Banu Akman

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Senior Product Designer | AI & Agentic Products, 0-to-1 UX Strategy & Complex Workflows

Designing clear, trustworthy experiences for complex products and AI.

10+ years of design experience, combining generalist range with human-centered systems thinking. Takes products from 0-to-1 concepts through launch, often as the first or only designer on highly technical, engineering-led teams, including B2B SaaS in regulated and emerging-tech domains.

- **Agentic product design.** Designs agents, human-in-the-loop workflows, and the governance around them, deciding what a person delegates, what needs approval, and how they review what the agent did. Grounded in Human-AI Interaction (HAX) research.
- **Systems and service design.** Maps how a system actually works, including handoffs between customers, AI agents, and human experts, so engineering, product, and leadership see the same picture. Decodes unfamiliar domains fast for the team.
- **Cross-functional partner with technical fluency.** Works from architecture docs, API contracts, and sandbox output, not only screens; prototypes in code to validate behavior; turns loose concepts into prioritized, buildable product scope with technical teams.

EXPERIENCE

Lead Product Designer
Stealth AI Startup (Remote) October 2026–Present

Early-stage enterprise AI company building an agentic platform for cloud infrastructure efficiency.

- Lead end-to-end design for the customer portal as sole designer, with a small team of developers and AI coding agents, shipping weekly toward a launch window.
- Review each page as it is built against HAX guidelines, usability heuristics, and WCAG, with every change written so the team and its AI coding agents can both act on it.
- Build agent-ready design systems in code, with W3C DTCG design tokens and automated contrast and color-blind checks across light and dark themes.

Co-Founder & Product Design Lead
Sente Labs AI - New York May 2026–October 2026

Open-source agentic AI company developing products and delivering client engagements.

- Led discovery and product strategy for three agentic products, from ICP definition and discovery workshops to product guardrails for agent behavior and human oversight.
- Designed delegation workflows, approval gates, escalation triggers, and activity review for an open-source multi-agent platform for leadership work (5.7K GitHub stars).
- Co-authored Proof, Not Trust (white paper, August 2026) on zero trust for AI agents, and wrote its human-approval design, what an approver needs to see before signing.

Lead User Experience Designer, Emerging Technology Group
Vertex Inc - King of Prussia, PA (Remote) September 2024–May 2026

Global tax technology company serving Fortune 500 enterprises. Sole designer in the Emerging Technology Group, the Office of the CTO's R&D team leading Vertex's AI implementation.

- Owned UX strategy and end-to-end design for ten AI proof-of-concept initiatives, turning loosely defined ideas into prioritized product scope and design specifications that fed the team's handoff to product teams.
- Partnered with 20+ engineers, data scientists, and product managers to translate architecture docs, API contracts, and sandbox output into interaction models with transparency, control, and human-oversight patterns.

SKILLS & TOOLS

AI & Agentic Design
AI Product Design · Agentic UX · Agent Governance & Approval Gates · Human-in-the-Loop UX · Conversational AI & Conversation Design · Generative UI · Human-AI Interaction (HAX) Research · Trust & Transparency Patterns · Prompt Design & Evaluation · Responsible & Inclusive AI Design

Design Practice
Interaction Design · Service Design · Journey Mapping & Blueprinting · Human-Centered Systems Thinking · Information Architecture · Design Systems & Tokens · Rapid Prototyping · WCAG 2.2 AA Accessibility

Research
Mixed-Methods Research · Usability Testing · A/B Testing & Experimentation · Competitive & Market Analysis

Strategy & Leadership
Design Strategy · Product Strategy · 0-to-1 Product Definition · Designing for Ambiguity · Cross-Functional Collaboration · Stakeholder Alignment · Discovery Workshops & Facilitation · Design Literacy & Mentoring in Engineering-Led Teams

Design & Collaboration Tools
Figma · Miro · Adobe Creative Cloud · Jira · Confluence · Notion

AI-Assisted Prototyping
Claude Code · Cursor · Codex · Figma Make · v0 · ElevenLabs

Code
HTML · CSS · JavaScript · React · Tailwind · SQL · MongoDB · API Integration · Git

Analytics & AI Platforms
Google Analytics · Amplitude · Qualtrics · Datadog · Microsoft Foundry

- Grounded AI behavior in evidence through structured interviews and feedback sessions with tax subject-matter experts, capturing decision logic for LLM enrichment. Curated RAG sources and tested agent responses side by side in Microsoft Foundry.
- Led an exploration of how a legacy design system could integrate with LLM tools via Figma MCP, documented the workflow and its limitations, and presented the findings to the engineering and UX groups at their request.
- Aligned engineering, product, and leadership through discovery workshops, value and feasibility prioritization, multi-stakeholder workflow mapping, and working prototypes that made agent behavior concrete; built design literacy on agentic work.

Selected projects

- **Tax AI Agent Builder:** No-code builder where tax experts describe a workflow in natural language, edit the generated agent plan, approve each run, and review activity logs; designed within Vertex's existing design system.
- **Risk Monitoring Experience (Anomaly Detection):** Configurable alerts and human-in-the-loop review workflows presenting AI findings with severity, financial impact, and supporting evidence; a POC on real EU VAT data surfaced €40K+ in potential exposure.
- **Configuration Best Practice Agent:** Conversational AI that brings consultant-level configuration guidance into product onboarding, so customers can self-configure.
- **Process Mining & Intelligent Workflows:** AI task monitoring informed by behavioral patterns.
- **taXchain:** EU trade proof-of-delivery workflows connecting ERP systems, transport APIs, and multiple stakeholders on a blockchain compliance platform.

Founder & Lead User Experience Designer

Breative Design Lab - Beacon, NY January 2019–September 2024

Boutique design practice serving early-stage startups and nonprofits across diverse industries.

- Led end-to-end UX and research across 40+ Lean UX engagements, many with startups under NDA, including design systems bridged from Figma into React and CMS.
- Redesigned the Shopify store of Precycle, a Brooklyn zero-waste grocer, from mixed-methods research: online sales up 56%, cart abandonment down from 78% to 65%.
- Modernized the Bridge Engineering Association's website and the peer-review workflow for its biennial conference (+35% registrations, –33% review cycle time).
- Designed AI-assisted automation for client operations, including an LLM chatbot grounded in client documents (RAG) and Zapier workflows for forms and scheduling, saving 10+ hours a week while keeping human oversight.

Co-Founder & Design Director

Bridgewiz - New York, NY February 2017–August 2019

Learning platform for early-career structural engineers, with online engineering calculators.

- Led product strategy and design; ran customer discovery at major global engineering firms and grew an audience from 0 to 8,000+ engineers in under four months.

Founder & Service Design Director

Asterya - Ankara, Turkey August 2010–September 2018

Service design and conference agency (15 staff) for academic institutions and research programs; partners included NATO, UNESCO, and the EU.

- Led service design for civic and public-health initiatives through field workshops with local governments, NGOs, and citizens, producing frontstage/backstage service blueprints grounded in stakeholder evidence.
- Ran 150+ international scientific conferences end-to-end, built in-house peer-review and program operations systems, and raised $3M annually in grants and sponsorships.

EDUCATION

Maryland Institute College of Art, Master's in UX Design, 4.0 GPA, 2022

Columbia University, Full-Stack Web Development Bootcamp, 2021

Southern Methodist University, Java React Native Bootcamp, 2021

Bilkent University, BS in Management

Professional Training: PMP, Six Sigma, ISO 9001 quality frameworks

INTERESTS

Slow Food & Permaculture

Cooking & Foraging

Art & Culture

Yoga | 200hr Teacher Training

