

# Brendan T. Norris

Design Engineer

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## Summary

Design Engineer operating at the intersection of product, design, and engineering. I lead 0-to-1 initiatives from strategic framing through hands-on execution—validating early-stage bets, building scalable systems, and shipping production code. My work spans from roadmap strategy to implementation details, always with a focus on momentum and measurable impact.

## Experience

### Backbone

2021 - 2024

#### Lead Design Engineer, Labs

2024

- Reported directly to the CEO to lead Backbone Labs, an R&D function operating at the edge of product, design, and engineering.
- Built 5+ UXR prototypes that validated product concepts, then shipped 3 as production features across iOS and Android.
- Solved complex integration challenges for the emulator feature, architecting the technical solution while addressing strategic product positioning and user experience design.
- Hand-built most of the app flavor shipped to China, navigating technical constraints, localization requirements, and market-specific feature adaptations.
- Partnered with the Director of Product to shape roadmap priorities while maintaining deep involvement in implementation and technical decisions.
- Built 3 Figma plugins and workflow automation tools that reduced design-to-dev handoff time by 80%.

#### Senior Design Engineer, Labs

2023 - 2024

- Founded and led Backbone Labs, personally building the team's first prototypes and establishing development workflows for rapid validation.
- Shipped 5 major features from concept to production, writing code across frontend, backend, and tooling systems.
- Transformed internal workflows by building custom automation tools and UX improvements that increased shipping confidence across product teams.

#### Senior Frontend Engineer, Web

2021 - 2023

- Architected and built Backbone's global ecommerce platform using Next.js and headless Shopify, personally writing the core systems that scaled from startup to worldwide brand.
- Built dynamic game discovery and SEO systems generating hundreds of optimized pages, increasing organic traffic by 30% and conversion by 20%.
- Developed and shipped intelligent cart systems with localization support, handling complex state management and payment flows for international users.

### American Express

2020 - 2021

#### Senior Software Engineer

2020 - 2021

- Built TimeMachine, a bi-directional system enabling incremental React adoption with 99.9% uptime across millions of customer sessions.
- Expanded Amex's customer support platform by launching a new travel vertical, unlocking a specialized agent network of 300+ agents.
- Created modernization patterns for legacy Angular applications to support hybrid delivery models and continuous feature development.

## Earlier Experience

- **Product Designer** at Sobol (2019-2020)
- **Frontend Engineer** at Hownd (2018-2019)
- **UI/UX Designer** at Yandy (2017-2018)
- **Freelance Designer & Developer** at Independent (2015-2017)

## Current Projects

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- **rune.design** - Visual development environment for systems-level product thinking, built by and for design technologists.
- **indiefindr.gg** - Indie game discovery platform focused on nuanced tagging, personalization, and community-driven curation.
- **thinkhuman.co** - Independent design/dev studio for rapid validation and idea-stage product development.

## Skills & Expertise

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- **Design Engineering:** Rapid Prototyping, Systems Thinking, Figma Plugins, Design Systems
- **Product & Strategy:** Product Definition, Cross-functional Leadership, Roadmapping, Validation
- **Development:** React, TypeScript, Next.js, Node.js, Figma Plugin API, Shopify Storefront API