

Aki Fukai

Principal Product Designer & Venture Builder

Available for 3-18 month
Engagements, Fractional or Full Time

Hamburg, Berlin, Zurich (hybrid)
EST to GST (remote)
Swiss Citizen

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Rapid Integration Toolkit

Design-to-Code Bridge: Figma (Variables & Tokens) · Component driven design · VS Code · Git workflows · Modern HTML/CSS · Meaningful CSS Transitions

Venture Collaboration: Notion · Miro/ FigmaJam · Slack · JIRA/Asana/Linear · Google Sheets

Methodology Expertise: Shape-Up · JTBD · Service Design · Lean UX · Hypothesis-driven validation

Workflow Effectiveness: Cross-functional alignment eliminating translation gaps · Regulatory constraint adaptation ·

Currently exploring AI-augmented UX and design tooling and workflows besides ChatGPT, Claude and GitHub Copilot: Figma Make, Relume, Claude Code in Figma DevMode MCP server, various LLM-powered website builders

Languages

German: Mother tongue
English: Full professional proficiency
French: Intermediate level (B1)
Japanese & Zulu: Beginner level

Education

HAW Hamburg, Department Design
Communication design (with an internship at Fork Unstable Media)

Venture & Scaleup Design Specialist

Principal Product Designer with 12+ years delivering scalable B2B SaaS in FinTech, HR Tech, UC/Collaboration, and Sustainability. Specialises in venture building, rapid validation, and turning complex regulations into user-centred products via collaborative, hypothesis-driven design.

Expertise: Venture leadership · Scalable design systems · Regulatory UX · MVP validation · Cross-functional alignment

Impact: Fast concept-to-market · Proven venture successes · Award-winning startup · Enterprise pilot success

Recent Engagements

Senior Principal Designer SDGventure · Impact-Focused Venture Building Collective | Ongoing
Design Director WHATEVER.WORKS (JobRad) · HR Tech / B2B SaaS Corporate Venture
Principal Product Designer PlasticPlan (Henkel) · AI-Powered B2B SaaS / Circular Economy
Co-Founder & Principal Designer Hello Meet · Scheduling SaaS Product / C2B / Social Network
Senior Product Designer enfore AG · ERP Systems / POS SaaS
Founding Interaction Designer collectAI (Otto Group) · FinTech / B2B2C Collections SaaS / ML
Lead Interaction Designer SBB Railway (IVEG) · Enterprise GIS / Infrastructure SaaS
Senior Interaction Designer frog for Siemens/Unify · Cloud-Based Enterprise Communications SaaS

Senior Principal Designer SDGventure

Impact-Focused Venture Building Collective
Jan 2022 – Present · Ongoing fractional · Remote

Strategic design leadership within Product-Design tandems and trios for corporate innovation projects. Operating as venture building expert within Germany's leading sustainable venture ecosystem, collaborating on multiple corporate ventures and spin-offs.

Reference: Patrick Koegel, Founder & CPO @ SDGventure

Principal Product Designer → Design Director whatever.works (JobRad)

HR Tech / B2B SaaS Corporate Venture
May 2023 – Jun 2024 · 14-month with SDGventure · Remote

Led hands-on product design in tandem with Interim CPO and Tech Lead for corporate-backed B2B SaaS venture from idea validation to minimum lovable product (MVP) launch. Designed UX architecture and design system enabling confirmed product-market fit.

Rapid MVP Development & Validation:

- **14-Week Sprint:** Corporate-backed venture from idea validation to MVP launch in 14 weeks
- **Product-Market Fit:** UX architecture and design system enabled scaling to 30+ B2B clients
- **Sales Pipeline:** Design quality contributed to 40+ high-potential leads pipeline

Rapid MVP Development & Validation:

- **Compliance Architecture:** Streamlined user flows for 150+ countries regulatory framework
- **Technical Integration:** Localisation (Lokalise), RBAC, SSO, account customisations, HRIS API inter.
- **Design System:** Scalable architecture enabling rapid feature development and client customisation
- **Team Building:** Hired, onboarded design talent within 1 week; mentored toward higher ownership

Stakeholder & Business Impact:

- **Alignment:** Engaged stakeholders across functions ensuring product and UX strategy buy-in
- **Award Recognition:** Contributed to "Best HR Startup 2023" award (8th HR Start-up Award)
- **Strategic Positioning:** Design excellence enabling transition from venture to standalone entity

Methodology Innovation: Modified Shape-Up framework for compliance-heavy regulatory constraints, enabling rapid iteration while meeting legal requirements.

Reference: Uwe Michaelis, Founder & Managing Director @ WHATEVER.WORKS

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Principal Product Designer **PlasticPlan (Henkel Venture)**

Sustainability B2B SaaS / AI-Powered Compliance / Circular Economy
Feb – Jul 2022 · 6-month engagement with SDGventure · Remote

AI-powered sustainability platform automating packaging data management and plastic tax compliance. Operated as Fractional Principal Designer in tandem with Interim CPO and Venture Lead, serving major enterprise clients in circular material use transformation.

Enterprise Impact & Validation:

- **Market Validation:** Secured LoI from Landbell, Bahlsten, and Melitta confirming market demand
- **Cost Efficiency:** UX design enabled up to 80% AI-driven reduction in plastic tax reporting costs
- **Data Scale:** 236M+ data points processed, 800K+ packaging comp., 160K+ products classified
- **Corporate Satisfaction:** High level of satisfaction regarding regulatory compliance

Technical Design Excellence:

- **Scalable Frontend:** Designed and shipped Tailwind-based frontend for multi-level data analysis
- **AI-UX Integration:** Turned AI data checks into actionable UI with low cognitive and interaction load
- **Contextual Design:** Role and operational context specific sorting and filtering mechanisms
- **Collaboration Systems:** Assignment logic for cross-team collaboration, preventing delayed reports
- **UX Coherence:** Delivered clear, consistent UX in German and English. Improved flows, microcopy, and interactions in close collaboration with Frontend Lead across agile sprints.

Strategic Business Contributions:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Drove technical-business alignment through Director-level alignment
- **Growth Foundation:** Extended stakeholder engagement laying groundwork for strategic expansion
- **Vision & Roadmap:** Defined MVP and long-term roadmap to position PlasticPlan for funding
- **Global Impact:** Addresses 40% of global packaging waste, enabling regulatory compliance

Environmental Context: Addressing critical sustainability challenge where plastic production GHG emissions projected to account for 15% of Paris Agreement allowed emissions by mid-century

Reference: Dr. Nora Mundschenk, Corporate Director Global Tax @ Henkel

Co-Founder & Principal Designer **Hello Meet – Group Scheduling**

Scheduling SaaS Product / C2B Innovation / Social Network
Jan 2018 – Mar 2024 · 6-year fractional engagement · Hybrid → Remote

Co-founded an uncompromisingly user-centric scheduling platform challenging traditional group scheduling models and ad-tech driven Social Networks. Led complete product design from early concepts and business model design through multiple product iterations.

Strategic Contributions:

- **Product Architecture:** JTBD-based UX strategy with hypothesis-driven validation cycles
- **Cross-Platform Systems:** Designed and maintained design systems across iOS, Android, Web
- **Product development:** Led end-to-end feature delivery using our assumption mapping method and drove continuous improvements through user-centred insights.
- **Innovation Model:** Pioneered C2B approach disrupting traditional enterprise scheduling workflows

Senior Product Designer **enfore AG**

ERP Systems / POS SaaS Platform
Jun 2018 – May 2020 · 24-month contract · Hybrid

UX leadership for retail and hospitality POS/ERP platform serving SME market. Delivered comprehensive modules including reservations, pick-up & delivery, online presence, business documents, a modular KPI dashboard and dashboard widgets.

Key Contributions:

- **Modular Design Systems:** Scaled architecture for complex multi-device workflows across multiple verticals (gastronomy, retail, beauty salons, services, e-commerce)
- **SME-Focused UX:** Simplified complex ERP processes for non-technical business users
- **UX Architecture:** Developed robust service blueprints to support fragmented, real-life user journeys with rapid context shifts and multi-role handovers.
- **Engineering Partnership:** Ensured design QA and performance optimisation throughout development cycles

Reference: Christophe Stoll, Head of Design @ Enfore via small is beautiful

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Founding Interaction Designer **collectAI (Liquid Labs, Otto Group)**

FinTech / B2B2C SaaS Collections

Feb 2016 – Feb 2018 · 24-month contract · Hamburg (on-site)

Led the UX and design as the founding Product Designer to create a customer centric collections platform. Designed scalable dunning and self-service payment flows for enterprise clients within regulated finance environment. Architected a B2B2B SaaS claim management platform, powered by smart ML driven claim resolution.

Specialised Contributions:

- **Traction:** Delivered product design that helped scale receivables management to €25M
- **White-Label Architecture:** Built modular UX systems supporting multiple client brands
- **Payment Journey Optimisation:** Self-service flows reducing customer service dependencies
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Design systems for claim management within strict financial regulations

Reference: Michael Backes, Co-Founder & CTO @ collectAI

Lead Interaction Designer **SBB Railway (IVEG)**

Enterprise GIS / Infrastructure SaaS

Nov 2015 – Sep 2016 · 11-month contract · Bern, Switzerland (on-site → hybrid)

Digitised vegetation risk assessment for Swiss railway infrastructure through GIS-enabled iPad/web application. Mapped complete field-to-office workflows for public sector efficiency and sustainability.

Technical Integration:

- **Service Design Workshops:** Complete workflow mapping from field assessment to procurement
- **Component Library:** UI systems aligned with SBB corporate identity across iOS and web
- **Stakeholder Complexity:** Public sector hierarchy alignment through iterative design workshops

Reference: Simon Haesler, Product Owner & GIS Specialist @ SBB CFF FFS

Senior Interaction Designer **frog for Siemens/Unify**

Enterprise Communications / Cloud-Based Team Collaboration SaaS

Sep 2013 – Jan 2014 · 5-month contract · Munich (on-site)

Designed the real-time collaboration experience design for “Project Ansible” (productised as Circuit) with frog Munich in close collaboration with the product leads and lead software architects from Unify. Seamless cross-platform consistency across mobile, web, and tablet for multi-modal enterprise communication requirements.

Reference: Justin Maguire III, Executive Creative Director @ frog Munich

Further Engagements

Principal Product Designer & UX Consultant (freelance, remote/hybrid)

Time Management B2B SaaS Rebranding & Relaunch · 2025 ongoing

Babymarkt UX Audit · 2022

Tagesspiegel Media Relaunch · 2022

Mercedes-Benz Design System Refactoring · 2022-2023

1komma5° Design System Consulting · 2024

SAP (Fiori) Design System & UX Consulting · 2015