

# James Rutherford

## *Product Design Leader*

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### PROFILE

Product Design leader with 20+ years of UX practice and 15+ years building and scaling design organizations across enterprise software, SaaS platforms, workflow-intensive products, and customer-facing experiences. Experienced leading multidisciplinary teams through platform modernization, AI transformation, organizational scaling, and complex product strategy initiatives.

Known for translating ambiguous business opportunities into clear product vision, scalable operating models, and high-performing teams. Combines systems thinking, deep customer empathy, and hands-on product leadership to deliver measurable business outcomes while developing designers into strategic partners. Player-coach leader equally comfortable shaping strategy, facilitating executive alignment, conducting user research, prototyping product vision, and coaching teams through delivery.

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### DESIGN LEADERSHIP AREAS

- Product Design Leadership
- Team Building & Coaching
- Product Strategy & Vision
- Workflow & Systems Design
- Design Operations & Operating Models
- Cross-Functional Leadership
- AI-Assisted Product Development
- User Research & JTBD
- Platform Modernization
- Design Systems

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### SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

Built and scaled the Pushpay UX organization from a single contractor into a multidisciplinary team of seven designers and a researcher, establishing career frameworks, operating models, and design practices that continue to guide the organization.

Established the Product Trio operating model, a cross-functional Product, Engineering, and UX framework now supporting nine active modernization initiatives and creating stronger ownership, alignment, and delivery quality across teams.

Led UX strategy and delivery for the Staq Platform Modernization initiative, including creation of the prioritization framework, modernization delivery pipeline, and governance model used across approximately seventy-one ChMS pages.

Applied Outcome-Driven Agentic Design (ODAD) practices to reduce engineering preparation time for an AI-powered profile insights feature from an estimated four to six weeks to approximately one week through improved intent definition and implementation readiness.

Helped drive a major Groups initiative from an original engineering estimate of nine months to an actual delivery timeline of approximately three and a half months through improved alignment, workflow definition, and reduction of delivery ambiguity.

Led adoption of AI-assisted product development across Product and UX through Design Forge, enabling designers to create implementation-aware prototypes built from production-aligned Storybook components.

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Pushpay Holdings, Inc.

Colorado Springs, CO · 2021 to present

#### Senior UX Manager · 2023 to present

#### UX Lead · 2021 to 2023

Lead UX across Church Management, Data Insights, and Streaming products while managing a team of designers and driving organizational transformation through modernization, AI adoption, and new product operating models.

#### Leadership & Organization

Direct manager for up to eight product designers across multiple product areas.

Built the UX organization from a single contractor into a team of seven designers and a researcher.

Designed and launched the Product Trio operating model now supporting nine active cross-functional teams.

Integrated the acquired Resi design team into the larger UX organization with zero attrition.

Created career growth frameworks that enabled senior designers to develop leadership skills while establishing clear progression paths for emerging talent.

Maintained high engagement and retention during periods of organizational uncertainty and workforce reduction.

#### Strategy & Product Leadership

Lead UX strategy and delivery across the Staq Platform Modernization programme, coordinating work across multiple concurrent initiatives and product teams.

Designed the modernization process pipeline used across the programme, establishing a repeatable model spanning research, prototyping, validation, and delivery.

Created prioritization frameworks, decision governance systems, and cross-functional planning processes used by leadership to sequence modernization investments.

Designed and facilitated executive workshops, design sprints, and alignment sessions that shaped roadmap priorities and product direction.

Design representative on the Group Leadership Trio supporting five active product trios.

## Hands-On Product Design

Player-coach leader actively contributing through concept design, prototyping, usability testing, workflow design, and product strategy.

Built the vision prototype that secured modernization funding and evolved into a production initiative.

Initiated and led the click-study audit that became the primary prioritization framework across approximately seventy-one ChMS pages.

Ran multiple usability studies and customer research efforts, including two rounds of validation with eleven participants for Forms modernization.

Designed and implemented Jobs To Be Done, personas, and research frameworks that remain foundational to roadmap planning and design reviews.

## AI & Innovation

Leading AI adoption across Product and UX through workflow integration, prototyping, and product strategy.

Co-created and facilitated the INFLECT AI transformation programme, establishing frameworks still used by Product and UX teams today.

Leading onboarding and adoption of Outcome-Driven Agentic Design (ODAD) and AI-assisted development practices.

Built Design Forge workflows using Claude Code and Storybook components to create implementation-aware prototypes that engineering can extend rather than rebuild.

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## Cherwell Software / Ivanti

Colorado Springs, CO · 2014 to 2021

### Principal UX Designer

Helped transform the UX organization from a production-focused team into a research-driven strategic partner through process design, mentoring, hiring, and cross-functional influence.

Led UX for major enterprise platform redesigns including content management, theme builders, form builders, and service management workflows.

Facilitated stakeholder alignment, customer research, prototyping, and validation across multi-release strategic initiatives.

Mentored designers and advocated for UX among executive stakeholders and product leadership.

Speaker at Cherwell Global Conference 2018, presenting product strategy, UX process, and upcoming innovations to a global customer audience.

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## Western Union

Englewood, CO · 2013 to 2014

### Interaction Designer

Participated in global ethnographic research initiatives with IDEO to envision future omni-channel service experiences.

Redesigned fulfillment workflows, improving operational efficiency by 52%.

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## Aquinas and More

Colorado Springs, CO · 2003 to 2012

### Senior Operations Designer / General Manager

Led design, operations, e-commerce strategy, marketing, hiring, and process improvement for a growing online retail business.

Designed customer experiences and operational workflows spanning both digital and physical business operations.

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## EDUCATION

MFA, Web Design and New Media (*magna cum laude*), Academy of Art University

BA (*cum laude*), University of Dallas

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## TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES

Figma, FigJam, Dovetail, Mural, Storybook, Claude, Claude Code, ChatGPT, Cursor, Figma Make, HTML, CSS, JavaScript

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AWS AI Practitioner Learning Plan, 2025

UX Management: Strategy and Tactics, Interaction Design Foundation

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## SELECTED FRAMEWORKS & SPEAKING

Product Trio Operating Model

Outcome-Driven Agentic Design (ODAD) Adoption

Jobs To Be Done (700+ job database)

INFLECT AI Transformation Framework

Speaker, Cherwell Global Conference 2018

Regular Presenter, Pushpay Product Guild