

Zeke Zalinski

Head of Experience Design

Executive Summary

I build design organizations that stick. Over 20+ years – from fine art and print through interactive agency creative direction to leading UX functions inside VC-backed SaaS companies – I’ve learned that great experience design is less about deliverables and more about the systems, people, and culture that produce them consistently.

At VelocityEHS, I was recruited directly by the CTO – a five-year trusted relationship – to assess and transform a fragmented UX function inherited across 8-10 acquired products. I restructured the team, authored the organization’s first UX standards and design guide, and built the cross-functional UX-to-engineering pipeline that now underpins every product the company ships. At Maestro Health, I was the sole UX leader across a suite of 12 healthcare applications for three years – including ground-up product builds that replaced paper-based HR workflows with intuitive, regulation-conscious digital experiences – before making a precise first hire to extend research and documentation capacity exactly when the work demanded it.

What I bring to an executive design role is the full range: the aesthetic instinct of a trained designer, the operational discipline of an org builder, and the strategic clarity to connect experience quality directly to business outcomes. I’m also actively integrating AI into design practice – using it to accelerate ideation, compress delivery cycles, and equip teams to move faster without sacrificing the human judgment that makes design matter.

Core Capabilities

- UX organization buildout and restructuring
- Design systems at scale across multi-product platforms
- Cross-functional engineering collaboration (Agile/Scrum)
- C-suite partnership and executive design strategy
- Mentorship, talent development, team structure design
- AI-assisted design workflow integration
- Regulated industry UX (healthcare, enterprise SaaS)

Career History

VelocityEHS / Director of User Experience & Design / Sep 2022 – Present

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 hunger and adaptability to operate in a process-driven, accountable culture, resulting in a leaner team with measurably higher output and alignment.
- 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.
- 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 – then partnered with a Senior Front End developer to translate it into a production CSS master library scaled across 6 simultaneous Scrum teams.
- Brokered and built the company’s first UX-to-engineering design partnership – working with the CTO to define and hire a Head of Front End, then co-developing shared Figma standards that became the structural backbone of all product development going forward.
- 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 touchpoints for direct user feedback that had not previously existed in the design process.
- Championed early adoption of AI-assisted design tools – including Figma AI for rapid prototyping – and partnered with Product to introduce Lovable as an exploration tool for surfacing industry needs and opportunities, enabling faster concept generation for stakeholder and R&D review.

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 – brought in specifically to own 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 – working embedded with Dev, Front End, Product, and industry consultants 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 engagements including 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 – delivering two days of one-on-one consultation to scheduled companies as a credentialed practitioner in a public professional setting.

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 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 – and served as creative lead on Axient.net, recognized with an Interactive Media Council Award for Outstanding Achievement.

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

First department-building role – hired to construct a creative function from scratch as the agency scaled from 8 to 25 people.

- Built creative department structure from the ground up – establishing routing procedures, job tracking, process standards, and team communication that gave a fast-growing agency the operational foundation to scale.
- Managed a mixed team of print and interactive designers, copywriters, and interns across traditional and digital deliverables – an early foundation in the team leadership and cross-discipline management that has defined the career since.

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

Ongoing professional development in UX strategy, AI/ML in design, and executive leadership.

Recognition & Awards

Interactive Media Council – Outstanding Achievement Award, 2011

Creative lead on Axient.net for Gorilla – responsible for wireframes, UX design, and creative QA throughout development.

Webby Award Honoree, 2011

Creative lead on PopcornPalace.com for Gorilla – responsible for full site design, user experience, and art direction of a product photo shoot for the site launch.