

DAVID J. POLLACK

Product & Design Strategist — discovery, AI product & evaluation

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SUMMARY

Product and design strategist. Seven years on the discovery end of product for banks and fintechs at EY and Capital One, then twenty months building an AI product end to end as founder of Prox — the strategy, the interface, and the evaluation program that says when it is wrong. I work in one order: find out what is worth building, build it, evaluate it, then ship. Built Prox to learn the whole loop; not founding again. Looking for a product team that needs AI features customers will trust. MBA + Master of Design.

HOW I WORK

Discover	Discovery research · interviews & surveys · personas & JTBD · usability testing · competitive analysis by thematic coding
Build	Product strategy · MVP definition · roadmap & prioritization (Now/Next/Beyond, RICE) · requirements · Figma · RAG · prompting
Evaluate	LLM evaluation · rubric design · failure taxonomies · LLM-as-judge calibration · inter-rater reliability · ship/hold gates · A/B tests
Ship	Release governance · stakeholder alignment · vendor & model evaluation · Amplitude · Tableau · Linear · Braintrust · Stripe

EXPERIENCE

Prox LLC	Chicago, IL
Founder — Product & Design (solo, self-funded)	Jan 2025 – Present
- Built and shipped a production AI product-discovery platform — RAG architecture (Voyage AI embeddings, pgvector, Claude) over 300K+ products — and designed the interface, from the clarifying flow to the project boards. Moving search from keyword to semantic retrieval cut a typical session from six turns to two. - Had no way to tell which component was producing bad answers, so built the evaluation program from scratch: a versioned persona, a stratified test set, and a hand-labeled failure taxonomy that put 71% of quality failures in a single layer — context extraction — and moved the fix from the generator to one upstream prompt. - Tested my own leading hypothesis against the whole dataset before writing it down; it had no signal. Isolated the real cause and rewrote the findings to match the evidence. - Set ship/hold gates before results came in, on a judge locked for reproducibility over a newer, less consistent model. A gate returned HOLD on a redesign I had built; I retired it, fixed the retrieval bug the same run exposed, and cut off-target recommendations from 4 in 7 to none. - Took the paid tier live on Stripe as a single reversible switch, behind a security gate every release passes — tenant isolation, ownership-scoped access, consent signals, right-to-erasure.	
Prudential Financial	Chicago, IL
Manager, UX Research — contract; led discovery research for enterprise product initiatives	Jul 2024 – Sep 2024
Capital One	Chicago, IL
Design Strategy Manager (Product Strategy & Delivery), Capital One Travel	Jul 2022 – Mar 2024
- Led discovery research and product delivery through 84% year-over-year growth (\$45M → \$83M) while NPS held well above the travel-industry norm. - Coded the home screens of 30 competitor platforms the way you would code interview transcripts, turned the prevalence of each content type into a directional framework, and translated it into a vision for the travel hub. The method fed the team's product-vision work and earned formal company recognition. - Unblocked a stalled traveler-profile MVP by mapping evidence against importance and sequencing it Now / Next / Beyond; aligned two product teams and partners at Hopper, and it shipped. - Co-led the usability study that turned vague NPS-detractor feedback into roadmap-ready proposals, several adopted into the 2024 roadmap; the itinerary research that followed scoped a year-long build with Hopper.	
Fifty Thousand Feet	Chicago, IL
Lead Brand Strategist (Product Strategy & Go-to-Market)	Sep 2021 – Jul 2022
Defined the value proposition and messaging for Sesami's AI-driven cash-management platform from quantitative discovery research, and aligned product, engineering and marketing on go-to-market. Ran positioning for WEX Corporate Payments-as-a-Service with WEX and Mastercard.	
EY	Chicago, IL
Manager, UX Research & Strategy (Product Discovery & Strategy)	Jul 2019 – Aug 2021
Led discovery for Barclays' freelancer marketplace, from interviews through concept testing and a national survey. The core insight — freelancers can't connect what they earn to how they get paid — defined the MVP and got the engagement extended. Owned research across Morgan Stanley's wealth-management product lines, synthesized into prioritized recommendations for executives.	

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION

Illinois Institute of Technology — MBA (Stuart) + Master of Design (Institute of Design), 2019 · Indiana University — BS, 2010 · Microsoft AI Product Manager Certificate, 2026