

Benjamin Mikiten *(MIK-ih-tin | he/him)*

Senior Front-End Developer

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Overview

I'm a senior front-end developer looking to join a cross-functional team where I can build tools that make people's lives easier. My design background helps me excel where UX designers and developers are a tight-knit team and prototyping, exploration, and creative problem-solving are important parts of the process. I care deeply about facilitating great experiences on the web that everyone can use. I'm looking to work on bigger, more complex React-based codebases and build my back-end experience.

Education

BFA in Communication Design, Texas State University (2013)

I attended Texas State University from 2009 - 2013 and graduated Summa Cum Laude. I took classes in the Honors College and focused on web design and development.

- Background in UI/UX design gives me an insight into working with design teams and an instinct for good UX practices
- Focused on Interactive Design courses, graduated with a portfolio of UI/UX design work and websites
- Courses and self-taught in web development, computer science, constantly learning more

Experience

Senior Front-End Developer, McGarrah Jessee (8 years)

McGarrah Jessee is a mid-sized full-service ad agency in Austin, Texas, known for its work with Shiner Beers, Frost Bank, YETI Coolers, Costa Sunglasses, and Whataburger. In 2017 it won AdAge's "Small Agency of the Year". In my time there I was one half of a development team that built and maintained every digital project that entered the building. At the end of 2020, I was part of a layoff that included the entire digital department.

- Lead front-end engineering decisions to optimize projects for performance, stability, and maintainability
- Pursued uncompromising attention to detail, dedication to delivering the absolute best product to clients
- Learned new technologies and tools as needed to fit client goals and stay current
- Collaborated with back-end developers, UI/UX designers
- Worked directly with client teams coordinating and managing team goals
- Brought designers' comps and wireframes to pixel-perfect reality while championing a11y and UX best practices
- Scoped and quoted projects to meet deadlines, budgets, and requirements
- Communicated technical considerations and goals to team members and clients
- Maintained documentation, style guides, and design systems for long-term projects.
- Mentored interns, and shared experiences and knowledge with colleagues

Projects

- **Opt For Optimism, Frost Bank** -- A campaign hub website I developed and maintained for three years, built with Gatsby, React, and animations with React Spring. Oversaw and directed a major refactor that brought the entire

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codebase onto a design system that included migrating all components to be functional components using hooks and modular SCSS. In 2020, I added a blog connected to Contentful as a headless CMS. The entire site was statically-generated to optimize for search engine indexability.

- **MCJ.co**, *McGarrah Jessee* -- In 2020, I built the front end for McGarrah Jessee's new website. I brought the designer's ambitious high-fidelity motion comps into pixel-perfect reality using Styled Components, zustand, Framer Motion, and React while maintaining an experience accessible for all users. This project was backed by a custom CMS that allowed us to create modular project pages where users could mix-and-match carousels, video players, and masonry image galleries among others. Behind the scenes, a fully-custom tracking framework reported user interactions through animations that google tag manager struggled to keep up with.
- **Frost Loft**, *Frost Bank* -- In 2019, I worked with a small cross-functional team to create a museum experience for Frost Bank's new HQ tower. This included several digital touch-screen experiences across displays of different pixel densities all of which needed to adhere to ADA requirements for visitors with hearing loss or who ride wheelchairs. The museum also included a two-axis check-signing robot connected to a tablet that users could enter their name into and have the robot sign their name on a replica 1860s check in the bank's founder's handwriting.

Skills

I have a broad skillset focused on Front-End Development. However, my time as part of a flexible and adaptive two-man development team that handled everything our clients needed gave me full-stack experience and understanding. I succeed in cross-functional teams where I get to collaborate with UI/UX designers.

Front-End Development

- React, Gatsby, Next.js
- Styled Components, Modular SCSS
- Redux, zustand
- TS, JS, HTML & CSS/SCSS
- Framer Motion, React Spring, GSAP
- Design system development
- Consuming RESTful APIs
- Accessibility
- Sketch, Figma, Adobe CC
- Version control (git, git-flow, GitHub)
- Agile processes
- Analytics integration
- SEO concerns

Back-End Development / DevOps

- Node, Express, MongoDB
- RESTful API design
- Rails, Postgres
- NGINX, Apache
- Docker
- AWS, Netlify

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Strengths

Collaboration and Communication

My greatest skill as a developer is my ability to communicate and explain technical ideas. My favorite part of my job at MCJ was collaborating with the UX/UI team. Without fail, we delivered the best solutions when they came out of a conversation across disciplines. Similarly, I was frequently tapped to meet with clients to explain and pitch technical concepts as needed.

Attention to Detail

Coming up in a culture of pursuit of perfection at MCJ gave me the patience and drive to commit to never cutting corners, tweaking and polishing my websites to match comps, and ratting out every dark corner of an experience that doesn't work or feel right. In my last months at MCJ, we rebuilt the company website, passing an ambitiously interactive and broad design system under that microscope.

Organization, Maintainability, and Accessibility

I built and maintained Frost Bank's *Opt For Optimism* campaign hub website solo for three years, taking the lead in organizing and architecting our design system into clean and reusable components. I used this project to show our team the importance of design system thinking and helped transition the UX/UI designers to use this approach across all our client projects. I also used this project to champion the importance of accessibility, reinforcing that we disable a user if we make an experience they cannot use. With the practices we built on this project, accessibility was are the forefront of our concerns for all future projects.

Technical Know-How and Adaptability

As a developer at an ad agency, our technical decisions were often made for us by our clients' requirements. Whether that meant quickly coming up to speed on a new technology or devising clever ways around a roadblock, I learned to RTFM and think obliquely around issues and focus on *how* to make something work, rather than why it *wouldn't* work.

Throughout my time at MCJ, I also regularly functioned as a technology consultant in house, helping to bring the technical side of creatives' visions into focus. To that end, I built a number of interactive digital museum exhibits for Frost Bank's HQ, including a 2-axis check-signing robot, helping to spec and troubleshoot displays, speakers, and of course the AxiDraw robot.

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Personal

I live in San Marcos, Texas with my wife Lauren and three cats (Lady, Sandwich, and Also). We're active in our small college town community and keep several large gardens where we grow our own veggies.

I am a voraciously curious hobbyist, notorious with my friends and family for picking up a new hobby every month or so and taking a deep-dive into the subject before moving on to a new interest. Those that I've stuck with the longest include building, programming, designing, and collecting mechanical keyboards, BBQing, amateur meteorology, linguistics and etymology, Dungeons and Dragons, and most importantly music: I play seven different instruments and participate in several local bands. My latest focuses have been jazz piano and building Gundam models.