

Austin M.
Design Leader

Empathetic mentor and design leader focused on creating authentic relationships that foster transparent, collaborative and inclusive cultures.

Over the length of my career in design, I've worked with multi-disciplined design teams of varying sizes, interviewed thousands of designers, and studied how design operates and matures within companies worldwide. During this time, I've noticed the lack of education supporting design storytelling, nurturing individual growth, and modern design recruitment.

My role as a leader, mentor, and designer is to balance thoughtful guidance with diverse levels of empowerment to support individual decision-making. Working with me means working transparently and inclusively, sharing in-progress work early and often, and framing problems as opportunities within a set of yet-to-be-understood contexts. I prioritise collaboration over independence. The best way to deliver meaningful outcomes is through shared responsibilities.

As a leader, I focus on achieving unique ideas with proactive action by creating authentic relationships that encourage deliberate measurable outcomes. If a team I'm working with fails, I don't see such situations as finite or defining but, instead, see failure as a chance for us to learn something and adapt to what we achieve next.

I strive to build a respectful yet playful culture built on the concept of strong view, loosely held to challenge our thinking and praise curious questions about how something fits into the big picture. Support comes from helping connect ideas, projects, and individuals or providing nudges on varied or alternative outcomes. I align myself with company values by routinely using them as tie-breakers or evaluation methods.

My strengths are primarily in having and encouraging a growth mindset based on self-awareness, creating a work-life balance where ideas can incubate and thrive, encouraging creative thinking, and acting authentically in everything I do. These strengths are my own and what I work to incorporate into the teams I work alongside. Through this, I hold my team big while supporting them ruthlessly to achieve success.

I've championed the coexistence of product, design, and engineering throughout my career, using agile processes and lean UX methodologies. Through partnerships with executive-level stakeholders, I have helped mature design within companies and deliver value in unlocking innovation through design.

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2022—Present
Remote

Product Design Director — Xero

I am currently leading the design team responsible for Xero's core accounting platform, consisting of 11 multifunctional product designers and design managers across two portfolios. The Accounting and Reporting design team are responsible for experiences that simplify complex accounting and transform data into valuable insights to help small businesses thrive. We provide multiple services and integrations to enable customers to get financial data into Xero while supporting businesses of all sizes to generate valuable financial reports.

In addition to these services, we also design robust analytics tools to identify the financial health of businesses and track ongoing metrics and financial performance. By providing small business owners, accountants and bookkeepers with greater customisation and more accurate projections, we enable Xero to become a trusted partner to help businesses thrive.

So far, in my time at Xero, I have worked with design leadership and engaged my team to lean into change and implement improvements to design processes. Initiatives include inclusive design reviews that empower decision-making, more meaningful one-on-ones, and building a centralised wiki for our design documentation to make it more accessible to everyone across the organisation.

2021—2022
Remote

Platform Design Director — Kraken Digital Exchange

Kraken's mission to accelerate cryptocurrency adoption sought to enable humanity to achieve financial freedom and a ubiquitous and inclusive future through Web3. Kraken's range of successful trading products is critical in helping transform the world's financial focus to support the mainstream adoption of crypto assets.

I led the platform design team focused on several initiatives.

- Established the Design Systems team, defining the strategy, setting the tone for our visual language documentation, and working with cross-functional partners to launch the initiative.
- Led design initiatives for all cross-product experiences, focused on Kraken's global expansion.
- Established the Client Support Systems design team incorporating Kraken's two-sided marketplace to connect clients through the support centre with Kraken's CE agents using our admin tools.
- Defining the broader design team processes, from hiring practices, and career matrices, establishing design tools, ways of working and design review rituals.

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2020—2021
Remote, Sydney

Program Design Manager — Telstra

I led a large integrated team of cross-functional designers and writers in Telstra digitisation. The team was distributed across 3 states, working with onshore/offshore development teams in multiple time zones. We worked end-to-end to deliver Telstra's prospect-to-order digital eCommerce solution, covering subscription-based mobile products and services, fixed nbn internet services and Telstra's new energy offering.

Additional to leading the design team, I supported the conversation to help the business understand the importance of design as a function. To ensure we deliver great customer experiences, I partnered with executive stakeholders to help them understand the impact of design maturity. As part of this, I helped define and implement many new design processes to achieve success working remotely. These helped define design at every stage, from initial ideation, through user testing, design validation, and final artifact delivery across the spectrum of design. Furthermore, I led the requirement to up-skill accessibility within the team to ensure Telstra meets its commitment to being WCAG 2.1 compliant.

2019—2019
Sydney, Australia

Experience Design Principal — Kayo Sports

During my time, I oversaw the design of the multi-platform sports streaming service owned by the Fox Sports media company. My responsibilities saw me play a critical role in the design process across native apps for mobile and TV devices (iOS, Apple TV, Android). Working closely with the engineering and design teams, I helped steer the program of work and was instrumental in the delivery of the user experience design framework. Additionally, I provided strategy, facilitated user research, and designed outcomes key to Kayo's product's success, which led to parallel product offerings such as Binge.

2017—2018
Sydney, Australia

Program Design Manager UX/UI — NSW Department of Justice

As the program design manager, I led the design team in delivering the AVL project (Audio Visual Link). A video conferencing technology that allows two or more people in separate courtrooms, correctional facilities, and specialty facilities to communicate live. As part of the project, we designed, tested, and delivered this communication's booking and management system across ALL courts and correctional facilities in NSW. The AVL program will save NSW taxpayers millions of dollars each year by eliminating the high cost of transporting accused persons across the state for bail and sentence hearings and other court appearances.

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This technology also plays a critical role in supporting children and other vulnerable victims to give 'in-camera' evidence from a private location, reducing the stress and trauma of participating in the criminal and civil justice system. Additionally, it allows expert witnesses to provide evidence from regional, interstate, or overseas locations.

2015–2017
Sydney, Australia

Experience Design Principal — Westpac Bank

I led the customer-centred design team within Westpac. We were UX and service design specialists who helped define and shape the business's new product streams to launch new technology solutions. Embedded within the organisation to help rethink and reshape the customer experience and service proposition through design and innovation initiatives.

2014–2015
Sydney, Australia

Experience Design Leader — CommBank

I oversaw the large-scale transformation project from initial vision, strategy, and concept design for the Bank's new property platform. This process included in-depth customer research and concept ideation. Following the vision's successful delivery, I hired a multi-disciplinary design team (UI, UX, Content) to deliver the program. I implemented a lean design process from initial discovery activities to feature inception to assist with the Bank's agile principles.

Additionally to these tasks, my role saw me oversee and deliver various UX-based activities such as concept strategy and ideation, regular research activities, developing the Bank's customer personas, and the mentorship and career management of the medium-sized team. I managed multiple scrum teams delivering projects across iOS, Android, and the web.

2013–2013
Sydney, Australia

Experience Design Leader — Deloitte Digital

At Deloitte Digital I worked as a design leader in the national practice. across a variety of digital work from experience and UI/UX design to design thinking implementation and agile design training to digital strategy and creative leadership through visual design and creative mentorship. Always delivering within an agile framework projects which included large scale CMS design and build projects, experience design through to UI design, service design, and business design. These were developed across a multitude of platforms such as iPad & iPhone Apps as well as responsive site design.

Please refer to my LinkedIn profile for previous experience.

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Pascal Potvin

Design Principal at Kraken

Austin is a leader who helps others around him grow. He is attentive and gives folks around him space to get their work done. He provides great feedback and likes to challenge designers around him to bring different perspectives into account. His work ethics are pristine, and he is easily adjustable to a given situation. His ability to go out of his way to help others has made him stand out. His unique ability to organize the working process and let employees demonstrate their professional skills' full extent helps everyone coordinate. A combination of humor and empathy helps to lift the spirit in stressful situations. Austin is an asset to any team.

John Lazzara

Head of UX at Telstra

Austin is a effective design leader and great to work with. I hired Austin in March 2020 to lead future state digital sales experience with a team of UX, Visual design & copy designers. He has done an amazing job working with many stakeholders to bring this work to life. He is smart, dedicated and has a solid design practice.

Sean McVeigh

Head of Customer-centric
Design at Westpac Bank

Exceptional Experience Designer that has that rare blend of great design capability, strategic thinking, creative collaboration. Able to transform fuzzy/complex problems into a simple customer value propositions; through hands on creative direction, and guiding multidisciplinary design teams and business owners.

Inga Latham

GM, User Experience and
Design at Commonwealth Bank

Austin is a very talented Experience Designer. As the User Experience Lead, he took a high profile project from business case concept to delivery. He managed both internal & external agency teams with a high degree of personal accountability & a focus on maintaining standards as well as ensuring the customer was at the center of all business discussions & decisions.

Drew Unsworth

GM, Digital Retail Banking at
Commonwealth Bank

Austin was brought in to help form our early thinking on a major customer experience. Not only did he throw himself at the task with a huge amount of energy he was able to combine UX/VD and Business thinking in the solution. He stretched out thinking further than we imagined and helped establish the road-map for future delivery.

Abigail Thomas

Director, Customer Experience
at Deloitte Digital

Austin is a big creative thinker. He comes up with new concepts and ideas readily and finds it easy to articulate his ideas visually. He also has that rare quality of being open and flexible when his ideas are challenged - either by colleagues or by clients - perhaps because he is confident he can always come up with new ideas.