

Phoebe Espiritu

Portfolio

simplifierlab.com

25x52.com

Product Design, Centaur Labs

Remote — Jun 2022 – May 2023

I joined as the first designer at an early-stage AI/ML medical data annotation startup looking to find product-market fit for an internal admin tool they'd built.

- Introduced continuous discovery and rigorous evaluative and generative research methods. Initiated and facilitated hard conversations with product leadership to challenge priorities and define strategic focus.
- Introduced a component-driven, token-based design system to incrementally transform the B2B tool into consumer-grade application.

VP of Service Excellence, Skylight

Remote — Jan 2020 – Feb 2021

Shortly after being hired as a Product Designer, I was promoted to the VP role at Skylight, a 40-person civic-tech consultancy. Also simultaneously served as acting VP of the Human Services business unit.

- Assumed responsibility for Design Ops. Defined the product development process and set standards for product quality. I also refreshed the brand identity and defined the identity guidelines to ensure cohesive messaging.
- Worked across the organization to develop a foundation for coaching, mentorship, and professional development. Defined career levels and created a communication structure for feedback and professional growth.
- I stepped in as an IC as needed to fill in gaps within PM, Design, and researcher roles on projects with the CDC, Air Force, and other.

Product Designer, GitHub

Remote — Sep 2018 – Jan 2020

I served as a design lead and UX researcher on high-priority “tiger teams”

- I worked with the data science team on a number of data-driven growth experiments to improve new user activation and increase paid conversions. I led a design experiment that resulted in an 8% increase in the number of organizations choosing a paid plan over free.
- Discovered onboarding problems with GitHub Classroom through self-initiated research. By redesigning the IA, we delivered time-to-value improvements in four weeks in December — just in time for the beginning of the school year.

Innovation Specialist, 18F

Remote — Oct 2015 – Apr 2018

I served a 2-year term at 18F, a federal agency that partners with US government agencies to modernize and improve public services through technology and user-centered methods.

- As 18F's engagement lead for USCIS, I led a small but mighty design team that shipped digital transformation for citizenship and immigration services.
- Product and Design Lead on the discovery research and relaunch of NSF Seed Fund (formerly known as NSF SBIR).
- Service Designer/Design Lead on cloud.gov, a secure and compliant cloud service platform-as-a-service (PaaS) for government teams.

Product Design Consultant, self-employed — Jun 2004 – Oct 2015

Jun 2004 – Oct 2015

I worked with founders and stakeholders to identify and validate product opportunities. I helped and coached early-stage teams with customer validation, finding product-market fit, building zero-to-one products.

- I worked closely with PMs and engineers as a trio to identify opportunities, decide priorities, and agree on execution. I provide UX/UI deliverables such as wireframes, mockups, clickable prototypes and HTML/CSS markup
- Led and facilitated design sprints and various design and research methods such as contextual inquiry interviews, usability testing, journey mapping, service blueprinting, and data analysis to uncover customer insights.

Adjunct Professor, Parsons | The New School

New York, NY — Jan 2012 – Dec 2013

Taught Entrepreneurship — a product design course — at Parsons' Design + Technology MFA program. Rewrote an outdated syllabus to make it relevant for New York City's flourishing startup environment. The syllabus included business model design, customer development, and product management. Brought in guest lecturers including David Karp, founder of Tumblr, Naveen Selvadurai, co-founder of Foursquare, Phin Barnes, Partner at First Round Capital, Charles Adler, co-Founder of Kickstarter

Hackstar (Managing Designer-in-Residence), Techstars

New York, NY — Jan 2011 – Mar 2014

Provided hands-on product and design support as an embedded IC to dozens of early-stage startups that were admitted into the 12-week accelerator. Recruited 5-8 developers and designers per program — despite having no marketing budget to work with, a mere 4-week timeframe to complete recruitments, and a below-market stipend to offer to candidates.

Design Lead, Shapeways

New York, NY — Jan 2012 – Dec 2013

Split responsibilities across Product (data analysis, generative research), UX/UI (usability, mockups, HTML, CSS) and Marketing (landing pages, print, and other offline collateral). Identified an opportunity to take advantage of Black Friday and led an aggressive product launch that resulted in an unprecedented volume of orders. Discovered marketplace anomalies by analyzing logs and subsequently recommended shifting the brand and product to focus more on creators and makers in order to simplify the product offering and improve user experience.

Creative Director, Paltalk

New York, NY — Jan 2006 – Dec 2008

Paltalk is a videochat application with over 100 million users. Inherited an underperforming 3-person group and turned it into a motivated, technically-competent design team. Introduced user-centered design research to help shift from stakeholder-driven product decisions. Led the product redesign of the core software that resulted in improved usability and increased user engagement. Worked closely with Product, Marketing, and Engineering to make product improvements — using heatmaps, multivariate testing, and analytics to help inform product decisions.

Instructor, NOVA Community College

Alexandria, Northern Virginia — Jan 1999 – Dec 2000

Taught a continuing education course on interaction design in the evenings.

Design Director, AOL

Dulles, VA — Jan 1997 – Sep 2001

I've been designing for the web since the early dial-up days where we had defined how we use the web.

- I oversaw and contributed to AOL's design systems (back when they were known as pattern libraries and brand/design guidelines). I was also responsible for managing the expanding portfolio of products that have expanded through growth and acquisitions (i.e., Netscape, CompuServe).
- Promoted from senior designer to art director after 3 months, then promoted to Design Director after 8 months. Led an award-winning design team while also serving as the design lead for AOL Small Business, Educational, Transactional, and e-Commerce business units.
- Appointed to serve as a senior ambassador, part of an executive team to help with three post-acquisition initiatives: facilitate integration of product across AOL, Time-Warner, and Netscape's product design groups; draft cross-brand standards and evangelize best practices; promote harmony across different design cultures

Education

M.P.S., NYU/Tisch Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP)

Coursework included Physical Computing, Computational Media, Dynamic Web Development, Game Design, Design & Redesign. GPA: 4.0

B.A. Liberal Arts, SUNY at Stony Brook

Academic emphasis in Biology, Linguistics, and Art History. Studied under the Scholar Incentives Program, an accelerated learning track. Clara Abbott Scholarship recipient for academic achievement.

Related Activities

25×52

A personal initiative to launch 25 projects in 52 weeks. Projects vary in size and scope but generally have educational value and serve to be useful to others. A few noteworthy projects include:

- Project Moccasin: An opportunity to spend a day with a design or product mentor to see what it's like to be in their shoes. I founded and produced this mentorship event as a way to offer access to some valuable mentors as the mentees get an insider view of their mentor's role in context. The pilot program ran in the Fall 2014 in New York. A second event ran in the Spring of 2015 in New York, NY and Austin, TX.
- Google Fonts Typography Project: A collaborative typographic project to provide inspiration for combining typefaces using the Google Fonts catalog. The project has garnered attention from Khoi Vinh, Product Hunt, Hacker News, How Design.

Design Trust

Assembled an elite group of product designers from New York's startups to participate in TechCrunch's Disrupt Hackathon NY (2011-2013). My goal was two-fold: (1) Provide the hacker teams with access to designers and incorporate design thinking from the outset rather than applying design cosmetically; (2) Get more designers involved in developer-heavy hackathons to spur more innovative thinking

Awards and Distinctions

Named among "25 Women Driving NY's Tech Scene," NY Observer, 2011

Winner, Gold Award for Teen Online category awarded by Society of Publication Designers, 2000

Select Talks and Lectures

GitHub for Designers, workshop at Orbital, New York, NY, 2015

Lean Launchpad at NYU ITP, guest leacturer on Accelerators and Early-Stage Startups, New York, NY 2014

"Conducting Product Research," lecture at NYU ITP, New York, NY 2014

The ARK Challenge, mentor Q&A, Fayetteville, AR 2012 - 2014

"Designing for the Brain," visiting lecturer at Cooper Union, New York, NY 2012

"Does Your Blog Have a Business?" SXSW panelist, Austin, TX 2005

Publications/Press

What Matters Now, contributing author

Work featured in the 35th Publication Design Annual by the Society of Publication Designers

Technical Skills

Proficient in Figma, Adobe Creative Suite, HTML and CSS, Git/GitHub. Also experienced in InVision, Sketch. Have worked with Jekyll, Python, React, Swift.