Ryan Shafer

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UX & Product Design Leader who builds and scales teams that turn complexity into clarity to drive measurable impact. From global brands like MTV to high-growth startups, I've shaped 700M+ user experiences and partnered with executives to embed design as a strategic capability.

Skills & Expertise

Leadership & Strategy: Design Leadership · UX Strategy · Cross-Functional Alignment · DesignOps · Talent Development · Executive Partnership

Design Expertise: Human-Centered Design · Information Architecture · Design Systems (Creation & Governance) · Accessibility (WCAG) · UX Research (Qual & Quant) · Hypothesis-Driven Design

Technical Fluency: Figma · Prototyping · HTML / CSS / JS, Tailwind · Git · AI-Enhanced Workflows · Agile Delivery

Work History

Oct 2022–Apr 2025 (Remote)

Head of User Experience Design (UX Lead) — Oritain

Began as a UX consultant and transitioned into a full-time leadership role defining Oritain's UX vision and building the foundation for its in-house design team and practice.

- **Experience Transformation:** Cut test-result turnaround from days to seconds and automated insight delivery by designing new workflows—reducing costly manual processes for both clients and internal teams.

- **Client & Revenue Impact:** Helped secure one of Oritain's largest clients by designing a strategic workflow that accelerated adoption and unlocked new account value.

- **AI Readiness:** Positioned the platform to deliver actionable insights without exposing sensitive data by designing a scalable UX framework for AI-powered (RAG) systems that balanced usability and security.

- **Design System Creation:** Improved efficiency, consistency, and client experience by unifying the product and marketing experiences under a common design language.

- **Team Growth:** Ensured sustainable scale and reduced risk in hiring by developing a multi-stage UX hiring roadmap, linking headcount growth to operational milestones.

Jan 2019 — Oct 2022 (Remote)

Consulting & Strategic Advising — Self-Employed

Focused on selective freelance projects, including early UX consulting for Oritain—which evolved into a full-time UX leadership role.

Jun 2017–Jan 2019 (Remote)

Head of User Experience Design (UX Lead) — Showmax

Hired as Showmax's first internal UX leader, building the in-house design function and strategy to transform the B2C platform into a data-informed capability across Web, TV, and Mobile.

- **Conversion Growth:** 3× homepage-to-signup conversion (~2.5% → ~9%) by diagnosing and resolving critical funnel bottlenecks.

- **Platform & Speed:** Improved team alignment, accelerated delivery, and ensured consistency by establishing a shared design language and cross-platform design system (Web, TV, Mobile).

- **Design Practice Formation:** Built Showmax's first in-house UX team, shifting the company from agency dependency to an evidence-based design practice.

- **Talent Development:** Mentored and elevated emerging designers, one of whom became Showmax's subsequent Lead UX, sustaining the discipline after my departure.

Apr 2015 — Jun 2017 (Italy)

Independent Work & Relocation — Self-Employed

Focused on family relocation to Europe while maintaining light freelance activity and speaking at a Copenhagen UX event on design culture and innovation.

Oct 2011–Apr 2015 (New York City, NY, USA)

Vice President of User Experience Design — Viacom Music Group

Founded and led MTV's first UX team (15+ designers) for Viacom's $1B+ Music Group, defining strategy across web, mobile, and TV for 700M+ users.

- **Audience Growth:** +565% mobile visits and 3× engagement by modernizing MTV's fragmented legacy platforms into a unified, user-centered, mobile-first experience.

- **Strategic Investment:** Secured multimillion-dollar investment by co-presenting to Viacom's COO, elevating design as a strategic driver of digital transformation.

- **Industry Innovation:** Pioneered one of the first responsive, ad-supported media experiences, recognized with a Webby Award and adopted as a new Viacom standard.

- **Organization Scale:** Created MTV's first UX organization—building sustainable design systems, processes, and governance to deliver impactful experiences across brands.

Winter 2004–Oct 2011 (New York City, NY, USA)

UX/UI Designer→Senior→Lead→Director — Viacom Music Group

Progressed from hands-on UI designer to design lead, establishing the cultural and operational foundation for Viacom's future UX organization.

Education

BFA, Film/Animation/Video — 2000 — Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Providence, RI