

Julia Swenson



I am a digital product design leader focused on the principles of simplicity, empathy, and inclusion. I build creative, diverse, engaged teams and have led strategic design for clients like Anheuser-Busch, Holiday Inn, and Edward Jones. My mission is to empower others to do the best design work of their careers and be happy while doing it.

Experience

Partner and VP, Design at WillowTree, Sept 2019 to present

- As the head of design for an office of 140+, I am responsible for driving culture, advocating for DE&I, and defining quality across a \$15m+ book of business
- A proven team leader with strength in recruiting and retaining talent, demonstrated by one of the highest rates of team satisfaction on internal surveys. Grew the Durham design group from 2 to 15 designers, with zero attrition in 2020
- Mentor and guide strategic design for Fortune 500 clients, balancing my ability to execute and coach depending on the project need, and collaborate closely with engineering and program management teams throughout a product lifecycle

Director of Product Design at WillowTree, Dec 2016 to Sept 2019

- Managed the product design group and design operations at WillowTree's second office in Durham, North Carolina through mentoring and design process definition
- Delivered complex design solutions and strategy for key accounts, using human centered design techniques and Design Sprints to bring our client's ideas from sketch to prototype quickly

Senior UX Designer at WillowTree, Apr 2016 to Dec 2016

- Led design, created design systems, and drove product roadmaps on large mobile products (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Wayne Fueling, Wyndham Hotels)
- Fostered design culture WillowTree's first satellite office by establishing design critiques and peer to peer mentoring

Designer at Atomic Object, Nov 2013 to Apr 2016

- Guided clients through a human centered design process from qualitative research to concept refinement
- Supported delivery teams through to launch of products for clients including Priority Health, American Bible Society, and Amway Corporation
- Established best practices and drove design quality for a team of 8 designers

UX Designer at Elevator Up, Feb 2012 to Nov 2013

- As the sole designer, I was responsible for the UX design, visual design, and production support for client and internal products
- Led branding and visual direction for internal branding and materials

Intern and Designer, Canright Communications, Aug 2010 to Feb 2012

- Designed brochures, websites, and logos for small businesses and entrepreneurs in the Chicago area

Intern, Toledo Museum of Art, Summer 2008

- Supported the head of design and museum curators by designing and executing signage for exhibits and summer programming

Education

Chicago Portfolio School, Design, 2011-2012

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Bachelor of Fine Art, 2006-2010

Academy of Art, Architecture and Design, Prague, 2009 Semester Abroad

Community

Design Leadership Forum Member, 2020 to Present

Founding Host, Creative Mornings Grand Rapids, 2014 to 2016

Director of Programming, AIGA West Michigan, 2013 to 2014



Specialties & Skills

Design Leadership

Workshop Facilitation

Inclusive Design

Design Ops

Creative Direction

Accessibility

Mentorship & Coaching

Concept Development

Visual Design

Human Centered Design

Product Management

User Experience Design

Ask Me About

“Up North”

I love, love, love to travel but at the end of the day my favorite place in the world is the Leelanau Peninsula. Lakes, rivers, sand dunes...come visit!

My Family

Resume’s are great, but I’m most proud of my family. I have two kids of my own, and as my dad is one of six, I have a ton of wonderful cousins.

My “Down” Time

When I’m not working or with my kiddos, I’m probably planning out my Peloton rides for the week or teaching myself interior design.