

Mariesa Lenz

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Experience Summary

Founder-minded operator and product strategist with nearly 15 years at the intersection of design, engineering, and business strategy. I help early-stage companies validate new products, align cross-functional teams, and design the internal systems that scale big bets into repeatable outcomes. Highlights include scaling Aurora Solar's design function to generate \$4.4M ARR and 203% YoY growth, leading R&D and AI product experiments as Chief of Staff at Hamlet, and coaching teams at Mailchimp and Pivotal Labs through market-defining transitions.

Professional Experience

Chief of Staff

Hamlet / myhamlet.com

Oakland, CA (Remote)

June '25 - Present

- Serve as the CEO's strategic partner and force multiplier, prioritizing initiatives across product, partnerships, and fundraising.
- Co-lead early product and AI experiments with Engineering and Product leaders, designing validation sprints (prototypes, MVPs, client pilots) that feed into roadmap decisions.
- Build and evolve company operations: OKRs, decision-making frameworks, onboarding, and internal communication systems that increase velocity and alignment.
- Act as connective tissue across the organization, ensuring strategic clarity and shared context at every level.
- Shape high-touch client pilots and external partnerships, turning early learnings into actionable insights that strengthen product-market fit.

IMPACT: Helped architect the company from the inside, driving execution of high-priority R&D bets while embedding scalable systems and culture to support growth.

Senior Design Manager

Aurora Solar / aurorasolar.com

San Francisco, CA (Remote)

Aug '22 - June '25

- Directed and scaled high-performing design teams by directly advising 8 designers and influencing up to 20 additional design team members. Average tenure of direct reports at Aurora is 26 months.
- Ensured strategic alignment across the core business 3D CAD product, internationalization, and new solar investment opportunities totaling 45 million dollars in annual revenue. Balanced innovation, operational excellence, and speed to maximize impact.
- Led generative research, usability testing, and customer interviews to inform customer-focused design decisions.
- Conducted due diligence for a \$2 million acquisition target, Lyra, identifying risks and integration challenges to guide strategic planning.

- Achieved annual cost savings of \$150,072 by aligning product direction and business strategy through collaboration with Engineering and Product Directors, while enhancing the end-to-end customer experience by addressing key challenges and building trust with executives and external stakeholders.
- Spearheaded initiatives that generated \$4.4M in annual recurring revenue and achieved 203% year-over-year growth, positioning Install-ready and Solar Instant Plan Set scaling as the fourth company priority.
- Developed a comprehensive brand narrative that increased customer engagement by 40%, effectively communicating the brand's mission and values through compelling storytelling techniques.

Senior Design Manager & Principal Product Designer

Truss / truss.works

San Francisco, CA (Remote)

Aug '19 - Sept '22

- Led a UX team of five designers and content strategists, fostering their professional development and enhancing overall design capabilities across the organization.
- Implemented hiring process improvements and developed growth leveling frameworks and self-assessment systems, resulting in enhanced team clarity and a reduction of over \$6 million in annual productivity losses.
- Led user research initiatives, including ethnographic studies and usability testing, to inform product design decisions.
- Implemented testing schedules that integrated continuous user feedback, resulting in a 300% revenue increase year-over-year.
- Led five cross-functional teams of 6-10 members each to streamline product delivery, resulting in a 50% increase in deployment frequency and a 35% reduction in production issues over two years.
- Led a cross-functional team in a design thinking workshop that fostered collaboration and curiosity, resulting in a 30% increase in innovative product features based on user feedback.

Product Design Manager

Mailchimp / mailchimp.com

Atlanta, GA

June '18 - June '19

- Oversaw and mentored a high-impact product design team, fostering a collaborative, high-trust culture that saw a 33% increase in team satisfaction scores. Set clear expectations and guided designers towards personal and professional growth goals, causing a 26% improvement in project delivery timelines and a 80% increase in overall design output.
- Shepherded the design team through a complex business model transition, and validated net-new solutions that improved user satisfaction scores by 45% and reduced customer churn by 25% within the first year of implementation.
- Implemented a user-centered design framework that resulted in a 23% improvement in usability scores on customer feedback surveys, contributing to a 46% increase in customer retention rates over a 12-month period.
- Challenged cross-functional teams to develop and launch 13 new features, resulting in a 62% growth in customer satisfaction scores and increasing Mailchimp's TAM in the small-business CRM space.

- Orchestrated a focus on user centric design practices by mentoring and supporting up to eight designers, product managers, and engineers in the Washington, DC office, driving consistency in user research, analysis, and design system approaches.
- Drove research-informed product decisions by conducting ethnographic research and usability testing, which led to a 110% increase in user satisfaction scores of government services and a 67% reduction in support tickets over six months.
- Collaborated with engineers, PMs, and designers to deliver 5 products within almost 36 months, achieving a 5 million dollar increase in Pivotal's 2016 annual revenue.
- Facilitated Lean Agile workshops that empowered product managers to prioritize features effectively, leading to a 54% improvement in project delivery efficiency and a 70% boost in overall product adoption within six months.

Educational Background

Cornish College of the Arts

Bachelor of Fine Arts | Design & Visual Communications, May '05

University of Oxford

Certificate of course completion | Executive Leadership Programme, Feb '24

Proficiencies

Specialties: Chief of Staff operations & cross-functional alignment, Early-stage product validation & R&D leadership, Systems design: OKRs, decision-making frameworks, onboarding, team operations, Product strategy & roadmap facilitation, Design engineering & prototyping for proof-of-concept, Agentic coding & automation (AI-assisted development, rapid iteration workflows), Human-Centered Design (HCD) & Lean UX experimentation, User research & metric-driven product insights, SaaS growth strategy & B2B product development, Organizational change management & culture building, Balanced team leadership & executive coaching.

Technical: Front-end: HTML5 · CSS/Sass/SCSS · JavaScript · React JS, AI/agentic coding tools: GitHub Copilot · OpenAI API · LangChain prototyping, Backend & integration: PHP · XML · REST APIs, Systems & tooling: Jira · Git/GitHub · Confluence · Figma, CMS & deployment: WordPress · Drupal · basic CI/CD workflows

Languages: English (Native) · French (B2) · Spanish (B1)