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El Paso, Texas
(Willing to Relocate)

Samuel Custer

Results-Oriented Fortune 500 UX Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UX leader with 10+ years of experience transforming product design into a primary driver of business growth and operational efficiency across consumer products and regulated, high-trust domains. Proven ability to scale T-shaped design organizations, architect enterprise-grade design systems, and orchestrate cross-functional alignment among Product, Engineering, and Marketing to accelerate speed-to-market. Leverages a strong technical foundation and financial fluency to map UX strategy directly to P&L outcomes, prioritizing revenue attribution, conversion rate optimization (CRO), and significant reductions in technical debt.

HIGHLIGHTED IMPACT

- Scaled internal UX team from 2 to 11 during enterprise agile transformation (design, research, content)
- Reduced digital customer complaints by 73% YoY (01/2021 to 01/2022) by creating and operationalizing a "UX Debt Process"
- Improved J.D. Power Banking Mobile App Satisfaction Study (Regional) ranking from #8 to #2 over 2 years
- Localized a global design system for U.S. products; established standards and governance ("definition of done") in Figma

CORE COMPETENCIES

UX Leadership & Management, UX Strategy, Product Design (0-to-1 and Optimization), User Research, Design Systems & Governance, Information Architecture, Interaction Design, Prototyping, Journey Mapping, Accessibility, Voice of Customer (VOC), Usability Testing, Cross-functional Leadership, Stakeholder Management, Agile Product Delivery, Metrics/Insights-Driven Design

TOOLS & TECH

Figma + FigJam, JIRA/Confluence, Dovetail, UserZoom, Lyssna, Qualtrics, Google Analytics, Adobe/Sketch/InVision (legacy), HTML/CSS/SCSS, JavaScript/TypeScript, React / React Native, Swift (iOS), Java (Android), Node.js, SQL

EXPERIENCE

Career Sabbatical
July 2024 - Present

- Conducted an intentional career sabbatical focused on personal development, wellness, and long-term sustainability, returning to the market recharged and ready to lead/ship at a high level.
- Performed intensive research into emerging AI workflows, personalization, and human-in-the-loop design patterns, developing advanced systems-leadership strategies to drive future-proof operational efficiencies.
- Pursued disciplined training across multiple partner and social dance styles (bachata, salsa, merengue, country, waltz, polka, cumbias, norteñas, corridos, huapangos), developing consistency, coaching-minded learning habits, and performance confidence.
- Invested in family priorities and strengthened support systems while maintaining professional readiness for leadership responsibilities.
- Co-founded and advanced an early-stage business with a partner, contributing to concept development, customer discovery, positioning, and go-to-market planning (details available upon request).

SVP, Director of User Experience
Santander Bank, N.A.
Jan 2020 – July 2024

- Built a high-performing internal UX organization from 2 to 11 (designers, researchers, writer); managed people leaders and ICs including hiring, onboarding, coaching, performance management, succession planning, and budgeting.
- Shifted UX from a downstream delivery function to an upstream business process; enabled earlier involvement, better requirement validation, and increased research lead time for actionable studies.
- Reduced digital customer complaints by 73% YoY (01/2021 to 01/2022) and improved J.D. Power Banking Mobile App Satisfaction Study (Regional) ranking #8 to #2 over 2 years by creating and operationalizing a "UX Debt Process."
- Identified high-value/low-tech opportunities (e.g., Mobile Banking Product Shopping) that increased account opening and positioned Mobile Banking as a digital sales originator; success led to additional funding.
- Improved operational efficiency by creating internal documentation and scalable processes (third-party onboarding, tool access, credential provisioning, intern goal trackers, onboarding/offboarding checklists, QA device check-in/out).
- Implemented UX tool stack and vendor ecosystem (Figma, UserZoom, Dovetail, 11 Pulse, etc.) to broaden capabilities and scale value across CX, IT, and Marketing.
- Localized a global design system for U.S. products; established standards, best practices, and "definition of done" for component creation and updates in Figma.

Manager, Product Design
Chewy, Inc.
Sept 2019 – Jan 2020

- Architected the UX strategy for Account and Autoship experiences, forging strong cross-functional alignment with Product Management to drive KPIs and long-term product vision.
- Accelerated operational velocity and reduced workflow friction by standardizing and optimizing JIRA governance across the broader product design organization.
- Piloted emerging technology initiatives, leading the end-to-end research and technical development of an Amazon Alexa/Echo proof-of-concept.

- AVP, Senior User Experience Designer**
Citizens Financial Group, Inc.
Jan 2018 – Sept 2019

 - > • Orchestrated the end-to-end UX strategy for a comprehensive iOS and Android mobile banking re-platforming, driving cross-functional alignment and application-wide consistency across a multi-disciplinary team.
 - Fostered executive trust and stakeholder buy-in by leading cross-functional alignment workshops, translating complex business requirements and Voice of Customer (VOC) data into actionable, research-driven product roadmaps.
 - Accelerated development velocity and mitigated technical risk by partnering directly with UI engineering leadership to build React Native and native iOS prototypes, effectively bridging the gap between design vision and technical execution.
 - Championed digital inclusion and technical excellence by prioritizing accessibility standards and technical site performance action plans directly into Agile development backlogs.

- Senior User Experience Designer**
IntePros Consulting, Inc.
Contracted to Citizens Financial Group, Inc.
Aug 2017 – Jan 2018

 - > • Pioneered the in-house Digital Banking UX function, proving the ROI of internal design capabilities over external agencies and scaling the organization to 15+ distributed resources through strategic talent acquisition.
 - Secured vital internal funding and executive commitment by partnering closely with the VP of Innovation to visualize and present high-stakes strategic initiatives.
 - Reduced organizational design debt and accelerated speed-to-market by engineering an Interactive Digital Style Guide and championing the componentization of the legacy codebase.

- Senior UX/UI Designer**
Collabera
Contracted to UnitedHealth Group, Inc.
Nov 2016 – Aug 2017

 - > • Led UX strategy for complex enterprise health software platforms, acting as the critical nexus between Product Owners, Business Analysts, and Engineering to translate Voice of Customer (VOC) insights into scalable business requirements.
 - Reduced operational waste and elevated the developer experience by spearheading automation-first practices and test-driven development, supporting a strategic organizational shift away from rigid API architectures.
 - Drove enterprise-wide UI standardization and mitigated compliance risks by executing rigorous cross-application consistency audits and establishing strict adherence to internal style guides.
 - Validated workflow usability and mental models through moderated testing, rapidly integrating findings into high-fidelity, interactive prototypes (Angular 2, HTML/CSS/JS) to accelerate stakeholder sign-off.

- Consultant, UX Design & Front-End Dev**
NETE Solutions
Contracted to NIEHS
Apr 2015 – Oct 2016

 - > • Led project-level UX strategy and stakeholder alignment for a high-traffic government research digital portfolio serving 1M+ monthly users, translating complex usability issues into strategic product enhancements.
 - Championed operational excellence by architecting scalable front-end component systems and implementing automated visual regression testing, significantly reducing technical debt and production errors.
 - Accelerated cross-functional development velocity by establishing automated CI/CD-adjacent workflows and rigorous code quality governance.

- Information Technology Specialist**
Department of Defense
July 2012 – Mar 2015

 - > • Optimized enterprise information architecture and operational workflows for a 400+ user ecosystem, driving down IT support resolution times and costs through targeted automation.
 - Increased department efficiency by scripting auto-responders in SharePoint Designer (C#) for intranet trouble ticket system, reducing helpdesk response & resolution time and improving status communication.
 - Strengthened organizational security posture and infrastructure efficiency by auditing information assurance protocols, establishing access control governance, and delivering enterprise-wide compliance training.

CERTIFICATIONS

- > **Enterprise Design Thinking Practitioner**
2022, IBM
- UserZoom Core Certification**
2022, UserZoom
- Customer Experience Pro (CX-I)**
2019, Forrester
- Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO)**
2017, Scrum Alliance

EDUCATION

- > **United States Army Signal Center of Excellence**
2012-2013, 25B Military Occupational Specialty Qualified
Information Technology, Distinguished Honor Graduate
- Central Valley High School**
High School Diploma
General Education, with Honors