



Henning Witzel-Açıkgöz

Director of Design · Product Strategy and UX Leadership

Design leader who still ships. I build design organisations, and I build products end to end.

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SUMMARY

Nineteen years building products, the teams that make them and the systems that keep both moving. I started in software development, which is why design, product and engineering are one conversation for me rather than three.

I build design organisations and the design operating system that keeps them running: hiring and levelling, research that reaches the product, and a way of working that holds up when I am not in the room. At NewStore that took the design function from one discipline to four: product design, research, content and communication design.

Since 2025 I have also been designing, building and shipping products end to end. A director who still ships is a director who can tell when an estimate is wrong.

What I am looking for now: leading design or product as VP or Head of, or co-founding something early.

CORE EXPERTISE

Leadership and strategy. Design leadership, hiring and team scaling. Product strategy and vision. Levelling, goal setting and performance frameworks.

Craft and systems. UX and research. Design systems and operations. Interface and interaction design, down to the motion.

Cross functional. Product, engineering and marketing. Omnichannel commerce platforms. Shipping production code.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Co-invented and patented mobile point of sale between two phones: US 11,379,813 B2, filed January 2018, four years before Apple shipped Tap to Pay on iPhone.
- Rebuilt and grew the design organisation to fourteen across product design, research, content and communication design, hiring and developing the team as it went.
- Designed the omnichannel features behind \$10B+ GMV and a 15% revenue uplift for retailers, now used by 50,000 associates at 90+ companies in 40+ countries.

EXPERIENCE

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Founder and Product Builder

2025 to present, alongside · Berlin

HWA Design

 - Three products, designed, built and shipped end to end: WhatWeCook, meal planning for households on iOS and the web; ShareMyPage, a multi-tenant SaaS live since August 2026, where the isolation model is the architecture rather than a feature; and Intura, a reflection journal for people who lead, with a server that keeps nothing.
 - Working with founders and early teams to sharpen product vision, map the journey and raise the quality of the interface.
 - A personal design lab: staying hands on with emerging tools, so the leadership judgement stays attached to how the work is actually made.
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Director of Design

Apr 2024 to present · Berlin

NewStore

 - Report to the Chief Operating Officer and sit in the extended executive leadership team that sets company priorities. Own the design function, its budget and tooling, the platform documentation and newstore.com.
 - Scaled the design organisation to fourteen across product design, research, content and communication design, and made design a strategic partner to product and engineering rather than a service to them.
 - Led design across the flagship products: the Associate App, Omnichannel Manager, the platform documentation and newstore.com, together serving 60,000+ people at work every day at brands including Meta, Clarks, Fossil and Reebok.
 - Contributed to \$10B+ GMV by designing the omnichannel features that let retailers capture 15% more revenue: endless aisle, ship from store, mobile checkout.
 - Cut design to engineering handoff friction by 30% and raised CSAT from 36 to 62 through better specs, onboarding and shared systems.
 - Built repeatable hiring loops and a design system, and set the documentation strategy the company now writes through.

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Head of Product Design

Apr 2018 to Mar 2024 · Berlin

NewStore

 - Took over a design function with no designers left in it, and hired four product designers and a researcher before continuing to grow it.
 - Introduced the foundational processes, the design rituals and the first components of the design system.
 - Mentored senior individual contributors and introduced levelling, goal setting and performance frameworks.
 - Set the standard by building the first one rather than describing it: I designed the first version of the Associate App, then handed each area to a designer I had hired.
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Senior Product Designer

Apr 2017 to Mar 2018 · Berlin

NewStore

 - Led UX for mobile point of sale in its early growth phase, shipping the workflows now used by top global retailers.
 - Introduced usability testing and design validation, moving the team from assumption-driven design to insight-led delivery.
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Product Designer

Apr 2015 to Mar 2017 · Berlin

GoodsCloud, acquired by NewStore

 - Led product design for the back office of an omnichannel order management platform serving European retailers.
 - Turned complex inventory, order and fulfilment workflows into interfaces retail operations could actually run, and cut onboarding time for a new retail client by about 40%.
 - Played a key part in the UX alignment leading up to the acquisition by NewStore and the move onto one unified retail platform.
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Product Designer

Apr 2014 to Mar 2015 · Erfurt

Pepperbill

 - Designed the back office for a mobile iOS point of sale running in 500+ restaurants, bars and clubs, and cut the setup time for a new venue by about 30%.
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Founder and Design Lead

Apr 2011 to Mar 2014 · Erfurt

Zebresel

 - Founded a studio and led its design: 50+ clients across e-commerce and SaaS in three years, then pivoted from client work to products of our own.
 - Launched two. Signum+, a digital signage system that came straight out of my master's thesis, the first time I turned my own research into something people paid for. And Beamerlasershow, an iOS app for the event industry.

EDUCATION

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MSc Computer Science, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt. 2011 to 2014

BSc Computer Science, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt. 2008 to 2011

WHAT COLLEAGUES SAY

He isn't a typical design or UX lead. He can comfortably think like a product person, and is really on the cutting edge of generative AI and codegen, as his team all are too. He runs rings around some of the engineers in NewStore.

Benjamin Hoskins, Chief Technology Officer, NewStore

I learned so much from his empathetic and transparent leadership style. He created a space where feedback and ideas were valued, and that made a big difference for the team's growth.

Sarah den Boer, Product Designer, reported to Henning

He has a rare ability to zoom into the smallest design details while simultaneously steering bold, strategic bets. A real superstar player-coach.

Mitun Pandey, Director of Product Operations

He builds design culture, influences how teams think, and helps shape the way we work. He is a builder, a mentor, and someone who always shows up with a strong sense of purpose.

Phil Granof, Chief Marketing Officer