Mariana Johnels

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Professional Summary

Strategic and hands-on design leader with 15+ years of experience across product design, UX/UI, branding, and creative direction for SaaS, B2C and B2B with a strong focus on enterprise UX, conversion-optimized experiences, and platform consistency. Proven track record driving scalable design systems, mentoring global teams, and aligning user-centered design with growth goals. Fluent in Spanish/English and passionate about accessibility, inclusivity, and data-informed decision-making in product development.

Skills

Leadership & Strategy:

Leadership & Communication, Project Management, Cross-functional Design Operations, Interviewing, Hiring & Mentoring, Business & User Goal Alignment, Go-to-Market Strategy Support

UX & Product Design:

Design Thinking & Problem Framing, User Journey Mapping, Customer Experience Mapping, Product Design & UX Strategy, Interaction Design & Micro-interactions, UX Writing & Content Strategy, Information Architecture, Responsive & Mobile-First Design, Accessibility & Inclusive Design, Ethical Design & Privacy-Centered UX, Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) & Data-Driven Design

Design Systems & Tools:

Design Systems & Component Libraries, Design Tokens & Scalable Frameworks, Wireframing & Prototyping, Developer Handoff & Collaboration, Art Direction & Branding

Research & Analytics:

User Research, Usability Testing & User Interviews, A/B & Multivariate Testing, Analytics & Insights (Google Analytics, CrazyEgg, Redash, Clarity)

Design Tools & Software:

Figma, Adobe Creative Suite, Framer, FigJam, Adobe XD

Project & Collaboration Tools:

JIRA, Trello, Confluence, Notion

Development:

HTML, CSS, Javascript

Al & Automation:

ChatGPT, Stitch, Claude, Perplexity

Languages:

Spanish, English

Specializations:

Digital Product Design, Brand Experience Design, User Experience (UX), User Interface (UI), SaaS, B2C, B2B, Enterprise Applications, Agile & Scrum, UX Thinking, Visual & Consumer-facing Design, Creative Direction

Experience

Emeritus Institute of Management | Sr. Product Designer | Jan 2023 - Jul 2025

- Created 'Blueprint', a scalable and accessible design system adopted organization-wide, reducing engineering implemen- tation time by approximately 50%, cutting maintenance costs, and improving key growth metrics like V2L and L2PA.
- Collaborated with engineers, PMs, stakeholders, directors, and C-level leaders (CTO, CMO) as well as university partners to align design with business strategy through standups, design reviews, async feedback, and real-time collaboration tools.
- Redesigned and scaled 100+ white-label landing pages for partner brands, applying brand guidelines, improving UX, and ensuring full ADA compliance to meet accessibility standards.
- Partnered with product and growth teams to ideate, test, and launch features that reduced CAC by 10% in six months, directly
 impacting acquisition efficiency.
- Conducted user research, usability testing, and behavioral data analysis to generate insights that drove iterative design improvements across learner and partner experiences.
- Co-designed an Al-powered tutoring platform integrated into Canvas LMS, delivering scalable and personalized academic support as a B2B SaaS offering for educational institutions.
- Mentored junior designers through feedback, guidance, and peer reviews, fostering team growth and promoting a culture of high standards and continuous learning.

2U, Inc | Senior Design Manager | Jan 2021 - Aug 2022

- Directed design efforts across a portfolio of 55+ global brands and 200+ programs, ensuring consistent and scalable visual systems aligned with each brand's identity.
- Led a remote team of six designers, providing strategic direction, mentorship, and performance coaching to elevate craft, increase autonomy, and support career growth.
- Partnered cross-functionally with product, growth, marketing, and engineering teams to drive high-impact initiatives from self-serve learner journeys to enterprise onboarding flows.
- Managed design contributions for growth-focused projects, including campaign landing pages, referral flows, and A/B testing efforts that improved CAC, V2L, and L2PA.
- · Hired, onboarded, and trained new designers, scaling the team efficiently while maintaining a high design quality bar.
- Established and optimized team workflows and design ops processes, resulting in improved execution speed and enhanced collaboration across functions
- Supported go-to-market launches and marketing campaigns through thoughtful design that reinforced brand consistency and business goals.
- Advocated for a user-centered design culture, balancing data-driven decision-making with creative innovation to improve engagement and retention.

2U, Inc. (via Trilogy Education Services acquisition) | Senior Designer | Jul 2018 - Jan 2021

- Joined Trilogy Education Services as the founding designer, building design foundations and systems during rapid startup growth; Trilogy was acquired by 2U for \$750M in 2019.
- Designed high-impact marketing assets across channels including websites, ad campaigns, emails, presentations, and brand manuals to support program launches and learner acquisition.
- Developed and maintained visual identity systems for partner programs, ensuring cohesive brand expression across digital and offline touchpoints.
- Created a modular, scalable and accessible white-labels design system to support all brands and programs in close collaboration with engineering.
- Led UX research, prototyping, and responsive design for new and optimized landing pages, focusing on mobile-first performance and conversion-driven user flows.
- Interpreted creative briefs to align design solutions with strategic marketing and business objectives, contributing to performance across growth funnels.
- Delivered targeted, actionable feedback to designers and team members, significantly boosting design quality and team collaboration.
- Reviewed creative work for strategic and visual alignment, ensuring consistency in hierarchy, accessibility, readability, and overall design excellence.
- Presented design solutions and campaigns to stakeholders with clear strategic rationale, balancing business impact with creative integrity.

Office Depot | Senior Web Designer, E-commerce Functional Lead | Jan 2014 - Jul 2018

- Led a team of 7 designers, managing projects, timelines, and recruitment to deliver high-quality marketing and product design assets.
- Developed and maintained style guides, training materials, and ongoing employee training to ensure brand consistency and process efficiency and managed CMS operations and translated wireframes into high-fidelity comps, prototypes, and coded responsive HTML/CSS for landing pages and email campaigns (Salesforce, Movable Ink, ExactTarget).
- Aligned design with iterative product development using EDX, Scrum, and Agile frameworks, boosting team collaboration and increasing project delivery speed.

Education

Florida Atlantic University | Bachelors, Fine Arts, Graphic Design Keiser College | Associate, Science, Computer Graphics & Design

Certifications

- Al for Designers: Interaction Design Foundation (IxDF) (2025)
- Accessibility: How to Design for All:Interaction Design Foundation (IxDF) (2025)
- Product Management Insights: Project Management Institute (2024)
- Problem-Solving Techniques: Project Management Institute (2023)
- Lean Foundations: Project Management Institute (2022)
- Communicating about Culturally Sensitive Issues: Project Management Institute (2022)
- Improving Employee Performance: Project Management Institute (2021)
- Make the Move from Individual Contributor to Manager: Project Management Institute (2021)
- Leadership Foundations: Project Management Institute (2021)
- Design Thinking: Understanding the Process: Project Management Institute (2021)
- Advanced Design Thinking: Harvard DCE Professional Development (2021)
- Becoming a Leader: Harvard DCE Professional Development (2021)