

Mike Thomas, Product & Brand Designer



*Hands-on design
leadership* for start-
ups and growing orgs.

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Hello, I'm Mike, a full-spectrum design lead with over 14 years of experience working in product, brand and innovation contexts across a range of industries, from logistics and education, to consumer finance and energy.

I can offer the right organisation a purpose-driven, outcome-aligned blend of both IC and leadership experience at all levels, with a strong breadth of design craft nous, and a deeply collaborative approach to supporting the progress of colleagues while developing an energised and thriving team culture.

I very firmly believe that good design is a non-hierarchical, multi-disciplinary team sport, and successful teams win by raising each other up.

In this deck, you will find:

- Details on the skill set I can bring to your organisation;
- A brief overview of my recent career impact;
- Some sample design activities I've lead in a specific project;
- A bit more detail about me as person, and what I'm looking for in my next role.

Any questions, please let me know.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike".

Design is a human-centric, outcome-aligned team sport. Good design happens when good designers apply their practice with *honesty, empathy* and *flexibility*.

Great design happens when teams raise each other up.



I break down my IC skills in to eight core areas of practice...

Research

User research, both qual and quant, desk research and generating meaningful insights through analysis.

Information architecture

Structuring content, developing taxonomies, crafting navigation and formulating other activities that make information accessible, usable and understandable.

Interaction design

The structural design of a software interface, supporting a user's flow through a system and ability to successfully interact.

Visual design

Color, composition, typography, visual hierarchy and brand expression that present the product or service in way that not only is clear and approachable, but appropriately exhibits personality.

(In no particular order)



...all of which can be utilised in tandem on any given project.

Writing

Clear written communication that guides users through an experience. The right words are a fundamental part of any end user experience.

Service design

High-altitude understanding of all parts that go into delivering a service, co-ordinated to support user journeys.

Prototyping

Quickly simulating proposed designs in order to better judge their user experience.

Front-end

Strong understanding of the raw materials of modern web applications, underlying technologies and the ability to contribute where needed (HTML, CSS, JS, Vue).



(Also in no particular order)

Additionally, I'm actively building credibility across five key leadership attributes.

Communication

Effectively articulating ideas, strategies, and feedback, fostering clear and open dialogue within the team and with stakeholders.

Building trust

Cultivating a culture of reliability, inclusivity and integrity, empowering the teams to take measured risks and collaborate confidently.

Visioning

Guiding the team towards crafting a compelling and coherent vision that aligns with business goals and inspires innovative design solutions.

Mentoring and coaching

Providing personalised guidance and support, nurturing team members' professional growth and enhancing their design capabilities.

Decision making

Guiding the team towards crafting a compelling and coherent vision that aligns with business goals and inspires innovative design solutions.

Most recently, I've been designing at *Piclo*, an EnTech startup on a mission to decarbonise the world's electricity grids.

I joined Piclo as a **Product Designer**, when the business was less than 15 people, and contributed in both an IC and management capacity, including implementing a baseline design culture and helping to grow the function from 2 to 7, around 9% of the total headcount.

In 2022 I was **promoted to Lead Designer**, with a remit including the 0-1 development of new product lines, as well as leading the team's efforts to grow and formalise our fledgling design system, 'Spark', and setting the team on the path to achieving and maintaining AA accessibility standards.



February 2020
Joined as a **Product Designer**

Early 2022
Promoted to **Lead Designer**

June 2024
Departed after opting for voluntary redundancy.

Happy to talk openly about this.

While at Piclo, I was fortunate to have had an impact in many areas.

£13m

Lead design activities for the creation of two 0-1 B2B SaaS products from early research through to first launch, one of which is now host to eight figures of value.

AA WCAG 2.1

Established working practices and set the baseline for achieving AA accessibility across design and engineering disciplines.

+5

Helped grow the design team from 2 to 7, including ensuring the hiring process aligned with company values.

→ **UX**

Helped coach and transition an early-career designer from Visual Design towards their first dedicated UX role.

Established a foundational design system including UI library, and ran a company-wide naming contest to productise our output.

Introduced regular design team ceremonies, quarterly reviews, and other habits to help the team share knowledge and seek support.

Helped to standardise product thinking across the business by introducing a consistent method of framing our work.

Re-designed and built the marketing site at [Piclo.energy](#), including establishing content management practices and training the team.

Co-engineered novel UI solutions, based on internal stakeholder interviews, to enable product teams to do more.

As mentioned, I worked on the creation of two new B2B SaaS offerings. One of which we called *Piclo Exchange*.

This project involved working across industry to solve for a notable gap in secondary trading within UK energy markets.

I teamed up with Piclo's innovation manager and senior software engineers to research, vision and develop a working prototype aimed at finding **product-market-fit** and demonstrating the first green shoots of **commercial viability**.

It was a bumpy road, we almost got it right, *and then the world changed*, rendering our new prototype moot.



To provide a bit of (optional) *background*...

Electricity grids have to constantly adapt to the ebb and flow of supply and demand. The ability of a grid to do this is known as 'energy flexibility'.

In the UK, ESO (colloquially referred to as National Grid) is responsible for moving electricity around nationally, as well as monitoring supply and demand in real-time. Regionally, the UK is further divided up into 7 networks that are managed independently by different companies.

These 7 organisations, along with ESO (and overseen by Ofgem) regularly need to procure services from various providers of energy, such as EV battery operators, gas power plants, and the like, in order to meet the ongoing needs of the grid. The type of service required can vary significantly, and so these organisations design markets and supporting processes to procure specific services depending on locational, technical, economic and cyclical needs. Or: what, where, when and 'how much'?

From the energy provider perspective, winning contracts to provide service can be highly lucrative, fuelling growth. Engaging in these markets therefore typically becomes a key pillar of their business strategies.

However... with 8 grid operator organisations initialising multiple energy markets across different time cycles, **it very quickly became difficult for energy providers to stay on top of all of the different processes**, platforms and interoperability rules, with some markets requiring deep levels of expertise to see successful outcomes (winning a contract, delivering some MW, and getting paid).

Piclo is on a mission to solve this problem at the macro level across the whole market life cycle, however at the time our ambition was intentionally focussed on a few specific areas where we felt we could have more immediate and strategic impact.

...which brings us to the *problem(s)*

Typically, agreements to provide service in to a particular energy market are agreed formally like any other business transaction, in the form of a contract.

Sometimes, energy providers cannot fulfil a contract. Perhaps due to an unforeseen technical fault, or perhaps market conditions have changed rendering the contract commercially unviable.

Sometimes, the contracts may stipulate severe financial penalties for failing to provide service as agreed, and so in the event of being unable to provide service, these organisations try to offload these contracts to other organisations to mitigate against potential losses. Pretty standard stuff.

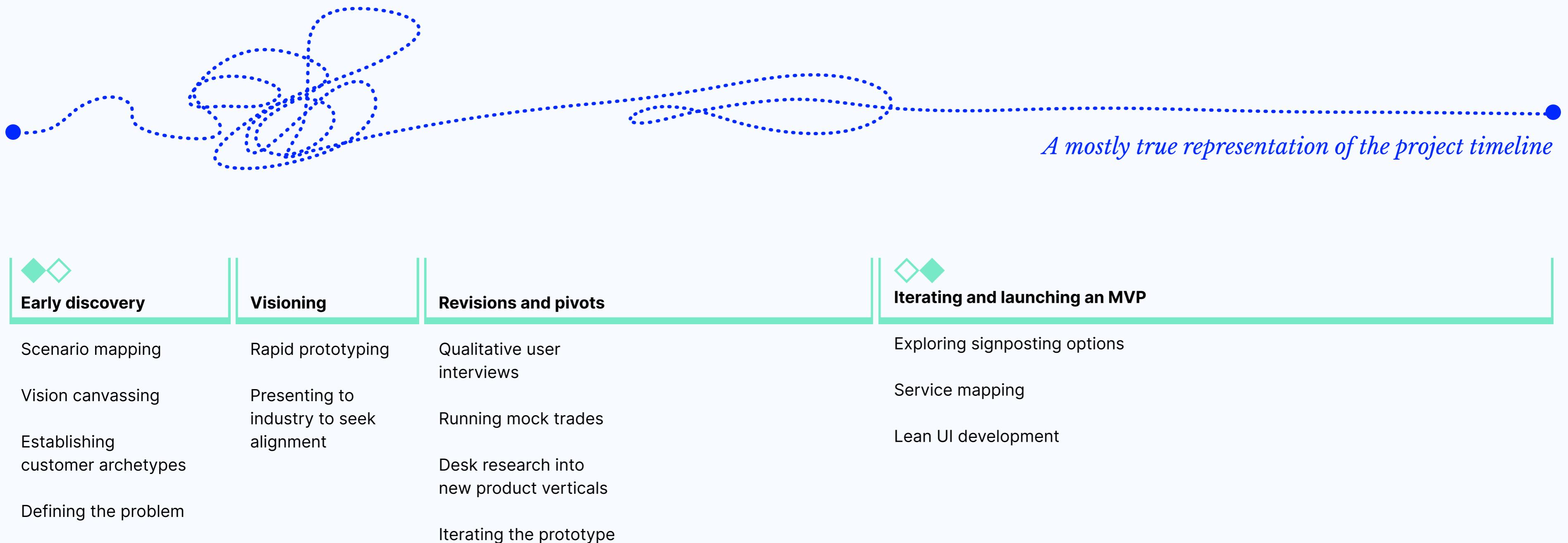
However—and this the notable gap mentioned earlier—while most energy market operators provide facilities to transfer a contract, they were not providing any form of facility to promote the **visibility** and **pricing** of these contracts.

This made it very **time consuming** and **challenging** for organisations to offload or source these contracts, **increasing risk** for all parties and creating a visibility black hole for the whole industry.

It's in this area we felt like we could have the biggest impact.

(We estimated that, *in just one market alone, up to £50m worth of contract transfers were occurring annually, with zero visibility, and with lots of friction*)

This project proved to be complex, and the following represents just a *small snapshot* of some of the design activities involved....

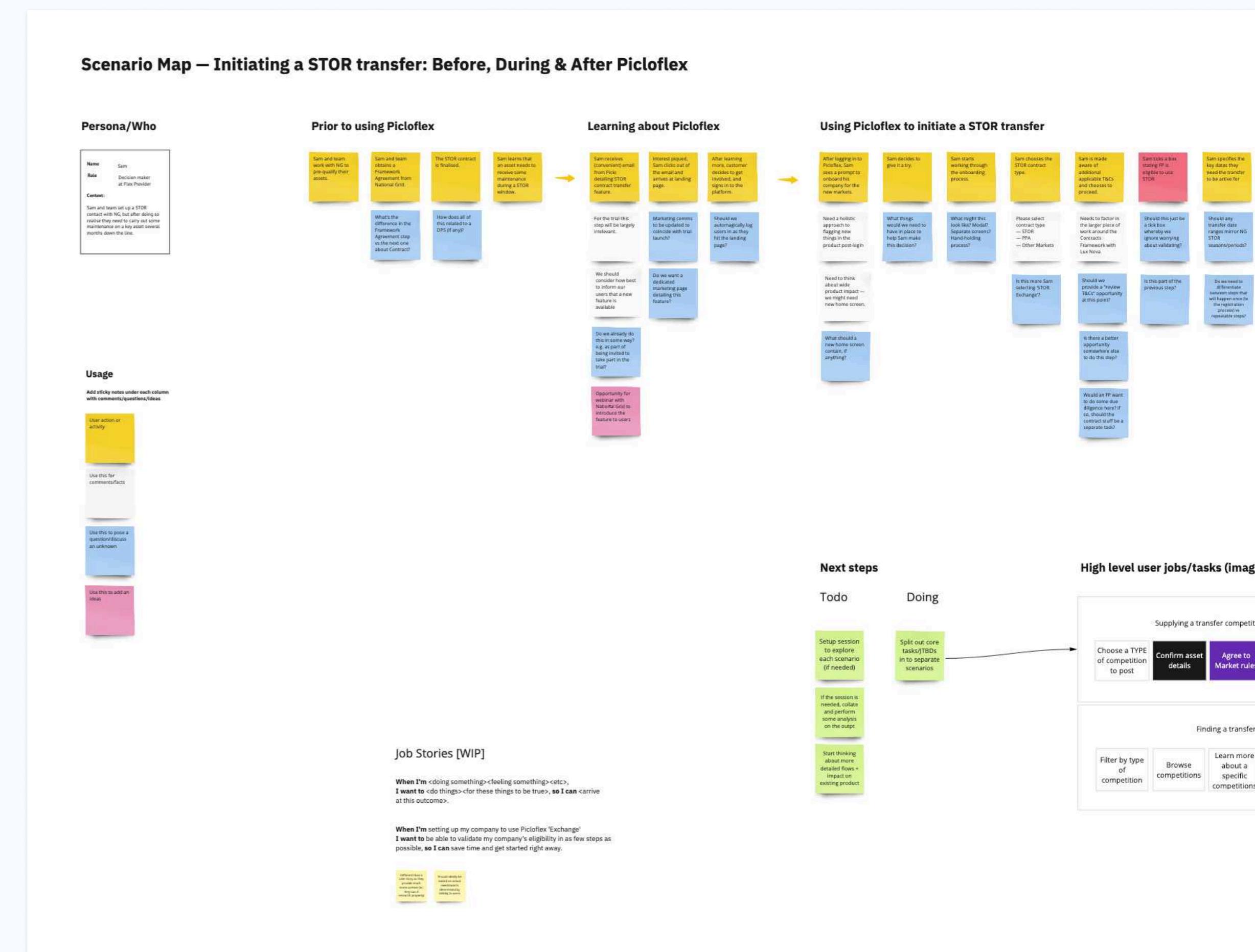


For example...

Early in the project I lead the team through some speculative *scenario mapping*.

Why?

- To align the team around a common overview of one potential customer journey.
 - To surface useful knowledge the team already had and identify gaps.
 - Honestly? Mostly because it just felt like a useful method to get things moving.



At the same time...

In parallel, I started developing *interactive prototypes* in Figma, leveraging the UI and patterns established in our flagship product.

Why? We wanted to imagine a future version of the product, which we could use in a *storytelling* context when talking to industry partners, and as a means to start *gathering feedback* from potential customers.

The diagram illustrates the development of a trading platform prototype. It features three Figma screens:

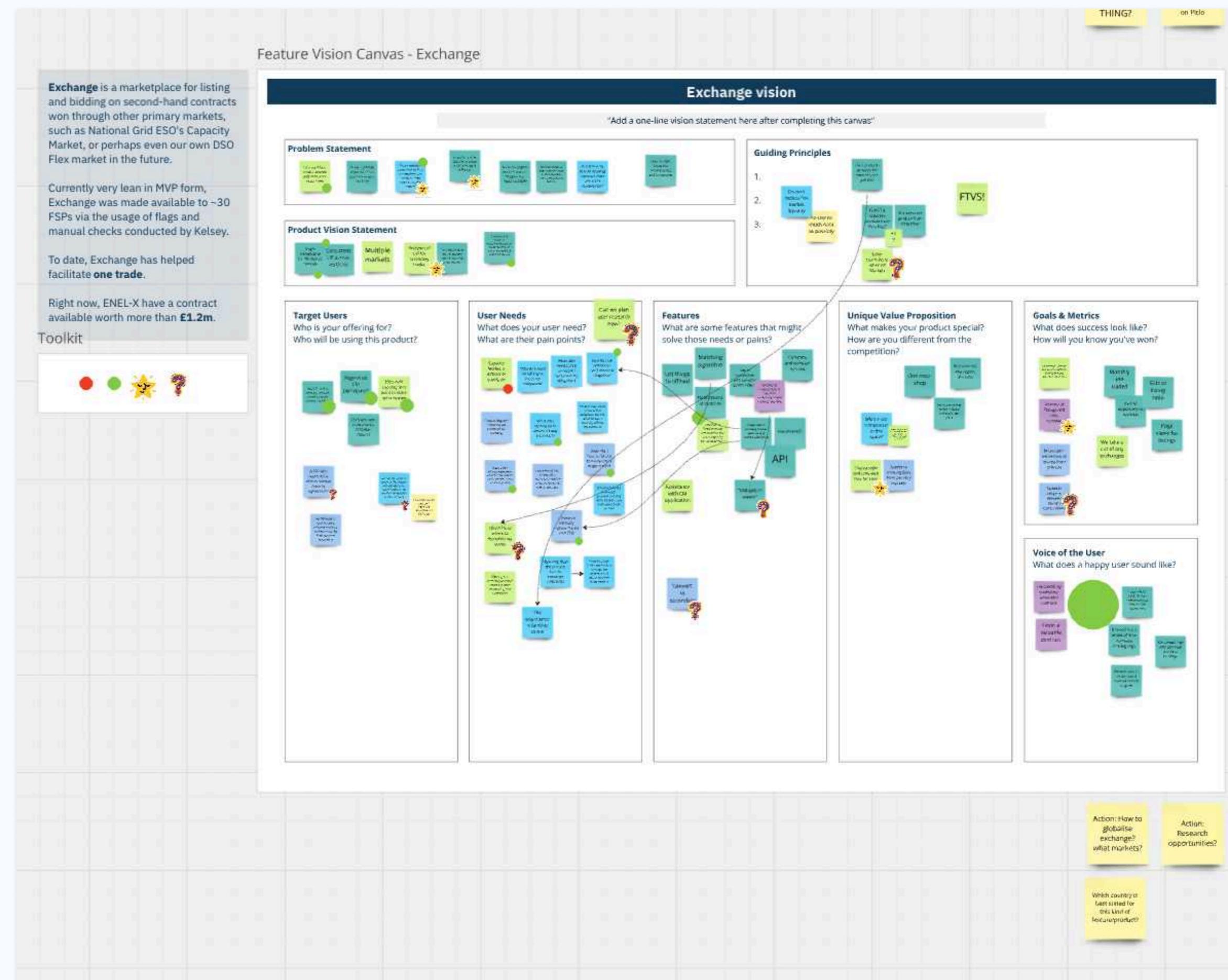
- Left Screen (Secondary Trading — CM Agreements Prototype V2.1):** Shows a flowchart of user interactions between Transferor (GreenPower) and Transferee (BLUEGEN). The Transferor's actions include "1. Listing an agreement", "3. Viewing received bids...", "4. ...and making a counter-bid", and "6a. "Signing-off" on the transfer". The Transferee's actions include "2. Browsing agreements and submitting an initial bid" and "5. Accepting a received counter-bid".
- Central Screen (Exchange):** Displays a list of 8 Capacity Market Agreements. Each listing includes details like CMU, Trade Capacity (MW), Type, Delivery year, Trade Period, CP (£/kW/Year), Guide Price (£/kW/Year), Listing Value, and Actions (Manage listing, Bid as is, Custom bid).
- Right Screen (Exchange):** Provides a detailed view of a specific listing for GreenPower (GP10). It shows the listing value of £69,255.00, a table of bids requiring action (with two entries for 21.01.21), a table of bids pending negotiation (with one entry for 24th Jan), and a section for rejected/historic bids. The right screen also includes sections for Stats, Agreement data, Auction identifiers, Obligation, Pre-qualification status, and Applicant data.

Later on...

As the project developed, and we began moving out of the messier early phase, I ran the team through a *vision canvas* exercise.

Why?

- Align around a more structured and communicable view about what we were building, why, and where we thought we were headed.
- Helped to start identifying potential chunks of work we could later sequence and build in to our roadmap.
- Helped the team start making consistent decision and build momentum.
- Helped to identify assumptions that need validating.



Eventually...

After several rounds of feedback gathered via qualitative user interviews, we began distilling our prototypes down in to something *lean and shippable quickly*.

Why?

- We'd built enough confidence in our product conceptually and we wanted to validate product-market-fit.
- Market deadlines and liquidity concerns made our window of opportunity small.
- We'd built relationships with orgs that were excited to use the product and they had contracts ready to go.



The project wasn't without its *missteps* and *challenges*. but ultimately we *cracked it*.

We got there eventually...

Wrong vertical

Early on we focused on what we thought was the right market vertical and, as we dug deeper, we realised there were too many technical barriers to facilitating successful trades, so we changed tack to focus on a different market.

This one was on us.

In response, we also devised a better framework to help us assess which verticals made sense for us and which didn't.

Macro-economics (the world changed)

Russia invaded Ukraine, sending energy prices soaring, which had the impact of locking down a lot of spare capacity in UK energy, meaning liquidity fell to near-zero.

We had to pause the project until things settled, which was around 6 months.

There was nothing we could do about this other than wait.



James Johnston • 1st
CEO and Co-founder
1w

£13m of GB Capacity Market contracts listed on Piclo right now! Don't miss out!



Piclo are industry experts in Capacity Market secondary trading

We've facilitated multiple successful trades through our online marketplace.

Current live opportunities:

10 listings for delivery year 2024/25

370MW total capacity

£13 million total contract value

T-1 and T-4 contracts

Watch our very own Ben Hall break down everything you need to know and answer questions like:

💡 Why would a company want to secondary trade?

💬 What to consider when secondary trading?

👤 How do you find a party to secondary trade with?

If you have any questions about Capacity Market secondary trading, or are keen to get involved, reach out to our dedicated team at exchange@piclo.energy

We look forward to helping you find your next trade!

#CapacityMarket #SecondaryTrading

But this really only scratches the surface,
and I'd happily walk you through the work in
more detail, alongside any the following work
streams*.

1. **From zero to one** in the UK energy sector... almost... twice;
2. **Design system** foundations;
3. Creating a **UI library from scratch** with Figma and Storybook;
4. Hitting **AA accessibility** standards;
5. Company **website redesign**;
6. Using OOUX and prototyping early to get **robust feedback**;
7. Baselining design culture to **improve maturity**;
8. **Helping designers grow** with a career progression framework.

*I reserve the right to add more or make this a better list of projects.

Lastly...

My education

MSc Digital Art & Technology
i-DAT, Plymouth
2008

BA (Hons) Graphic Design
Arts University College
Bournemouth
2005

Current inputs

Reading
The Artist's Way
Range

Listening to
Decoder
UX Podcast

Playing
Lies of P (PS5)

Watching
Severance

Running in
Brooks Adrenaline GTS 23

What I'm looking for in my next role

Purpose-first

I'm looking to work for an organisation that is purpose-centric, where the mission is part of the origin story, and not added in later.

Flexible, trusting working schedule

I value being able to pick and choose when and where I work (within reasonable boundaries and aligned to team needs) and I'd like to avoid being tied to an office with high mandatory attendance requirements.

Hybrid IC/management role

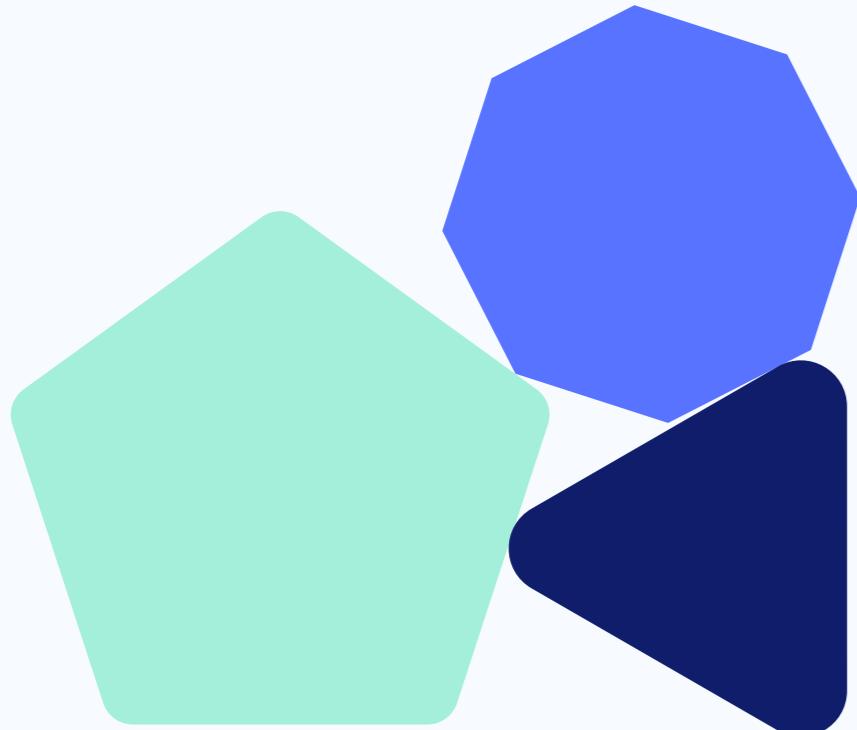
I'm looking to continue developing my skills in both an IC and design leadership context, however I am increasingly becoming more interested in higher-level strategy and mentoring others, so any role I take on must allow room for this kind of development.



London Marathon 2023. I didn't win....but *I did finish* 🏃.

Thanks for reading (or skimming). If you have any questions, let me know.

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*Let's make the world
better, together.*