

Derek Whitaker

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SUMMARY

UX Researcher and Designer with 5+ years leading product strategy & design for high-stakes organizations. Trained anthropologist (M.A.) who specializes in bringing structure to ambiguous problem spaces where user needs are unclear, stakeholders conflict, and the cost of getting it wrong is high. Drive discovery, interaction design, and usability testing from first interview through shipped product.

SKILLS

User Research

Usability Testing

Interaction Design

Wireframing & Prototyping

Workshop Facilitation

Journey Mapping

Information Architecture

Agile / Scrum

Product Discovery

Service Design

Tools: Figma, Miro, Jira, Confluence, GitHub, Dovetail, Claude, ChatGPT

Languages: English (native), French (fluent), Spanish (advanced)

EXPERIENCE

Throughline, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Dec 2020 — Present

● Principal UX Strategist

Jan 2025 — Present

- Led product discovery for a knowledge platform that unified siloed information across 30+ organizational units, running interview synthesis, opportunity solution tree creation, and solution ideation cycles.
- Established the knowledge platform's design library, defining shared components and patterns, and drove consistency across parallel workstreams from design through development handoff.
- Facilitated co-creation sessions and created a service blueprint which drove design for a naval aviation customer intake briefing tool, accelerating brief prep and letting more team members run intake interviews previously limited to a few experienced leads.
- Built a strategic framework for a naval tech and innovation department, co-leading executive prioritization across 1- and 3-year roadmaps and defining the business, UX, and delivery metrics that gave leadership portfolio-level visibility.

● Senior UX Strategist

Jan 2022 — Dec 2024

- Owned design and delivery of net-new features for a funding request platform, adding requirement generation, tracking, and prioritization workflows that extended the tool well beyond its original submission scope.
- Formalized a financial communication tool's design system, articulating design principles and language and standardizing the component library and interaction patterns with the design team.
- Designed a "War Room", an analog decision-making space for a Naval wartime readiness program, grounding it in ethnographic field observation of how leaders made decisions; senior leadership implemented 6 of its strategic recommendations across the enterprise.

● UX Researcher

Dec 2020 — Dec 2021

- Conducted foundational research across 14 federal agencies, producing 5 persona diagrams and customer journey maps which helped secure client's buy-in on design pivot from a submission to a coordination tool, and influenced the product's privacy and information sharing model.
- Translated user stories into consistent layouts and interaction patterns for a net-new product, progressing from low- to high-fidelity wireframes.
- Ran usability testing on a redesigned HR platform serving active-duty and reserve personnel, surfacing critical pain points that drove design improvements ahead of rollout.

Earlier roles (France): language instruction, lesson design, and administrative process improvement.

EDUCATION

M.A., Anthropology — Université de Toulouse

2018

B.A., Anthropology — University of Mary Washington

2013