics-backed UX assessments for major clients using GA4, identifying conversion-impacting issues, UX gaps, and optimization opportunities that informed product and experience improvements.
- Introduced foundational design system elements and reusable workflows that improved cross-team consistency, accelerated recurring delivery cycles, and strengthened overall output quality.

### Senior UX Designer & Researcher – FinTech SaaS Platform

May 2022 – Oct 2023

**Innovation Refunds** · *West Des Moines, IA*

- Designed and launched a 100+ article knowledge base product from discovery through delivery, defining the information architecture, content standards, and cross-team working model that supported scale and consistency in a high-growth FinTech environment.
- Conducted mixed-methods research including interviews and large-scale surveys with 300+ participants to evaluate desirability, feasibility, and market fit for new financial product concepts, improving decision quality and helping reduce product risk.
- Partnered with sales teams to identify workflow gaps, delivering UX recommendations that improved process clarity and cross-departmental communication accuracy across a rapidly scaling organization.

### Senior UX Designer – Ecommerce & Consumer Platform

Jan 2020 – May 2022

**Hy-Vee, Inc.** · *Des Moines Metro, IA*

- Led a data-driven PDP redesign that delivered measurable ecommerce growth: +84,000 related add-to-carts, +4,000 direct add-to-carts, +31,000 variation interactions, +31 seconds time on page, and -5% bounce rate.
- Designed the 'Did You Forget Anything?' pre-checkout upsell experience, improving average order value by surfacing relevant add-on recommendations before checkout.

- Partnered with engineering and product in a UX/Product/Engineering triad to define A/B experiments, validate hypotheses, and guide iterative releases, embedding a continuous-improvement culture into the team.
- Leveraged GA4 and LogRocket behavioral data to identify funnel drop-off and workflow friction, combining quantitative and qualitative signals to drive evidence-based design decisions at scale.

## **User Experience Lead – Enterprise 3D Collaboration SaaS**

Apr 2018 – Oct 2019

**Vertex Software** · Ames, IA

- Served as sole designer at a stealth B2B startup building a complex enterprise 3D collaboration platform, defining the full interaction model, information architecture, and early design system under high ambiguity and tight constraints.
- Built foundational navigation structures, interaction patterns, and early design system components that gave engineering a clear, scalable surface to build from throughout the product lifecycle.
- Designed segmented model-sharing workflows enabling secure, context-aware data exchange with annotations and metadata, simplifying technically sophisticated operations for a demanding technical user base.
- Supported engineering velocity through iterative prototyping, usability validation, and close collaboration with technical leadership, reducing implementation ambiguity throughout the delivery cycle.

## **Director of User Experience – Enterprise EdTech SaaS**

Jun 2016 – Mar 2018

**ACT, Inc.** · Iowa City, IA

- Reduced student registration time from approximately 30 minutes to under 7 minutes by redesigning a complex, data-heavy workflow using research-driven problem framing and iterative usability testing.
- Built a multi-source VOC dashboard integrating customer service data, usability findings, and web analytics; delivered quarterly design strategy insights to senior leadership that shaped product roadmap prioritization.
- Managed UX budgets, vendors, and a multi-disciplinary team responsible for journey mapping, personas, and design sprints, establishing scalable processes and cross-functional engagement models that improved delivery quality organization-wide.

## **Lead UX Designer – Enterprise EdTech SaaS**

Dec 2013 – Jun 2016

**ACT, Inc.** · Iowa City, IA

- Led research and design for core EdTech products used by students, educators, and institutions nationwide, conducting user interviews, usability studies, and workflow redesigns that improved task success and platform clarity.
- Collaborated with engineering and product leadership to define requirements, align on cross-portfolio dependencies, and deliver scalable solutions across a complex matrixed enterprise organization.
- Mentored junior designers on HCD methodology, IA principles, and structured critique practices, building team capability and elevating design quality without formal management authority.

## **Interaction Designer – EdTech SaaS**

Mar 2008 – Dec 2013

**Pearson** · Iowa City, IA

- Designed enterprise and institutional EdTech platforms, conducting on-site contextual research with administrators, IT coordinators, and district leaders across Texas and Virginia.
- Created personas, journey maps, and workflow models informing large-scale platform redesigns that improved efficiency and task success for complex, state-driven institutional workflows.
- Built interactive prototypes and collaborated closely with engineering teams to reduce implementation ambiguity and improve alignment across complex, fast-moving product releases.

## **Front-End Developer & Prototype Creator – EdTech SaaS**

Jun 2006 – Mar 2008

**Pearson** · Iowa City, IA

- Built production UI components and interactive prototypes in HTML, CSS, and JavaScript that supported early product exploration, accelerated stakeholder alignment, and bridged design intent with engineering delivery.

## EDUCATION

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**MBA, Management & Organizations**

University of Iowa, Tippie College of Business

**B.A., Management Information Systems (Computer Science Emphasis)**

University of Northern Iowa

## CERTIFICATIONS

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**UX Certificate, UX Management Specialty** · Nielsen Norman Group

**Certified User Experience Analyst (CXA)** · Human Factors International

**Certified Usability Analyst (CUA)** · Human Factors International

## TOOLS & PLATFORMS

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**Design & Prototyping:** Figma · FigJam · Miro · Webflow · HTML/CSS (prototyping)

**Research & Analytics:** GA4 · LogRocket · UserTesting · Optimal Workshop

**Product & Collaboration:** Jira · Confluence · Aha! · Notion

**AI Tools:** ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · AI-assisted design, research, and content workflows