

# Zeke Zalinski

UX Design Leader | Experience Strategy & Design Systems

## Summary

Design executive with 25+ years spanning fine art, agency creative direction, e-commerce, and Brand. For the last decade building and restructuring UX organizations inside VC-backed SaaS environments. Recruited directly by C-suite leadership at both of my last two roles to assess fragmented design functions, establish process and standards from the ground up, and deliver unified product experiences across multi-product portfolios. Equally fluent in craft and strategy, with the range to operate at both the pixel and the boardroom level. Very interested in exploring how integrating AI into design practice can be both a force multiplier while also being held to governance in service of the work, users and clients.

## Core Capabilities

- UX org buildout, team mentorship & talent development
- Cross-functional leadership: thought leadership, product, customer success, design, back-end, front-end dev
- C-suite partnership and executive design strategy
- Design systems architecture: scalable guardrails for engineering autonomy
- AI-assisted design workflow integration (Figma Make, Lovable, Claude)
- UX Direction: wireframes, prototypes & specs
- Regulated industry UX (healthcare, enterprise SaaS)

## Experience

**VelocityEHS** / Director of User Experience & Design / Sep 2022 – May 2026

Recruited directly by the CTO, a relationship built over five years at Maestro Health, to assess and restructure a fragmented UX organization across a portfolio of 8–10 acquired SaaS products, before being elevated to lead it.

- Restructured the UX organization from 8 to 5, identifying and retaining the designers with the adaptability to operate in a process-driven, accountable culture, resulting in a leaner team with measurably higher output and alignment.
- Designed and directed the Accelerate Design System (ADS) in Figma, building the template architecture and component library that became the structural backbone of all applications and user flows. Once completed partnered with Front End development to scale across 6 simultaneous scrum teams.
- Authored the organization's first UX Design Guide from the ground up, establishing documentation standards, scope boundaries, and process discipline that gave the team a shared language and a clear operating model for the first time.
- Championed early adoption of AI-assisted design tools, including Figma Make AI for rapid prototyping. Then partnered with Product to introduce Lovable AI as an exploration tool for surfacing industry needs and opportunities, enabling faster concept generation for trusted clients, stakeholder and R&D review.
- Established in-house VPAT documentation capability across the product suite, building the internal practice led by a Senior UX Designer rather than outsourcing, in response to enterprise contract and educational institution

requirements. Had identified an AI-assisted workflow using ChatGPT Pro to sustain delivery following team restructuring, positioning the department to maintain compliance output without dedicated headcount.

- Directed two full brand overhauls across the product suite, elevating visual consistency and user perception across a portfolio that had previously reflected the scattered identities of a dozen acquired companies.
- Initiated and developed UAT practices for the UX department, including embedding UXD in client conversations and prototype demos, creating structured touch-points for direct user feedback that had not previously existed in the design process.

#### **VelocityEHS** / Senior Application UX Designer / Jun 2021 – Sep 2022

Joined to lead the integration of a newly acquired company's software onto the VelocityEHS design system, complex workflows, large data sets, and the kind of ambiguous scope that requires both systems thinking and design precision.

#### **Career Pause** / Full-time Parent / Feb 2020 – Jun 2021

Stepped back from professional work to manage family full-time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Maestro Health** / Director of Experience Design / Feb 2015 – Feb 2020

Recruited by referral from a former colleague to join a 30-person healthcare startup as its first and only UX voice. Tasked with ownership of the full delivery model from wireframe to boardroom.

- Served as sole UX leader across a suite of 12 healthcare applications (8 public-facing, 4 internal) for three years, owning the complete experience from concept through delivery in a regulated, data-intensive environment.
- Led ground-up design and development of custom applications that replaced paper-based HR workflows while embedded with Dev, Front End, Product, and industry consultants in an agile scrum based work flow. All in an effort to solve problems that had never been digitized before.
- Built and documented the UX process model for the department from scratch. Establishing the operating framework that scaled with the team as the company grew from 30 people to a full-scale health insurance platform.
- Made a deliberate, timed first hire in year three, bringing in a specialist for user flow documentation and research to extend delivery capacity at exactly the moment the product complexity demanded it.

#### **Siteworx** / Creative Director, Chicago / Sep 2012 – Sep 2013

One of four founding directors of Siteworx's first remote office; the only location to launch with leadership across all four pillars: sales, development, engagement, and design.

- Led the design department through the full client lifecycle; from discovery and stakeholder interviews through concept, production, and development handoff across major clients such as Grant Thornton, American College of Surgeons, and DeVry University.
- Operated as a peer director alongside sales, development, and engagement leads contributing to strategy, pitches, SOW approvals, and resource planning as a full business partner, not just a design function.

#### **Lyons Consulting Group** / Associate Creative Director / May 2011 – Sep 2012

- Oversaw the LCG agency rebrand and new site launch. Managing creative through all cycles while improving cross-department communication and process alignment.
- Represented LCG at IRWD 2011 as a Design and UX specialist. Enjoying two days of one-on-one consultation with companies as a credentialed practitioner in e-commerce design strategy.

**Gorilla** / Senior Design Lead / July 2010 – May 2011

Core creative contributor during the year Gorilla was named 2010 Magento Partner of the Year.

- Owned full-circle project delivery from creative discovery and concept through art direction, UX, and development QA. With a strategic focus on e-commerce standards, ROI goals, and business objectives.
- Represented Gorilla at the 2011 Internet Retailer Web Design Conference as a Design, UX, and IA consultant. While there also served as creative lead on Axient.net, recognized with an Interactive Media Council Award for Outstanding Achievement.

**Envisionit Media** / Art Director / Mar 2006 – Mar 2010

- Owned the process and routing infrastructure for print production from the ground up, then extended that same framework to cover web design as the agency evolved, establishing how work was conceptualized, presented, revised, client-reviewed, and approved across both disciplines.
- Helped formalize the creative department as the agency grew, building the day-to-day operating structure: job tracking, handoff standards, and team communication that gave a fast-moving shop the foundation to take on more work without losing quality or visibility.
- Managed a cross-discipline team of print designers, front-end developers, copywriters, and interns across traditional and digital deliverables, including brand design, print marketing, email, and early websites, during the industry's shift from print-first to digital.

**Earlier Career** / Art Direction, Design & Freelance / 2001 – 2006

Senior designer and art director roles at Italia Partners and Z Design (contract), with client work spanning Euro RSCG Tatham, Foote Cone & Belding, Chicago Tribune, and others. National campaign work for CompUSA including photo shoots, in-store experience, and FSI design. The foundational years where craft, production discipline, and creative range were built.

## Education

**Illinois State University**

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Graphic Design