

Brendan Langen

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» Profile

Product leader, conceptual designer, and researcher with 10+ years experience creating UX design and research processes from scratch. I have built teams from the ground up at work and in my own time. The design and development teams I lead are inquisitive and principled, which has created **award-winning tools**. Above all, I pride myself on doing the work to have valid insights. I love designing a conversation.

» Work Experience

Research Assistant, Decentralized Knowledge Synthesis (Web3) • July 2021 - Present

I work with Rob Haisfield and Joel Chan to uncover principles for decentralized knowledge synthesis in *tools for thought*, funded by The Graph. **I lead interviews** with academic researchers, software builders, and well-known authors, and write about how they do their work. Research published March 2022.

Capsim Management Simulations • Chicago, IL • June 2011 – June 2021

Director, Product Design & Development building games and creator tools for a \$10m EdTech firm

For the last decade, **I designed game experiences for students and authoring tools for SMEs**. Shortly after I was hired, the founder handpicked me as his apprentice. I learned how to understand people, design games, validate opportunities, and build our first product team. A foundation in solving tricky problems.

We doubled in size during this time, and I have been at the center of all things product – personally creating our first Design Playbook, Research Ops, and testing framework. This helped us identify the expert-creator gap in business, from which **we built the intuitive day-in-the-life simulation platform, CapsimInbox**, winner of *EdTech's 2020 Trendsetter Award*, beating out IBM Watson and Salesforce.

Beyond product duties, I spent the final year co-leading **strategy and market development**. Many conversations, webinars, and essays jump-started a nascent business unit. A good start for a great tool.

Manager / Director, Product Design & Development • Feb 2017 – June 2021

- Managed suite of 25 products and **grew team to 10** while instilling performance and learning culture
- Launched Capsim Marketplace, built bank of business authors + experts to author 20+ sims
- Facilitated learning programs and **researched user experience in Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia**.

Associate Product Manager / Product Manager / Senior Product Manager • Nov 2012 – Feb 2017

- Created **Design Playbook**, established product KPIs and embedded **Research Ops** across company
- Built pipeline of user feedback through focus groups, ethnographic interviews, and surveys
- **Transitioned company into agile** software development, reducing product release cycle from 18 months to 6 months, and going from 1 release per year in 2013 to 220 in 2020

Internet Marketing Associate / Apprentice / Associate Marketing Manager • June 2011 – Nov 2012

- **Led research on EdTech industry**, internal operations, and new product opportunities
- Built and managed team of student interns after identifying gap in support operations

Spect • Gainesville, FL • October 2018 – June 2019

Head of Product at an EdTech startup connecting underrepresented students to scholarships and jobs

A short stint helping a startup launch and generate revenue. I was Head of Product for a team of 11 – establishing design principles, leading UX research, **building a product team**, managing tech resources, pitching investors, **securing seed funding**, and all the gritty work to go from concept to paying customers.

Eventually, I stepped away from this as a second role after securing our first deals with a local university and high school district. The iPhone and Android apps we built **connected kids from underrepresented communities with scholarship and career opportunities**. An immensely fun and lesson-laden time.

» Education

University of Florida, *Warrington School of Business* • MBA • 2016 • 3.9 GPA

Indiana University, *Kelley School of Business* • BS, Marketing • 2009 • 3.5 GPA

» Life

Selected Public Projects

Author – Thinking with Paper, *The Future of Text Vol. II* (2021) – an essay on analog thought as a basis for creative work in a compilation, next to luminaries like Alan Kay, Barbara Tversky, and Vint Cerf.

Creator – Inbox: Product Management (2020) – a day-in-the-life game as a Product Manager, with a focus on training how to prioritize. I used this to mentor dozens of PMs and as an assessment tool for hiring.

Founder – career.mode (2018-2020) – Before the pandemic, I spent much of my spare time creating an app to prepare recent college grads with their future. In my case, I didn't know what to do when I graduated, and I wish I had this. I have since paused to focus on community and city design projects.

Founder/Writer/Editor-in-Chief – JVBackups (2008-2013) – In college, I launched a sports & pop culture blog that made me a light living. Near the end, I averaged 1800 readers per month. Included interviews and features with collegiate and professional athletes, Gatorade, and ESPN.

Interests & Inspiration

Writing, Interviewing People, Sketching, Cities, Mentoring, Soccer, Design Fiction, Tools for Thought

Impactful Reading – *Thinking, Fast & Slow* (Kahneman), *A Timeless Way of Building* (Alexander), *Shaping Things* (Sterling), *Thinking in Systems* (Meadows), *Understanding Context* (Hinton), *Meditations* (Marcus Aurelius), *New Media Reader* (MIT Press), *The Beginning of Infinity* (Deutsch), *Hackers & Painters* (Graham), *Three-Body Trilogy* (Liu), *The Overstory* (Powers), *The Making of Prince of Persia* (Mechner)

Communities I like – Future of Text, Ink & Switch, Near Future Lab, Mixed Methods, Serious Games

Skills & Certifications

JS, Python, HTML/CSS, GraphQL, Figma, Adobe XD, Excel, Roam, Certified Scrum Product Owner