Information Architecture
Artificial Intelligence
User Experience
User Research
Front End
Product

Daniel Castellanos

Portfolio of work 2024

Design

Daniel Castellanos

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Foreword

Throughout my career, I've embraced a rigorous design process that aligns with my scientific approach to problem-solving. I firmly believe that successful Human-Computer Interaction hinges on **data-backed visual solutions**. Subjectivity has no place in this equation; instead, we rely on objective metrics to evaluate design success.

Design thinking lies at the core of my approach. This mindset fostering creativity, empathy, and collaboration can be applied to any challenge; be it sales, product development, or growing tomatoes.

In this portfolio, you'll find evidence of my commitment to excellence—where data meets design, and where thoughtful questions lead to breakthroughs.

Thank you,

User Research

Vision Alignment

In the dynamic landscape of digital transformation, successful project kickoffs demand more than just technical expertise; they require a shared vision.

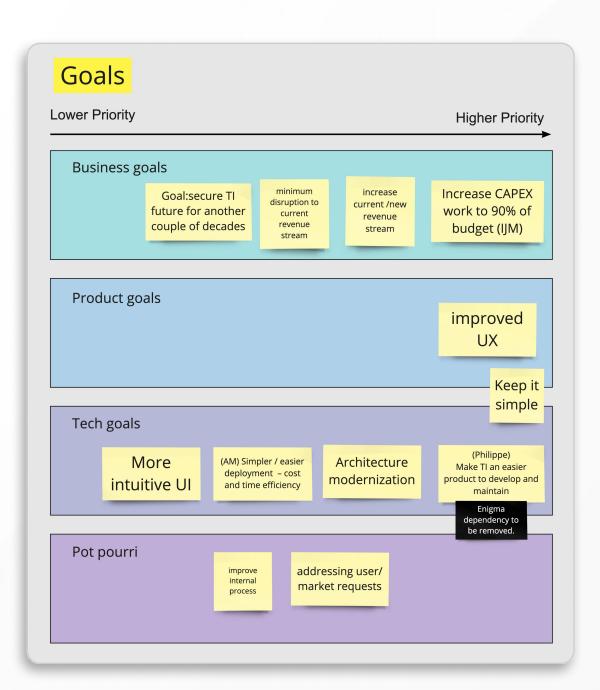
These collaborative whiteboard sessions bring together diverse stakeholders: product owners, client representatives, tech experts, developers, and more. Teams deliberate on topics such as project objectives, goals, risks, what success looks like, who the users are, what systems are used.

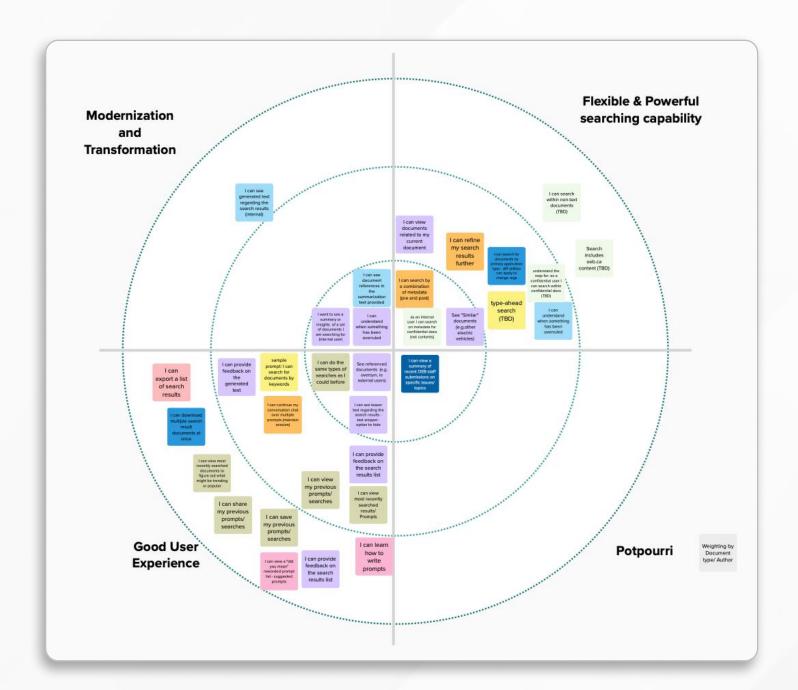
Fueled by collective creativity, we explore narratives: what stories will this project tell? How will it impact lives?

Ultimately the purpose of this is to produce a mission statement. We craft succinct, purpose-driven statements that resonate with the team. Mission statements aren't mere slogans; they're guiding stars throughout the project.

In one such workshop I lead at the Microsoft HQ in NYC, a premier insurance company executive shared the following testimonial:

"You've accomplished in less than 2 hours what typically takes us 3 months to do."





SUMMARY

BY BRINGING ACCESSIBILITY INTO OUR DAILY PRACTICE, WE WILL LEVEL UP HOW WE DEVELOP PRODUCTS USING DATA BACKED SOLUTIONS.
WE AIM TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF MAN-HOURS REQUIRED TO DELIVER CUSTOM SOLUTIONS, ACCOMPLISHING FASTER ONBOARDING
FOR OUR USERS, AND A BETTER CLIENT EXPERIENCE, CREATING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY BEST PRACTICES INCLUDING ACCESSIBILITY &
STANDARD PATTERNS WILL ATTRACT MORE CLIENTS.

GOALS

- 1. 6 month vision / Roadmap for the future.
- 2. Determine which Accessibility standard we are aiming for and what level of completion.
- a. What does Microsoft expect?
- 3. How to manage accessibility work-stream.
- 4. Identify primary initiatives to solve (low hanging fruit)

RISK

- Having accessibility practices become a bottleneck
- Resourcing constraints.
- 3. Legacy technology may hinder accessibility implementation.
- 4. Open ended target / lack of clear industry expectations
 - a. What does Microsoft expect?b. What do competitors do?
- Organizational adoption.
 - a. Communications
 - b. Change management / oversight.
 - c. Teams don't take Accessibility seriously enough

User Research

User Interviews

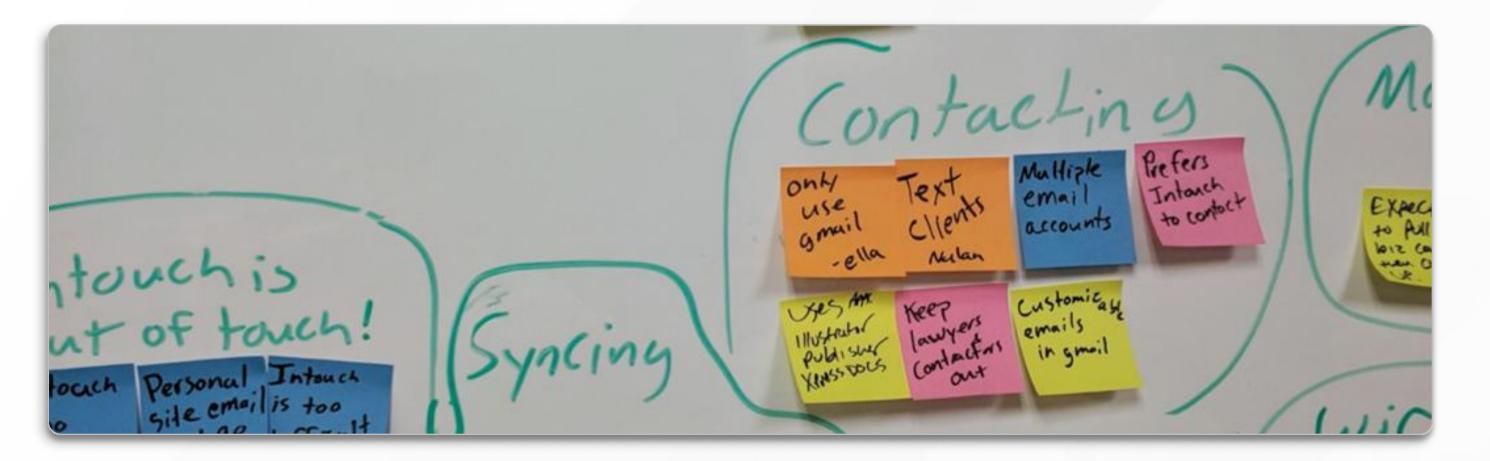
Candid conversations with real users are where the design magic happen. They provide a direct line to the heartbeat of our design process, users.

Since speed to market matters; I dive straight into understanding users' needs. My User interviews follow a meticulously templatized process.

This process allows my User Interviews to be done via quick guerilla marketing style, even leveraging internal team members. Stakeholders weigh in on the discussion guide, aligning business goals with user insights. This allows anybody on the team to pick up where we left off or understand historically what was done in this research endeavor.

The response data is eventually processed through exercises like the Affinity Cluster map shown. These artifacts and exercises guide design decisions by helping to differentiate between assumptions and reality.

"Pretend I have a magic wand that can remove any pain points you have with this app...."



MetLife Sample
Discussion Guide
User Interviews Round 1

verview

The following plan outlines the approach for obtaining user feedback and understanding how users manage their clients' contacts in REIOS and MSAS.

Our Goals & Key Questions

The following goals briefly outline our key objectives and what we are looking to learn from conducting user research.

Research noals

- 1. Understand the initial process agents follow when first using REIOS.
- Discover if and how agents curate their contact list and how they use contact groups in REIOS.
- Shed light on any difficulties that agents may experience in managing their contacts in any other format they use to record client contact information.

Jser Interviews

In order to achieve our research goals, we will be conducting user interviews to learn about user behavior and needs. User interviews will be casual and outlined by a discussion guide, meant to foster conversation and prompt users. (Discussion Guide is found at the end of this document)

Геат

User interviews are led by a trained moderator and should also be attended by any team members who can be available. All sessions will be recorded, but attendance is strongly recommended.

Tools: User interviews will be conducted and recorded via Microsoft Teams **Time:** Sessions/interviews will be scheduled for 60 minutes **Dates:** User interviews will be conducted between 7/15/23 – 7/19/23.

Who will we talk with?

Users should **span across different locations and markets** as well as **different levels of familiarity with REIOS**. By interviewing across these characteristics, we will be able to gain a more rounded view of feedback and assess global insights and patterns.

Research Discussion Guide

This script will serve as a guideline for conversation between the users and the moderator. Additional questions may be asked, or we may dive deeper into certain areas, based on user response.

Introduction (5 minutes)

Hi ______, thank you for your time today. My name is _____ and I'll be working with you during this session. ____ is also here to listen in, take notes, and ask any additional questions that I may not address.

Interview Purpose: Today we'll be talking to you about your experience using Intouch and REIOS and managing your client's contact info.

Before we begin, there's a few things that I would like to go over with you:

- Recording/Observing: We'll be recording today's session so that we are able to refer back to it later to listen and take additional notes. Your name and image will not be associated with the data and will only be shared internally within the Realogy team.
- Addressing Questions: If you have any questions during our discussion, just ask. I may not answer your question directly but may instead redirect the question back to you. This is just because we really want to hear YOUR thoughts and insights. I'm also happy to address any additional questions after the session.
- No Wrong Answers: Lastly, I want to make it clear that there are no
 wrong answers. We are not testing you in any way and there is no
 such thing as a stupid answer, we're really looking to understand how
 we can better support you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Warm-up Interview (5-7 minutes)

- Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about yourself and your role? How long in the role/field, etc?
 A:
- Q: Who are some of the clients that you deal with? How do you keep track of them?
- Q: How familiar are you with REIOS and MSAS?
 A:

Contact Management: (5-10 minutes)

 Q: When a new client comes in, calls, or emails, where does that person's info go?

User Research

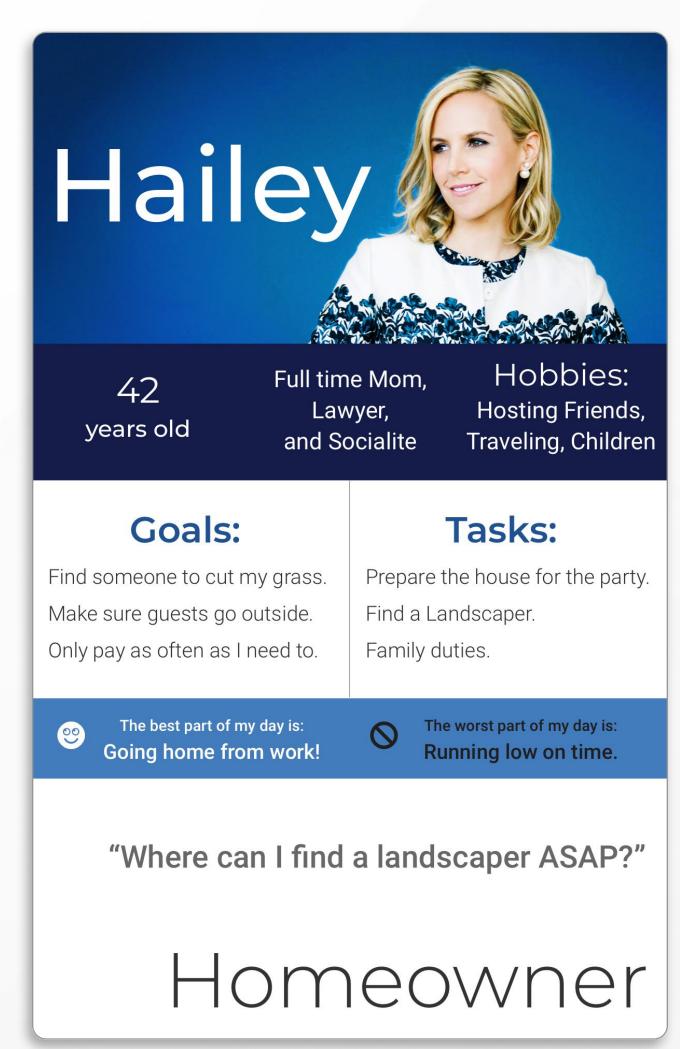
Personas vs EUPs

Personas is one of those 'sexy UX terms' buzzing around, yet it is usually removed from project roadmaps. I believe this is due to two convenience factors that devalue proper Personas: real data, and presentation.

The purpose of a Persona is to create a caricature of an average or percentile of real users. An imaginary embodiment of a segmented user, posted on a wall of a war room to be asked "Would Danny the Designer use this feature?", information portrayed on the Persona needs to be quickly and easily read in that situation yet compelling enough to remind team members who they are developing for.

To combat the assumptive side of Personas, I like to first identify End User Profiles (EUPs). These are the job titles or roles of potential users that the product will affect. EUPs are the segments for User Interviews, primary profiles may be targeted in research. Eventually when enough data is captured to coalesce into an imaginary average user, which as we know is a Persona.

These exercises take time and the guidance of a UXR specialist with skills like mine to truly steer the project roadmap into a new user friendly direction.





We kind of suck at telling stories. ""

Vision:

Wants to move KPMG to better adopt Power BI to leverage more of its features to better serve clients.

Goals:

Introduce more training for consultants to be more independant scaling the business opportunities. Building a community around Power BI would help increase our technical skill and support. Power BI armed clients are happier and more lucrative.

Frustrations:

The business is dependant on other older technologies where the learning curve for Power BI presents a problem. Everyone is charting their own course, due to lack of roadmap.

YEARS IN ROLE

TECHNICAL SKILL:

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Tech Savvy

Power BI Training

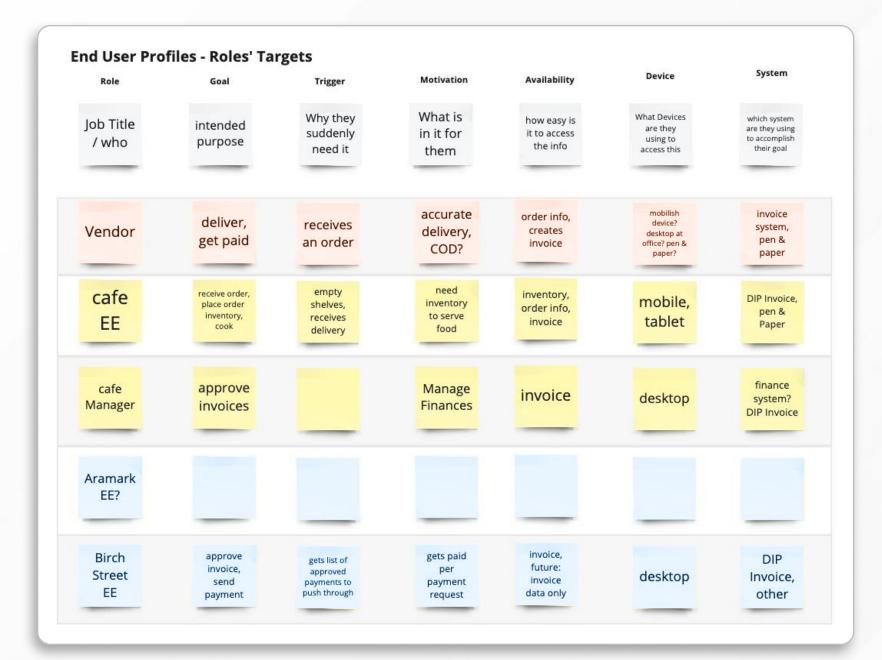
High

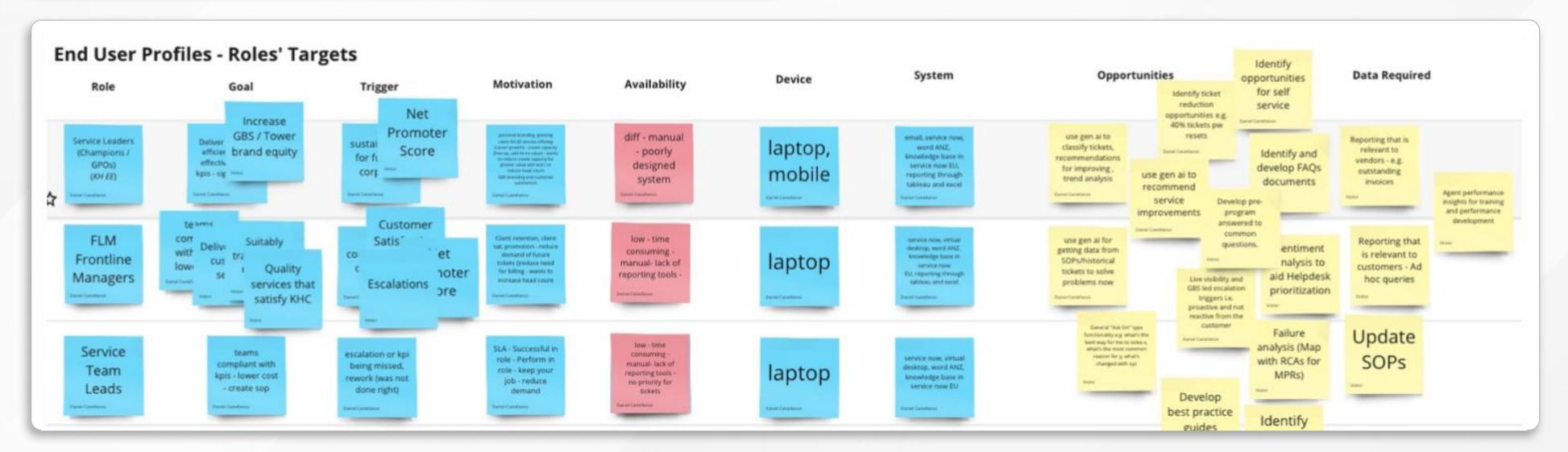
Org Influence:

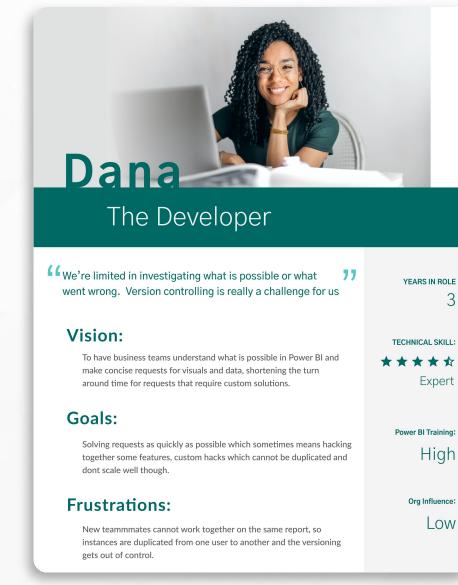
High

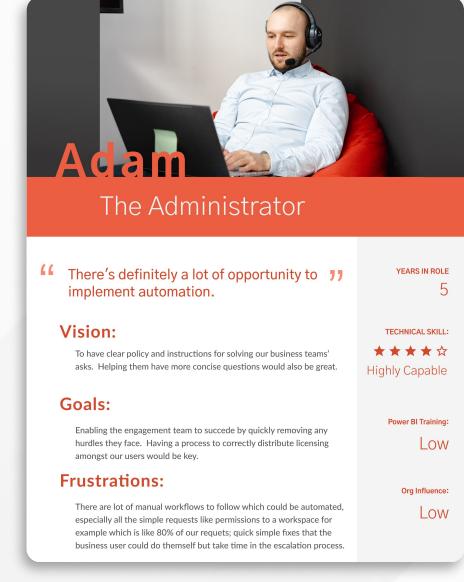
Personas vs EUPs (End User Profiles and more Personas)









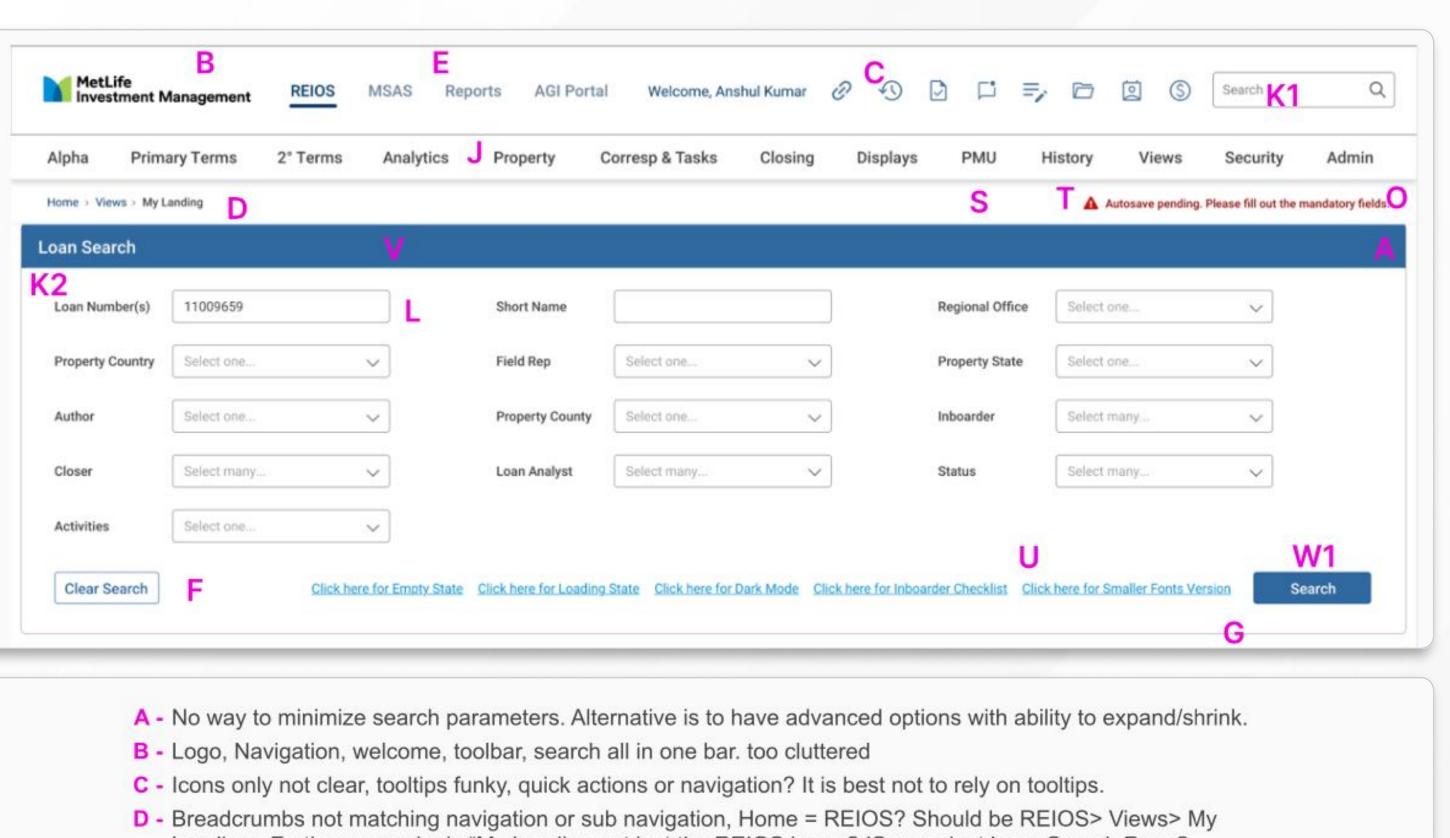


Heuristic Analysis

As a product designer, conducting a Heuristic Analysis offers several valuable benefits. I gain a deep understanding of the user experience by immersing myself in the product, using it firsthand, reading training material, and observing users. This perspective allows me to identify pain points, usability issues, and areas for improvement.

Heuristic analysis goes beyond surface-level visual assessments; it helps me inspect the system's architecture, navigation, and interactions. I have used "fly on the wall" observations of real users engaging with the products.

This holistic view helps uncover hidden flaws and opportunities. Moreover, applying established usability principles early in the design process allows me to catch potential problems and prioritize design changes effectively. It empowers the team to see through the eyes of users, ensuring that our product resonates with their needs and expectations.



- Landing. Furthermore why is "My Landing not just the REIOS home? IS page just Loan Search Page?
- E REIOS is highlighted but secondary Nav is not. In DDD, macro apps should be hidden; task based navigation
- F Why is clear so far from search and a secondary btn?
- G Table options get icon plus label? might be better as a dropdown.
- H No header style for table



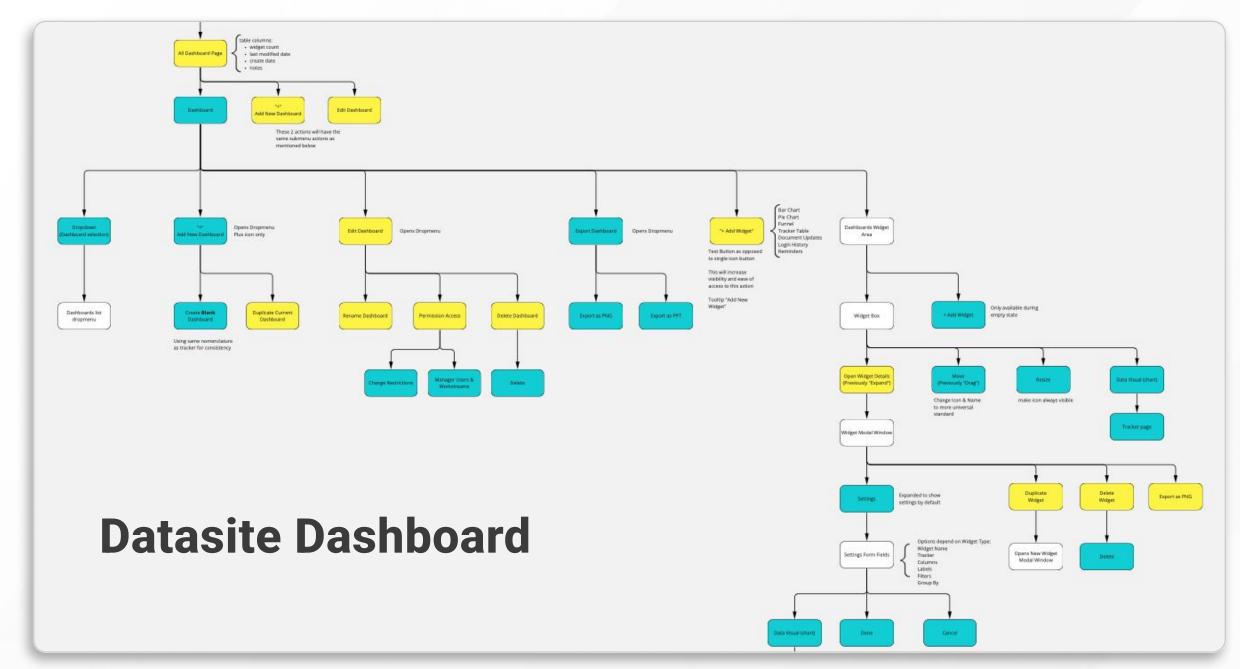
User Flow Optimization

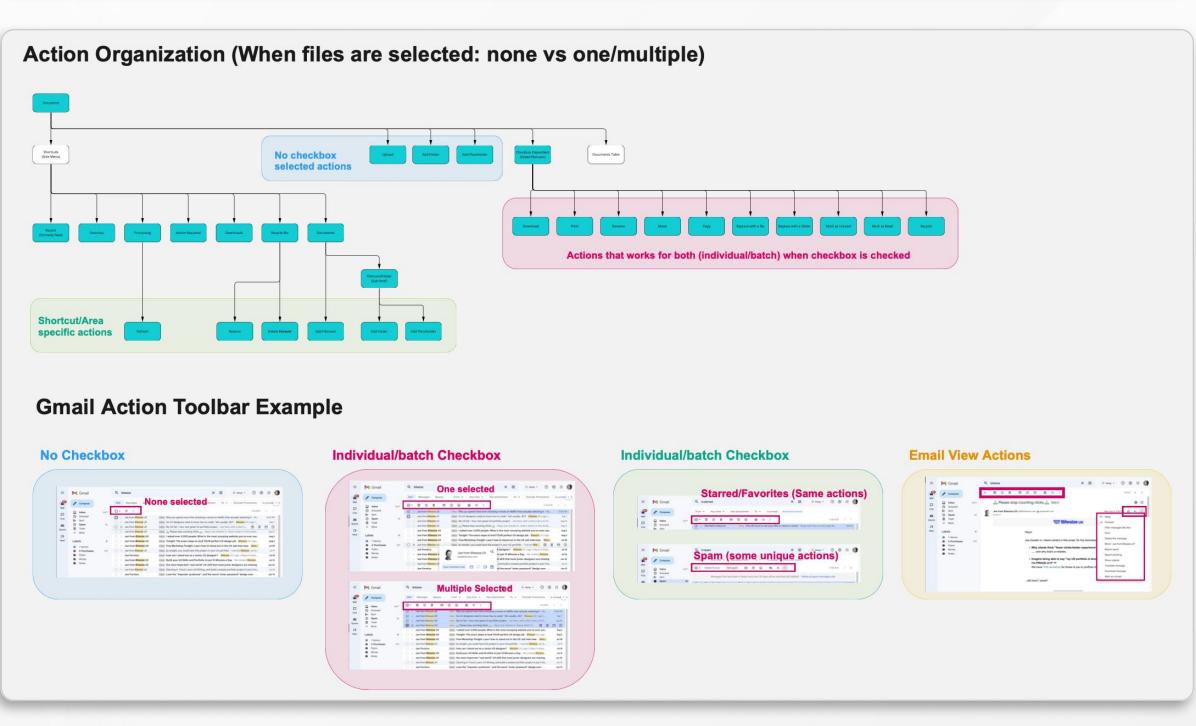
At the core of user experience is how a user gets to where they want to go, their user flow. Different from a sitemap (places), Architecture Map (places & technology), and Journey Maps (actions & emotions), a User flow highlights the places and actions that a user can take at any given moment in a system. I have created a process that relies heavily on user flow identification and optimization.

User flows help me understand all options and paths a user can take. Dead ends become obvious, steps noted to find hard to reach pages, hierarchies appear and violations of this order begin to resonate with user frustrations. Realsure was a great example of highlighting user frustrations while Datasite gave us opportunities to enhance the UI and reduce visual load, ensuring proximity relieves any cognitive dissonance.

Since everything in a User Flow is a 1:1 relation to all components in wireframes, Optimizing these user flows directly effects the layout and component organization of a screen enhancing the UI.

See the ePay use case on page 14





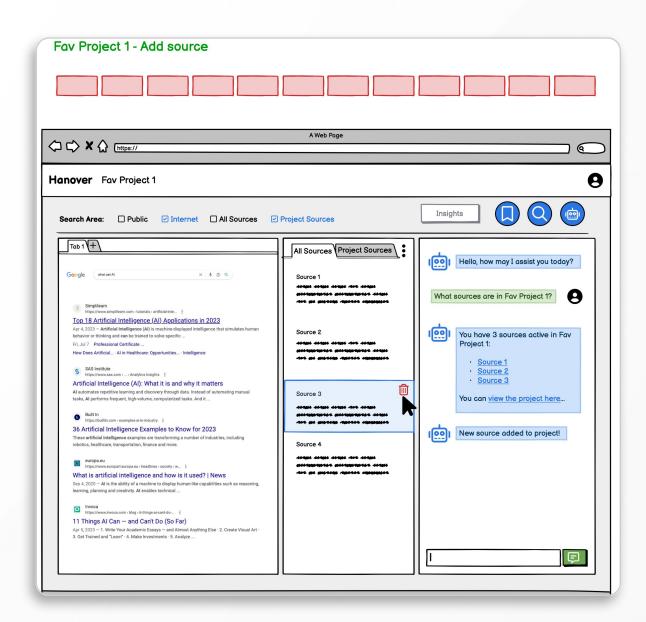
Wireframe Cycle

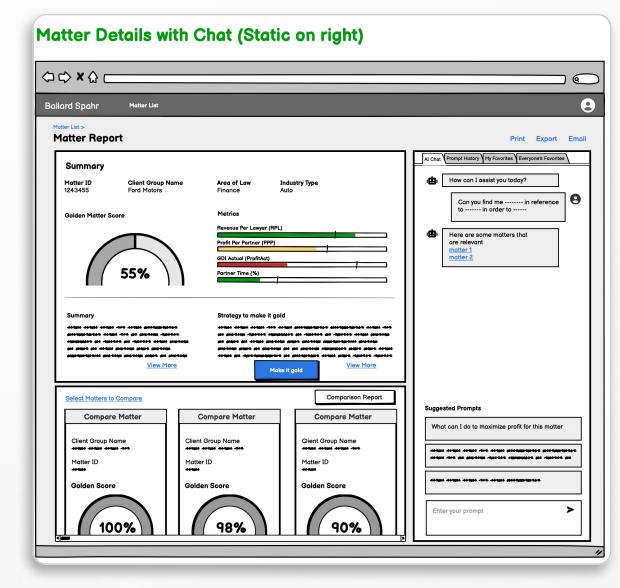
Once a User Flow has been solidified, it is used as the foundation to wireframes, nothing new is added in the wires unless it is added to the user flow. Wires can be used as part of the Definition of Ready: helping the product owner to discover requirements, or the Definition of Done: as a QA reference for what a developers final deliverable should look and feel and act like. With these different needs come different iterations of my wireframing process that I have honed.

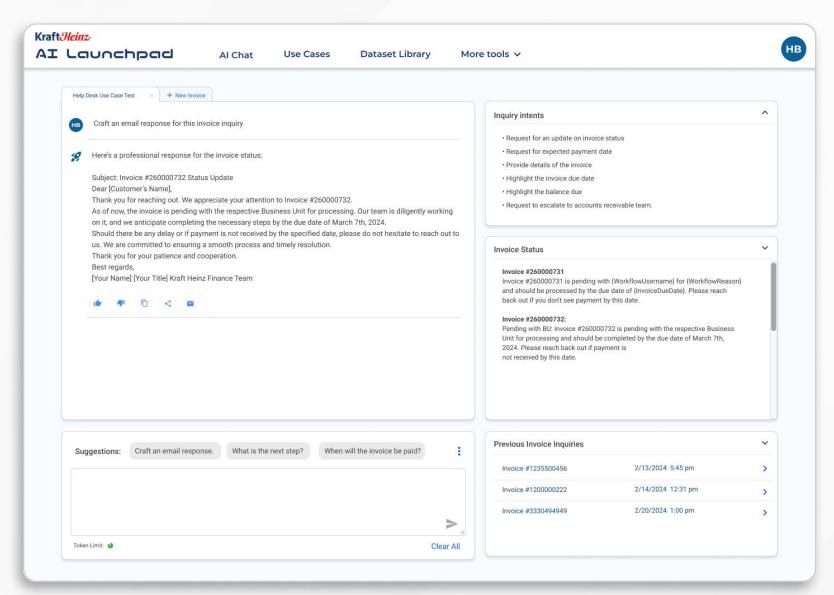
I always start the wireframing process in Low Fidelity - this helps focus on problem solving and layout composition. The lack of color and interactions helps focus the audience on what is most valuable to help the user accomplish their goal.

High Fidelity wires incorporate the Design System, Style Guide, or Front End Library into the picture. This will be the closes to a pixel perfect iteration of the final product.

Lastly comes the prototype phase, which can be done in Low or High Fidelity. I limit prototypes to Use Case Scenarios, or single workflows that can be used in User Testing or for demos. Helping teams focus on user flows helps avoid massive 100 screen prototypes that take too long to build and require too many modifications as a whole.









Styles Governance

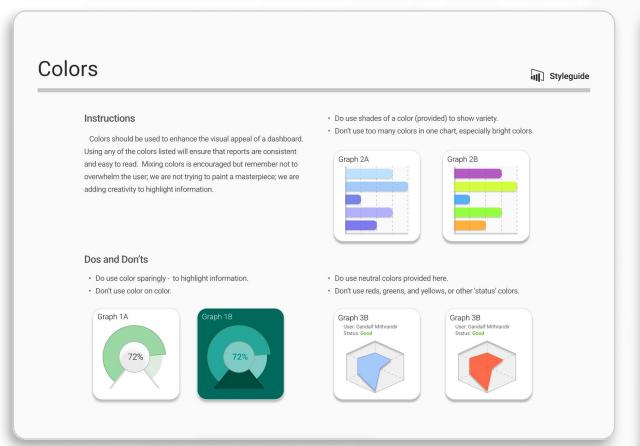
Creating and applying a Design System or Style Guide is more than just selecting colors that look cool. Action sentiments must be interpreted to a brand to ensure consistency. Styles need to be matched to the front end library in order to reduce custom code, which will inherently increase production time. These are all topics I have balanced into styles that again push towards product goals. Even the colors used need to promote the original goal identified, support the user flows created, and beautify the layouts to be engaging and readable to users.

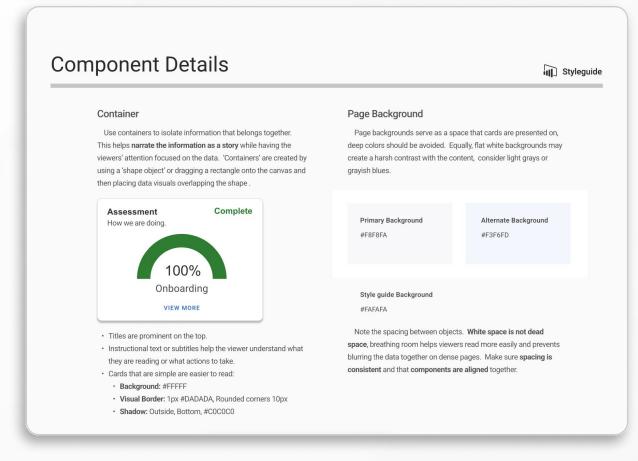
More than just painting the wireframes, Styles need to promote the functionality of the product. I always say:

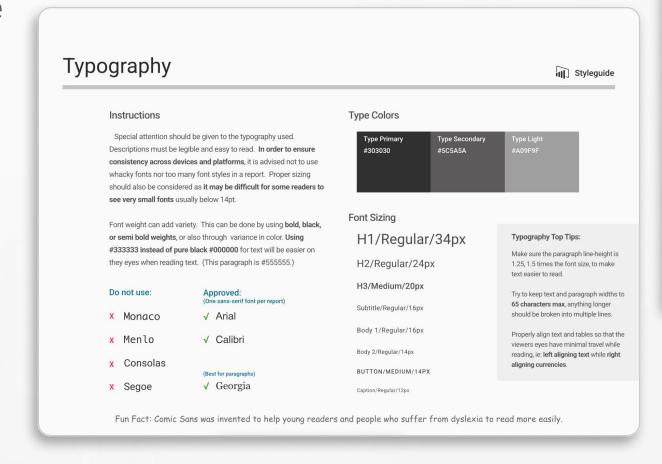
"When everything stands out, nothing stands out"

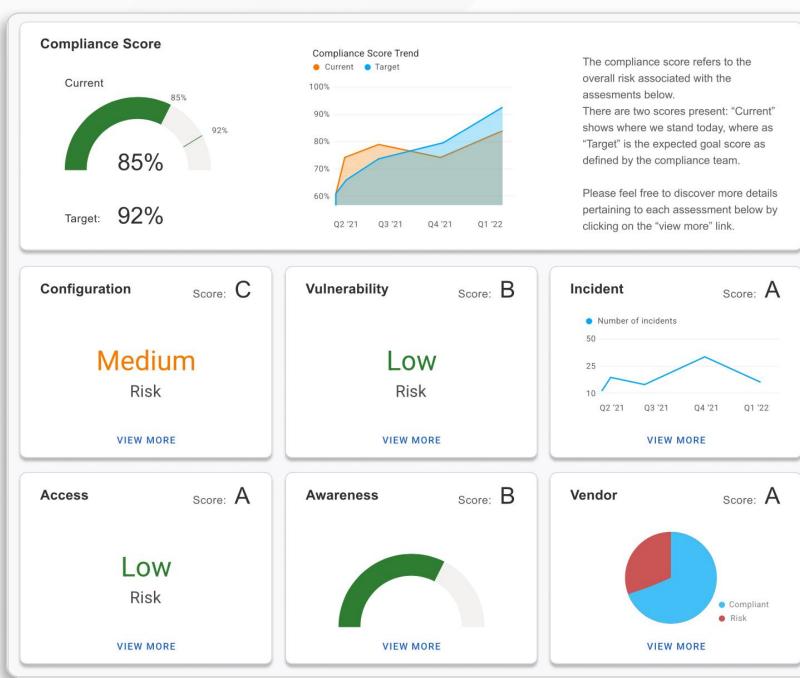
My style is simple and clean, only personalizing the elements that give a brand its flavor while enhancing the items that beckon for user attention. Checkout these pages from a style guide I created for a team wanting to make their Power BI reports more consistent.

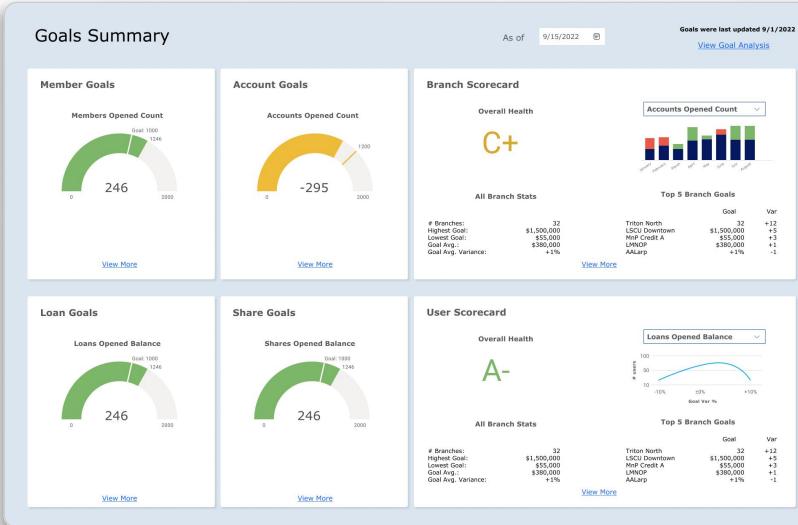
When there is a need to be to push the limit and create far out, artistic interfaces, the artistic styles must be in line with the original goals of the product vision.











Visual Design

Accessibility Accelerator

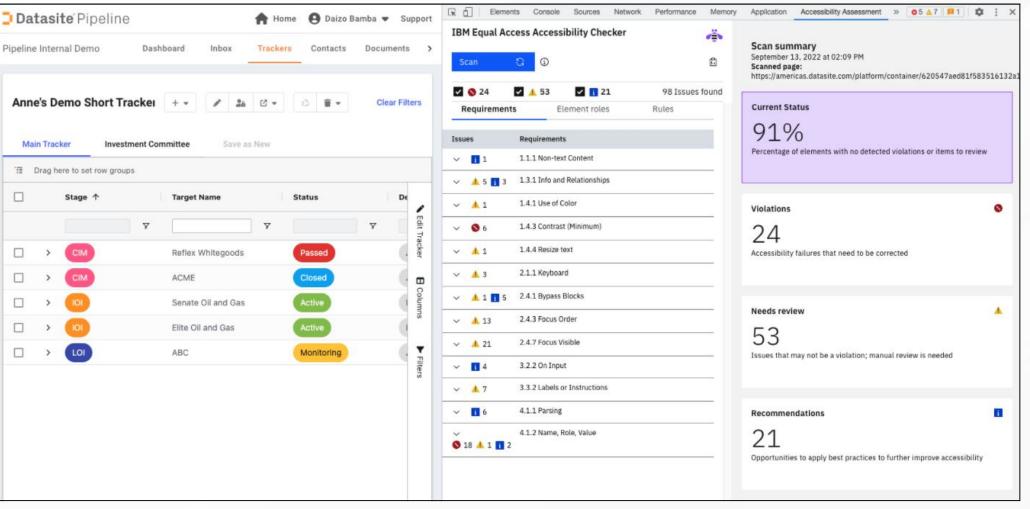
As tech savvy generations age, they will begin dealing with a limitation to accessing the information they once took for granted. Accessibility addresses multiple forms of disabilities that inherently affect the user experience of products, more than just color contrasts.

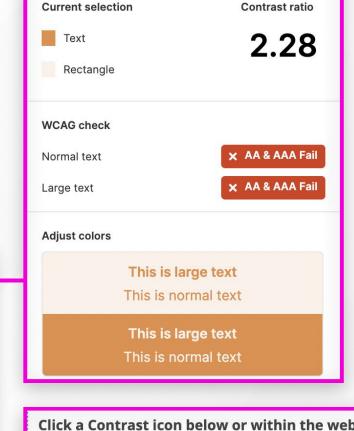
I created the Accessibility Accelerator at Neudesic. This service helped clients assess and plan updates to their products to become more complaint with accessibility standards. This process combines several artifacts with an educational portion on how to update the style, code, and layout of a product in order to achieve certain standards.

The Accessibility Accelerator included the following:

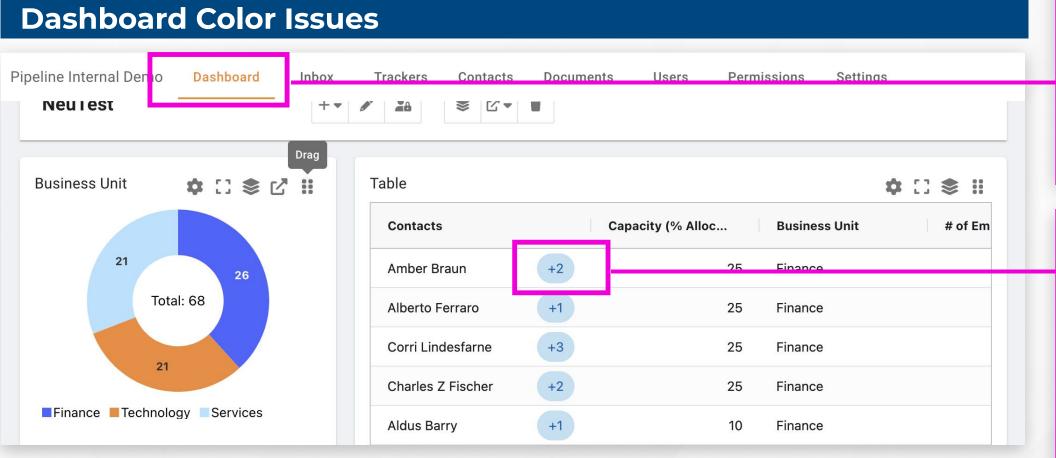
- WCAG introduction & legal overview
- A, AA, AAA reference guide
- Future Steps
- IBM Accessibility Checker report
- VPAT of competitors and templates
- Concept to Product Kickoff workshop
- Focus state analysis
- End User Profiles
- Sitemap and Current User flow assessment
- Optimized User Flows
- WCAG version breakdown
- Accessibility and Heuristic Analysis
- Competitor Analysis
- Style Analysis
- Front end code Accessibility tools

IBM Accessibility Checker Report

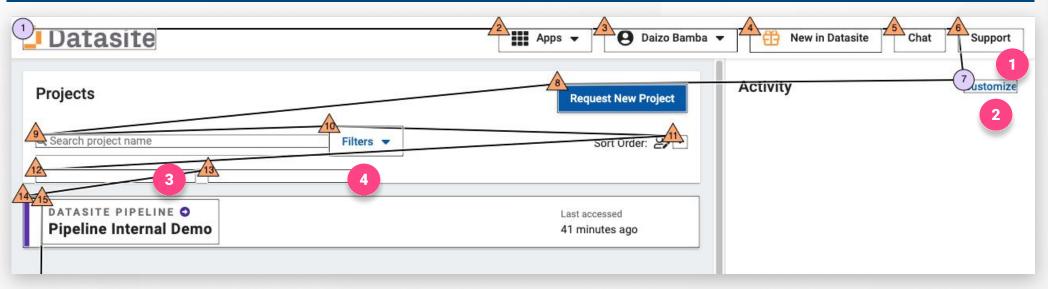




Color contrast



GLOP - Tabbing Order



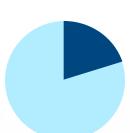
Visual Design

Accessibility Accelerator

Federal Court Filings

Digital Ally Lawsuits between 2017-2020

ADA Title III Lawsuits



Since 2018, 10k+ lawsuits filed annually; 20% web/mobile ally related

Inconsistent rulings due to the lack of defined web ally regulations

Robles v. Domino's Pizza (2019)

Unable to order pizza online due to ally issues

Ruling: Domino's must comply w/ WCAG 2.0

Thurston v. Midvale Corp (2019)

Unable to access restaurant website w/ screen reader **Ruling:** Midvale must

comply w/ WCAG 2.0 AA

Regulatory Enforcement

Federal Level

- ADA Americans w/ Disabilities
- Section 508 of Rehabilitation Act
- Air Carrier Access Act
- Section 1557 of Affordable Care Act

State Level

- NY State & City Human Rights Laws
- CA: Unruh Civil Rights Act

Violating these these laws can result in fines of \$55,000 to \$75,000 for firsttime violations and \$150,000 for every repeated violation for the latter.





Accessibility Accelerator

It's estimated that companies without accessible sites are losing \$6.9 billion

a year to competitors whose sites are accessible. Be proactive by identifying your website's accessibility issues and find solutions. As a result you can reach a wider audience, improve user experience, and demonstrate your commitment to social responsibility.



Accessibility Introduction

- · Introduction to accessibility standards and why they are relevant to your business.
- · Potential legal repercussions of not adhering to web accessibility.



Product Assessment

- In-depth accessibility/usability analysis.
- Auto-generated reporting tools.
- · Identify workflow inefficiencies.



Collaborative Workshops

- Align on team goals, risks, and reasons to make changes.
- Action item prioritization across multidisciplinary teams,

* Roadmap and Strategy

- Guidance on next step actions; short-term/ long-term changes.
- Accessibility tools to help with future QA testing.

4-6 Week **Accelerator** Process:

- Concept to Product Kickoff
- End User Profiling
- · Heuristic / Accessibility Analysis
- Competitor Analysis* *Optional
- Style Analysis
- · Sitemap & current state User Flow
- User Flow Optimization
- IBM Accessibility Checker* *Requires Web browser based application

For More Information Contact Us



daniel.castellanos@neudesic.com

ePay

My greatest success story from Realogy.

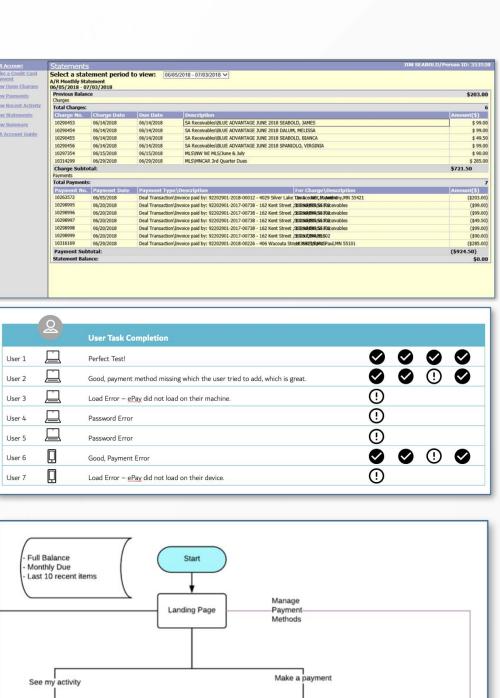
The team had spent 3 extra years and were several million dollars over budget when I joined. They were trying to modernize the payment portal that real estate agents needed to use to pay their bills. Not only was the technology stack disparaged among several different libraries, but the product owners only wanted to update the tech and style.

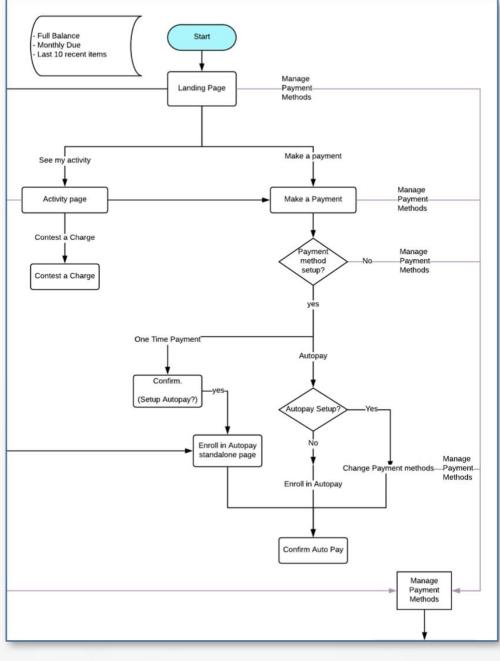
As with all Digital Transformation efforts, when the technology changes, it opens up new possibilities to optimize the experience for users and potentially grow the business, it is more than a tech only problem.

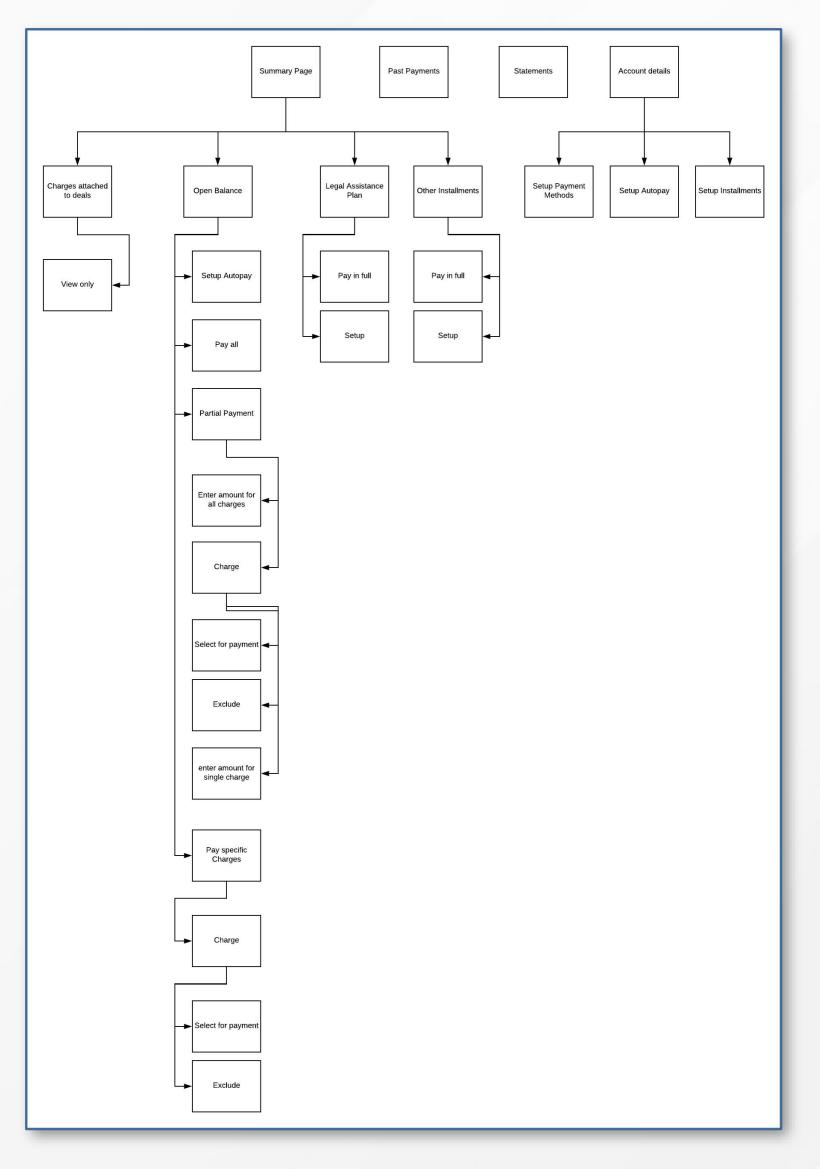
After several attempts to introduce product design to the team, I finally had a breakthrough when I conducted some User Tests to gather unbiased data on the limitations user faced explaining why they just were not paying their bills. The CFO in charge of that organization put me in charge of the project and I was finally given the reigns to do a proper product life cycle.

Pictured here are clockwise:a screenshot before the modernization, a User Flow assessment of the current state, a logic flow of the tech, and results from user testing.

continued on next page...







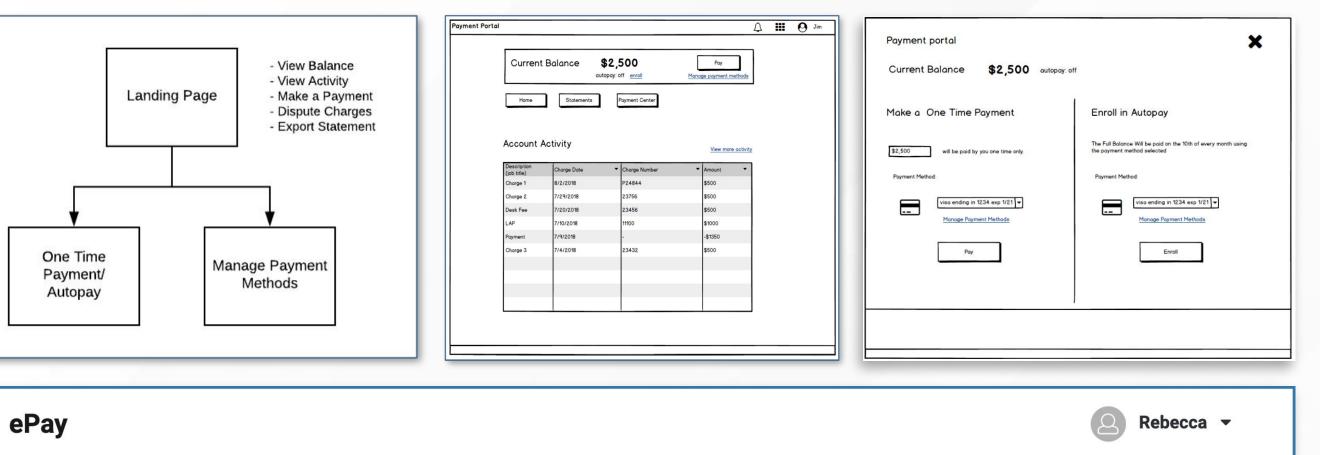
ePay

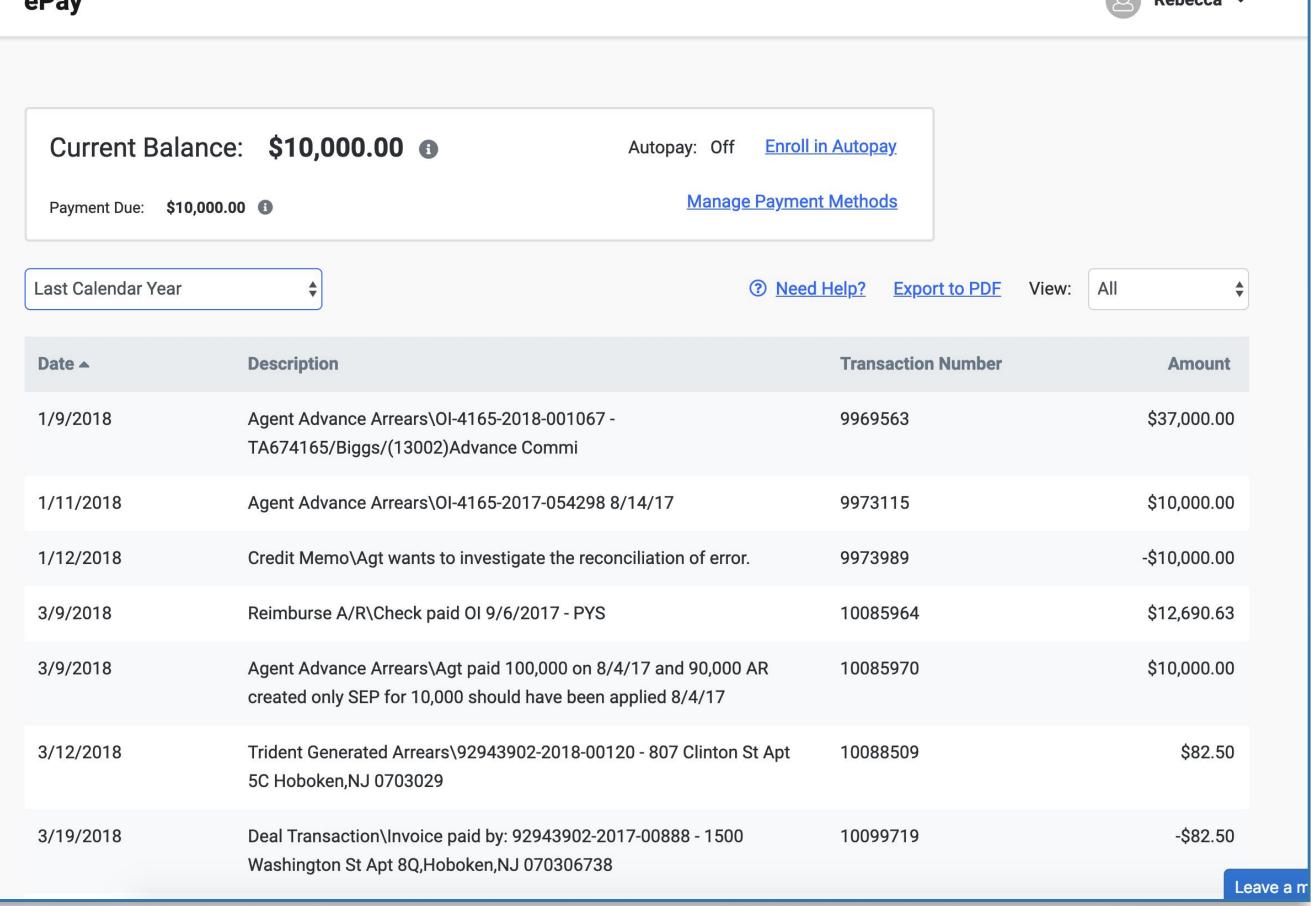
I started with reassessing the user flow to be more concise and efficient. This opened up a new paradigm for the business to conduct its finances, leveraging more modern payment methods in line with users expectations - ie no more paper checks nor paying arbitrary individual line items.

Being more account focused now, the low fidelity wireframes highlight the information most relevant to a user: how much money do I owe? and can I easily pay my account?

Finally you can see a screenshot of the final product.

In the first month of release there was an increase in over \$2 Million of payments made by agents in the first month alone. According to agents' feedback, it was completely due to the more modern app.





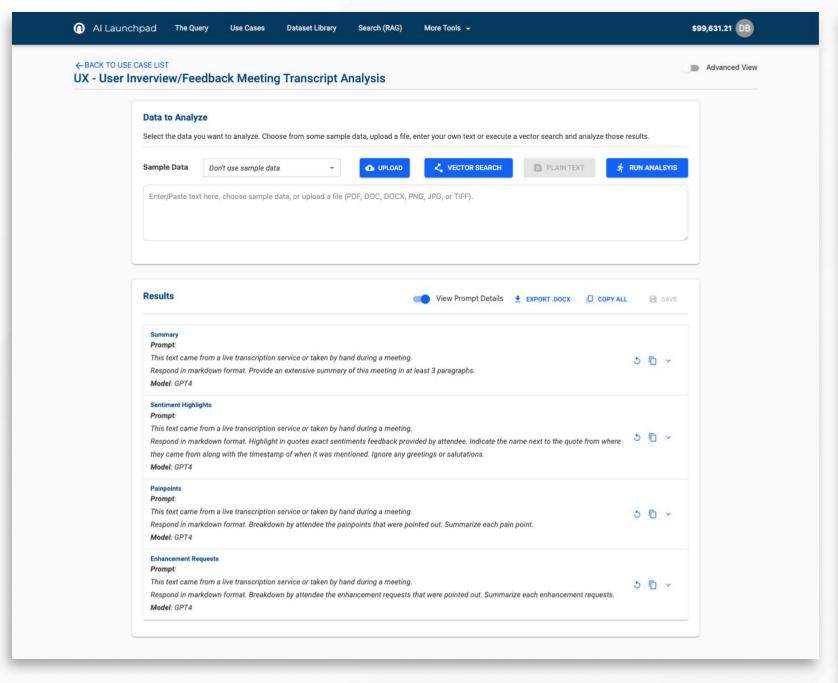
Al Launchpad

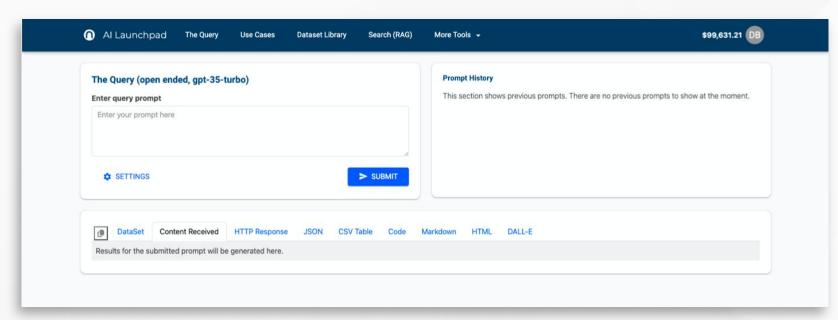
Director of Application Innovations, Paul Galvin single handedly invented the AI Launchpad, Neudesic's premier Build-your-own OpenAI PaaS. The original version was a very bare bones proof of technology with a gateway to explore more ideas and concepts.

As Lead UX on this product, I made sure the interfaces were redesigned to accommodate less dev oriented users and bring AI Launchpad its own brand. This included artifacts such as one page posters for promotions and web media including a marketing site.

As the project grew I followed in Paul's footsteps to be the change you want to see, which added the role of Al Launchpad Project Manager to my resume. This allowed me full control to run Agile sprints complete with all the ceremonies from planning to demos.

Ultimately having such an intimate connection with the backlog, Paul and I began to share Product Owner responsibilities until his new duties gave me the opportunity to guide the team as the sole Product Owner/Manager/UX Lead/pre-sales workshop moderator. As this product grew and became unsustainable for one person, my role turned to delegation and innovation leadership which in turn allowed me to run the East Region Innovation Communities - our innovation labs.



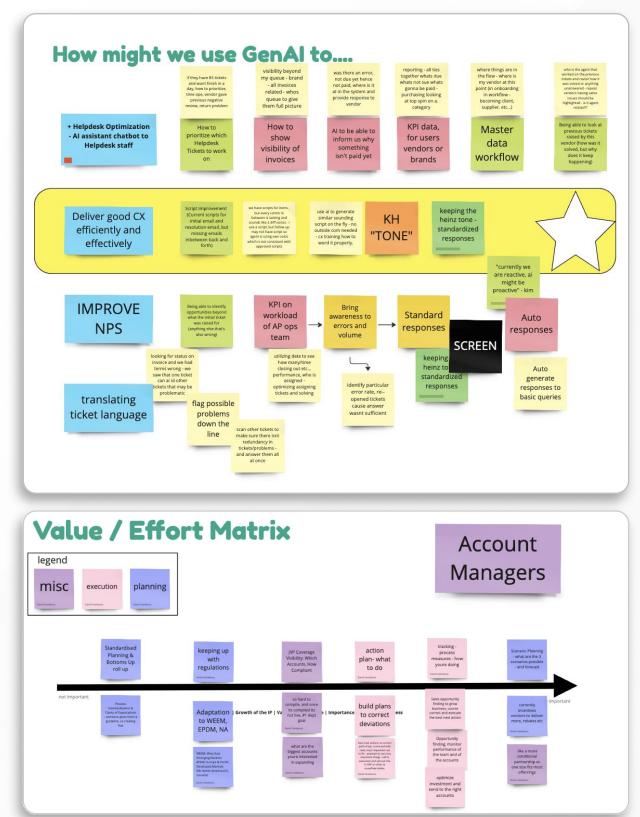


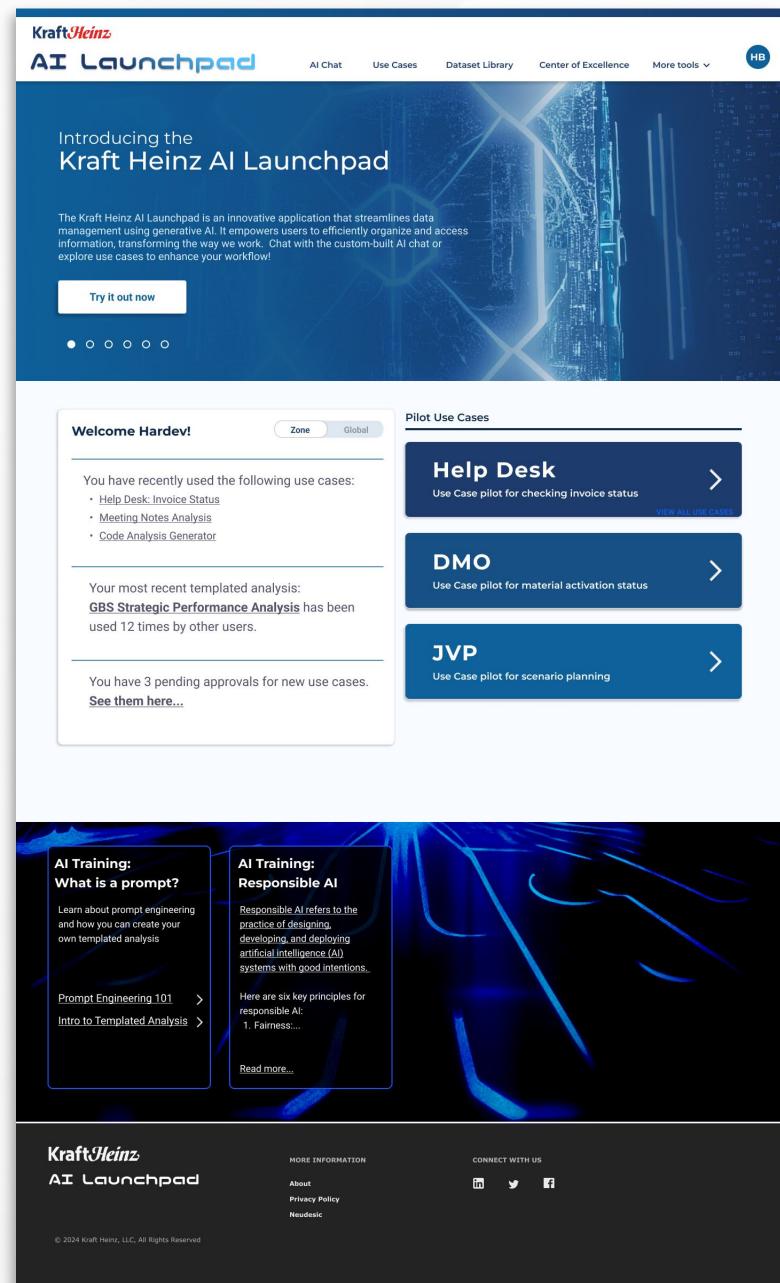


Al Launchpad

The most exciting part of the AI Launchpad journey for me was being the Lead Product Designer on the first fully successful deployment of OpenAI to a client.

I was a member of several other pilot projects that created amazing proof of concepts, but Kraft Heinz was able to leverage AI Launchpad for real world use cases with live data. Getting to this delivery required a full suite of Product Design services from workshops to wireframes, and prototyping to front end coding. I had to use my full arsenal to make this project a resounding success.





Scaper

Scaper is the brain child of myself and my best friend.

We founded Scaper in the summer of 2018 and continue to grow the company throughout the northern New Jersey area.

Our Mission is to become the nation's premiere on-demand lawn care solution.

Scaper is restarting in 2024 including all new features like the Landscaper Job board and onboarding process.

Check us out at: www.getscaper.com



