



Banu Akman

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

New York, NY

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Designing clear, trustworthy experiences for complex products and AI.

15+ years of design experience, combining generalist range with human-centered systems thinking. Takes products from 0-to-1 concepts through launch, including B2B SaaS in regulated and emerging-tech domains.

- **Agentic product design.** Designs agents, human-in-the-loop workflows, and the governance around them: what a person delegates, what needs approval, and how they review what the agent did. Tests agent behavior in model playgrounds to inform interaction design; grounded in Human-AI Interaction (HAX) research.
- **Systems and service design.** Maps how a system really works, the people, data, services, and decisions in it, including handoffs between customers, AI agents, and human experts, so engineering, product, and leadership see the same picture. Decodes unfamiliar domains fast and makes them understandable to the whole team.
- **Cross-functional partner with technical fluency.** Works from architecture docs, API contracts, and sandbox output, not only screens; prototypes in code with AI tooling to validate behavior and align decisions; turns loose concepts into prioritized, buildable product scope and roadmaps with technical teams.

EXPERIENCE

Co-Founder & Product Design Lead

Sente Labs AI - New York (Remote)

May 2026–September 2026

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

- Led discovery and product strategy for three agentic products, defining target users, facilitating discovery workshops, and establishing product guardrails in collaboration with an engineering-led team.
- Defined delegation, human approval, escalation, and user review of agent activity for an open-source multi-agent platform for leadership work (5.7K GitHub stars).
- Reframed a client's early proof of concept into a product plan and MVP scope for an AI coach serving people with limited income and digital skills, and the caseworkers supporting them, with privacy-first verification.
- Co-authored [Proof, Not Trust](#) (August 2026), a white paper proposing independently verified authorization and human approval controls for AI agents.

Lead User Experience Designer, Emerging Technology Group

Vertex Inc - King of Prussia, PA (Remote)

September 2024–May 2026

Global tax technology company delivering cloud platforms for tax determination, compliance, and audit to 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 build-ready specifications handed off to product teams.
- Partnered with a 20+ person group of engineers, data scientists, and product managers to translate architecture docs, API contracts, and sandbox output into interaction models, defining transparency, control, and human-oversight patterns for AI workflows unfamiliar to both tax users and the team.

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 · 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 & Prototyping Tools

Figma · FigJam · Miro · Adobe Creative Cloud

AI-Assisted Prototyping

Vibe Coding: 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 AI Foundry

Collaboration

Jira · Confluence · Notion

- Grounded AI behavior in evidence through structured interviews and feedback sessions with tax subject-matter experts, capturing decision logic for LLM enrichment. Curated RAG knowledge sources and tested agent responses side by side in Microsoft AI Foundry.
- Aligned engineering, product, and leadership through discovery workshops, value and feasibility prioritization, multi-stakeholder workflow mapping, and Figma and AI-assisted coded prototypes that made agent behavior and human handoffs concrete; ran knowledge exchange sessions that built design literacy on agentic work.

Selected projects

- **Tax AI Agent Builder:** Self-serve experience for tax experts to create, run, and manage agents, with execution logs for reviewing agent activity; 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.
- **Best Practice Agent:** Conversational AI extending Vertex's expert configuration judgment to self-serve customers.
- **Process Mining & Intelligent Workflows:** AI-powered task monitoring informed by behavioral pattern analysis.
- **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, including brand and product design systems bridged from Figma into React and CMS; drove +35% sign-ups and -33% review cycle time on a peer-review platform.
- Applied mixed-methods research to inform design decisions: interviews, card sorting, heuristic evaluations, competitive analysis, A/B testing, surveys, and usability testing (Maze, UserTesting).
- Designed AI-assisted automation for client operations, including an LLM chatbot grounded in client documents (RAG) and no-code pipelines for forms and scheduling, bringing systems thinking to fragmented client tooling.

Co-Founder & Design Director

Bridgewiz - New York, NY

February 2017–August 2019

Bridge engineering firm with an R&D arm: learning platform for early-career engineers, engineering calculators, AI-powered inspection tools, and data pipelines.

- Led customer discovery with engineering managers, junior engineers, and research panels at international conferences to define the ICP, and validated pre-launch demand with a curated audience of 8,000+ engineers.

Founder & Service Design Director

Asterya - Ankara, Turkey

August 2010–September 2018

Service design and event operations agency for academic institutions; partners included NATO, UNESCO, and the EU.

- Grew the agency to 10 staff and contractors; led service design for civic and public-health engagements through discovery workshops, field research, and service blueprints.
- Designed and built in-house peer-review and program operations systems (custom forms, automation pipelines, multi-stakeholder workflows) used across 150+ international programs; grew annual sponsorship to \$3M with business cases and impact reports.

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

Professional Training:

PMP, Six Sigma, ISO 9001 quality frameworks

INTERESTS

Slow Food & Permaculture

Cooking & Foraging

Art & Culture

Yoga | 200hr Teacher Training

