mary schafrath

User Research & Design Program Director

Objective

Operations Strategist with 8+ years of experience driving operational efficiency, building scalable systems, and leading UX and design initiatives within Software Design for IBM. Passionate about empowering leadership with data-driven insights, streamlining user-centered product delivery, and defining cohesive UX strategies that enhance customer experiences and align with business goals. Eager to drive innovation and operational excellence in commercial technologies through collaboration and strategic implementation.

Contact

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Experience

UX Research Operations Manager 07.2024 – 12.2025
IBM, Security Software Research, NYC

- **User Research Feedback Program Development and Scale**
  Built and managed a custom CRM to centralize outreach, scheduling, and session tracking for 12 UX Researchers, across 5 product pillars and the global Sales team.

- Designed and automated scalable workflows that enabled seamless collaboration between UX, Product, and Sales, supported by a core team of 4 researchers dedicated to program growth.

- Expanded the Guardium research panel from 40 to 120 clients and business partners, establishing a sustainable framework for continuous client engagement and feedback.

- Enabled 60+ user research sessions in 6 months, driving actionable insights and achieving $150K in cost savings by replacing third-party research tools with a zero-party feedback program.

UX Design Operations Manager 10.2021 – 07.2024
IBM, Security Software Design, NYC

- **Streamlined Onboarding and Skills Development**
  Designed onboarding workflows and training guides for 100+ design practitioners, reducing ramp-up time by 20% and improving team readiness and productivity.

- **Fostered Innovation and Growth**
  Managed 6 UX designers, enabling career growth through skill development programs and fostering collaboration with engineering, product, and brand design teams to deliver high-impact solutions for key business challenges.

UX Design Lead 09.2019 – 10.2021
IBM, Watson Digital Marketing, NYC

- **AI Ethics Homepage Launch and Content Strategy**
  Launched IBM's AI ethics homepage, aligning research and marketing teams to consolidate internal content and drive user engagement to IBM as a thought leader in ethical AI.

- **Global Diversity Initiative Leadership**
  Orchestrated the Women Leaders of AI campaign, engaging 200+ participants, increasing global event attendance by 25%, and elevating IBM's brand as a leader in diversity initiatives.

Co-Founder and Creative Director 02.2017 – 09.2019
Distilled Studio, NYC

- **Client-Centric Collaboration and Creative Direction**
  Directed creative strategies and led visual asset production for 5+ clients, crafting social campaigns that increased engagement by 20% and enhancing e-commerce visibility, while managing client relationships and project timelines.

Skills & Expertise

- **Tools & Platforms:** Airtable, Salesforce, GitHub, Adobe Suite, Microsoft tools, Figma

- **Leadership & Strategy:** UX research operations, design systems, stakeholder engagement, customer journey mapping

- **Core Skills:** Data analysis, metrics-driven evaluation, problem-solving, critical thinking

Education

- **Digital Marketing and UX Design**
  General Assembly, New York City

- **Web Development Certification**
  New York University, Continuing Education

- **BFA, Advertising & Graphic Design**
  Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, Ohio