

Eric Atkinson - User Experience | Research Manager

Summary

Design and research leader with 20+ years of experience in creating solutions, researching consumer-facing products, and leading user experience teams in e-commerce, consumer electronics, healthcare, government and technology industries. Diverse international experience including EU, LATAM, and APAC locales. Grower and nurturer of UX teams from the ground up; guiding team member careers, capabilities and effectiveness. Builder of customer empathy through education and evangelism. Accelerator of innovation where discovery is the driver to success.

Amazon, Alexa Experiences

Sr. UX Researcher

9/2017-Present

Sr. Researcher leading horizontal research programs for Alexa Experience & Devices across multinational, cross-domain teams. Lead foundational, generative, and evaluative research to support conversational product design and development.

- Managed Alexa international expansion research program including budget and headcount resource forecasting, vendor relationships, platform tooling, and delivery of actionable insights.
- Partners closely with global business and engineering leadership to identify generative research opportunities and build forward-looking roadmaps to inform product strategy.
- Leads team in agile, but thorough, evaluative research and data analysis to de-risk product delivery with evidenced-based insights.
- Co-leads cross-functional program to aggregate, mine and measure research insight, impact and success across the organization.
- Presents and persuades executive leadership on research strategy, insight and recommendations.
- Elevates research thought-leadership in the organization through community-building events and compelling programs to build customer empathy.
- Interviews, mentors and coaches junior designers and researchers on a growing user experience team.

Amazon, Alexa Skills

Experience Design Researcher

1/2017-9/2017

Lead Researcher on the Alexa Skills UX team responsible for growing the ecosystem and application catalogue from 8,000 to over 30,000 skills with more than 1,000 skills rated 5 out of 5 stars. Led the research of the successful launch of a reimagined platform to develop skills for Alexa.

- Led international research program charged with empowering Alexa Skill content creators to build voice-activated multimodal experiences.
- Partnered with senior leadership, product managers, and software development managers to plan the organization's experimental research strategy and roadmap for an emerging technology.
- Designed and directed the execution of end-to-end product research and vendor support.
- Mentored researchers and team members on generative, formative and evaluative research including study design, fieldwork, analysis and reporting.
- Evangelized the business value of user research throughout the organization and educated teams on research.

Microsoft, Cloud + Enterprise (via Insight Global)

Principal User Experience Researcher

9/2016-1/2017

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Principal Researcher on the Cloud + Enterprise team responsible for coaching international product and engineering leaders on human-centered business strategy. Developed training curricula and evangelized evidenced-based research, human-centered design, design-thinking, growth hacking, and lean product development.

- Led operationalization of international, experiential design-thinking program to coach teams on user-centered product development.
- Developed roadmap, curricula and interactive modules for train-the-trainer workshops focused on measurable business impact.
- Ushered in customer-obsessed culture for Cloud + Enterprise teams responsible for cloud infrastructure, enterprise mobility, operations management, application development, and analytics solutions.
- Embedded within product teams and evangelized customer obsession and lean user experience methods according to business goals and outcomes.

WorldView Solutions Inc. (now GeoDecisions)

User Experience Lead

10/2015-8/2016

UX practice lead and business development manager responsible for winning substantial projects and delivering measurably improved experiences for key accounts. For client's line of business solutions, increased engagement and decreased friction resulting in improved customer experience and satisfaction metrics.

- Led and managed end-to-end experience design team consisting of three direct reports for geospatial solution consultancy.
- Established UX business development program and created case study proposals proving and selling the value of experience design to clients.
- Oversaw all UX project phases, from concept-to-launch, to ensure the successful delivery of solutions that met client goals and solved customer problems.
- Recruited, hired, coached and evaluated UX team members including researchers, interaction designers, and visual designers to grow and produce high quality work.

CapTech Ventures – Fortune 500 Consumer Packaged Goods Company

Experience Design Manager

9/2013-8/2015

Managed lean customer experience team for client program with the charter of reimagining line of business sales and retail B2B products. Eliminated legacy software licensing costs by tens of millions of dollars. Improved product performance across mobile devices and increased engagement.

- Built from the ground up and managed a customer experience team of four direct reports responsible for end-to-end experience design, research, and design technology for client B2B, mobile and web e-commerce properties.
- Worked with senior leadership to grow account, identify business opportunities, develop proposals and statements of work, and forecast project resources.
- Led the re-implementation of a behavior and analytics framework to measure customer engagement and business outcome success.
- Directed the vendor supported experience design, research and front-end re-architecture of mobile-first, responsive e-commerce properties for point of sale retail, category management and marketing promotions.
- Directed the development and integration of an automated build and deploy process introducing digital asset management, web and mobile performance budgets and design quality assurance oversight.

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Snagajob (now Snag)

Sr. Interaction Designer / Researcher

2/2013-8/2013

Senior interaction designer and user researcher for B2C mobile and web products. Led discovery on launching a reimagined V0 iOS app for the nationwide hourly job seeker platform.

- Led experience design and customer research for B2C mobile and web products.
- Planned UX roadmap for foundational discovery, generative design and formative and summative research.
- Directed qualitative and quantitative user research activities, including foundational ethnographic studies, A/B/multivariate tests, and remote evaluative research to rapidly validate user behavior and inform design strategy.
- Partnered with product owners and engineering leads to distill business and user goals into clearly defined customer archetypes, design principles, opportunity backlogs, and user stories/tasks.

Verisk Health (now Cotiviti)

Sr. Product Designer

7/2012-2/2013

Senior designer responsible for the product design and generative research of first-generation, beta launch of health and prescription drug business intelligence software.

- Worked with product management to develop design and research roadmap and product strategy.
- Led generative research and opportunity discovery for the product and service.
- Designed and conducted qualitative research and ethnographic studies that informed first generation product concepts.

VA Dept. of Social Services

Lead Product Designer / Researcher

1/2010-6/2012

Led product design and research for successful launch of first-generation temporary assistance portal serving over 1MM of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens.

- Developed identity, user interface and interaction design of web-based applications.
- Designed and conducted evaluative research using triangulated mixed methods and remote testing tools.
- Served as subject matter expert on accessibility and usability.

VA Office on Volunteerism and Community Service

UX Producer

7/2005-12/2009

VA Dept. of Social Services

Sr. Designer

2/1999-6/2005

Knowledge, Skill & Ability

Leadership	Research & Discovery	Design & Technology	Insight & Analysis
Team lead and management	Customer archetypes and segmentation	Creative strategy	Sense making and synthesis
Talent recruitment, evaluation and mentoring	Research roadmap planning	End-to-end multimodal design direction	Topline and detailed report generation
Executive presentation and influence	Foundational, generative and evaluative research	Critique facilitation	Experimental applied analysis
Program management	Discovery facilitator and coach	Information architecture	Customer experience and satisfaction
Business development	Competitive and comparative benchmarking	Design technology	Translation and communication of complex concepts
Client relations and vendor management	Ethnography	Performance optimization	ROI analysis
Operational planning	Qualitative and quantitative methods	Content strategy	Statistics and digital analytics analysis

Education & Certifications

- MS, Human-Computer Interaction candidate, DePaul University
- BA, Design and Visual Communication, Hampton University
- Certified Scrum Master (CSM)

Professional Organizations

- EPIC member - advancing the value of ethnography in industry
- User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA)
- International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP)
- Interaction Design Association (IxDA)
- The Information Architecture Institute

References

References available upon request.