

MICHAEL HELMAN

(708) 846-6654 | mikehelman33@gmail.com | Orland Park, IL
[LinkedIn Profile](#) | [Online Portfolio](#) (UXLead2026)

SUMMARY

Senior UX Leader and Strategist with 25+ years of experience leading multidisciplinary teams, driving end-to-end product strategy, and scaling design systems across enterprise platforms. Proven track record of aligning UX design with business goals to boost engagement, streamline complex user workflows, and accelerate growth. Adept at integrating AI-driven interfaces, establishing cross-functional design operations, and mentoring designers to deliver intuitive, accessible digital experiences.

Key strengths: UX & Product Strategy • User-Centered Design • Design Operations • UX/UI Design & Usability • User Research & Insights • Information Architecture • Design Systems • Prototyping & Validation • Enterprise SaaS Products • Cross-Functional Alignment • Team Management & Mentorship • AI-Assisted Product Design • Continuous Discovery

EXPERIENCE

SUREFRONT	Remote / San Marino, California
Principal Product Designer (Contract)	March 2025 - June 2026
- Led UX strategy and end-to-end design for a retail-focused SaaS platform integrating PLM, PIM, and CRM, establishing a cohesive cross-device experience that improved usability and increased product adoption by 30%. - Defined the UX strategy for AI-powered enterprise experiences, including conversational onboarding, workflow assistance, product recommendations, automated product variant generation, and AI-generated imagery. Partnered with Product and Engineering to establish AI interaction patterns that simplified complex workflows, reduced manual data entry, improved data consistency, and accelerated catalog, quote, and order creation. - Translated complex B2B requirements and data-driven workflows into intuitive enterprise experiences through continuous user research, usability testing, and data-backed UX insights, driving a 75% increase in feature adoption and informing product roadmap decisions. - Established and evolved the enterprise design system using Figma and zeroheight, creating reusable components, governance standards, and documentation that reduced UI inconsistencies by 40% and front-end development rework by 45%. - Built scalable UX processes, collaborative frameworks, and design standards while coaching and mentoring designers, improving team productivity and delivery efficiency by 25%. - Led cross-functional workshops and executive design reviews, communicating UX strategy and design rationale to align Product, Engineering, and executive stakeholders, strengthen decision-making, and drive confident product investments. - Leveraged AI-assisted research and design tools - including generative prototyping, automated journey mapping, and AI-powered analytics - to accelerate discovery, improve decision-making, and increase design team efficiency.	
US FOODS	Rosemont, Illinois
Senior UX Manager, Digital Commerce	May 2019 - July 2024
- Directed UX vision, strategy, and execution for US Foods' multi-billion-dollar e-commerce platform, serving on the Digital Commerce leadership team and aligning customer experience, product strategy, and business outcomes across web and mobile. - Built, led, and mentored a multidisciplinary team of 12 UX designers, researchers, and front-end developers, fostering a high-performance, data-driven culture centered on continuous discovery, rapid prototyping, and collaborative delivery. - Championed an enterprise-wide atomic design system across Figma and digital products, establishing reusable components, inclusive patterns, interaction standards, and governance that unified web and mobile experiences, reduced design inconsistencies by 70%, and improved team efficiency by 35%. - Led a research-driven redesign of critical B2B ordering journeys, synthesizing insights from 100+ customers and internal stakeholders to simplify complex workflows, increase feature engagement by 75%, and improve customer satisfaction scores by 30%. - Defined and advanced AI-driven personalization strategies, partnering with Product and Data Science to deliver tailored content recommendations and adaptive experiences based on customer behaviors and preferences.	

- Partnered with Product, Data Science, Engineering, and 12+ front-end developers to translate UX strategy into accessible, technically feasible, and high-quality experiences, influencing roadmap priorities and ensuring consistent execution across releases.
- Advocated for accessibility and inclusive design across product teams, embedding inclusive practices into design standards and product development to reduce barriers and improve the overall customer experience.
- Analyzed competitive trends, customer needs, and market opportunities to identify product gaps and provide data-backed recommendations that shaped roadmap prioritization and strengthened feature adoption.

US FOODS

Rosemont, Illinois

Senior Manager, UX Design and DevelopmentMay 2015 - April 2019

User Experience ArchitectJune 2013 - April 2015

- Led the design, execution, and branding of digital products and mobile apps for both customers and employees. Kept everything consistent to improve user experience and support business goals.
- Defined and executed UX strategy across web, mobile, and Salesforce-based platforms, leveraging customer insights, analytics, and usability testing to drive adoption and growth.
- Drove user research initiatives, such as interviews, usability testing, journey mapping, and persona development, shaping product direction and design decisions.
- Directed the creation of wireframes, user flows, prototypes, and visual mockups for complex enterprise applications, ensuring design excellence and user-centric solutions.
- Established and scaled UX processes, reducing design rework by 65%, accelerating delivery timelines, and enhancing cross-functional collaboration.
- Championed accessibility and WCAG compliance through regular audits, design reviews, and accessibility enhancements, resulting in more inclusive digital experiences.
- Managed project portfolios, budgets, and vendor relationships, while driving innovation through the evaluation of emerging technologies and Agile/Scrum delivery practices.

RETROFIT

Evanston, Illinois

Art Director (Contract)June 2012 – April 2013

- Championed the creative direction for the corporate website and all marketing campaign pages, ensuring a visually engaging and cohesive brand presence.
- Led end-to-end marketing strategy and content development, guaranteeing brand consistency and messaging alignment across all channels.
- Authored and implemented a comprehensive brand style guide, establishing consistent standards for all digital platforms and marketing materials.
- Forged strong partnerships with external vendors, designers, and search engine marketing specialists to execute high-impact campaigns and deliver measurable results.

HCSC / BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ILLINOIS

Chicago, Illinois

Senior Web Designer and Front-End DeveloperNovember 2009 – May 2012

- Led the design and development of a public website used in multiple states. Oversaw information architecture, managed CMS-based web delivery, guided visual design, and ensured the site worked well across different browsers for a large digital project.
- Managed QA and testing efforts while working closely with engineers to set up usability best practices.
- Established and governed global UI components, and documented workflows to support scalable product development and design excellence.

FREELANCE EXPERIENCE

FLYING MONKEYS STUDIO

Founder & Principal Designer/Developer1997 - Present

- Founded and lead an independent design practice delivering UX strategy, digital experiences, visual branding, and front-end solutions for diverse clients, owning engagements from business discovery and strategy through creative direction, execution, and delivery.
- Provide strategic design leadership and consultative partnership to clients across industries, translating business objectives, customer needs, and market opportunities into cohesive digital experiences and brand strategies that strengthen engagement and support growth.
- Lead end-to-end UX/UI and creative direction across responsive websites, digital platforms, brand identities, marketing campaigns, and multimedia experiences, ensuring accessibility, usability, visual consistency, and high-quality execution across channels.
- Design and develop accessible, responsive digital experiences using modern front-end practices and platforms including WordPress, Drupal, HTML, and CSS, collaborating across design and development to deliver scalable, maintainable solutions.
- Drive business operations and growth, including client acquisition, strategic proposals, scope and budget management, stakeholder relationships, and delivery planning, while building long-term client partnerships through consultative engagement.

EARLIER CAREER EXPERIENCE

AMERICA'S BEST COMPANIES

Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois

Creative Director and Information ArchitectMay 2008 - May 2009

SHOPLOCAL (TEGNA/Tribune Media Co.)

Chicago, Illinois

Senior Graphic and UI DesignerMarch 2006 - May 2008

DIRECT ADVANTAGE

Chicago, Illinois

Senior Graphic / Flash DesignerDecember 2004 - March 2006

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Technical Tools: Adobe Creative Suite, Figma, Sketch, InVision, Zeplin, Balsamiq, Axure, ChatGPT, Replit, Claude

Coding Skills: HTML/HTML5, CSS/CSS3, JavaScript, WordPress

Analytics and SEO Tools: Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics, SEO

Collaboration and Management Tools: Jira, Confluence, SharePoint, Adobe Experience Manager, Lucidchart, zeroheight, Microsoft 365

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA COLLEGE, Chicago, Illinois

Bachelor of Science, Communication Arts

Graphic Design, Animation

MORaine VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, Palos Heights, Illinois

Associate of Arts, Liberal Arts