

Benjamin C. Lister

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Overview

I'm a design leader with 19 years in product design and design systems across startups and enterprise companies. At Okta, I designed components, built a Figma plugin to migrate 500+ components and styles, and improved processes on the Odyssey Design System team. At Sprout Social, as the first design hire, I co-created the Seeds design system, achieving 100% adoption in 14 months as the company scaled from startup to IPO. At Gusto, I revitalized their design system—rebranding it as Workbench—established governance models, implemented accessibility best practices, and rebuilt the Figma library, working hands-on to drive 100% adoption across design in 4 months. I excel in roles blending hands-on design with strategic leadership, systems thinking, and mentoring, with the unique ability to bridge design and development through my strong technical skills.

Experience

STAFF PRODUCT DESIGNER, OKTA, INC; SAN FRANCISCO, CA – OCTOBER 2023-APRIL 2025

- Led key initiatives for Okta's open source Odyssey Design System, including component design, strategic planning, and cross-functional enablement.
- Built an internal Figma plugin that automated the migration of 500+ legacy components and styles to Odyssey, resulting in adoption by five internal teams within three months.
- Helped define and scale intake, contribution, and governance frameworks that aligned Odyssey with platform teams and enabled them to ship consistent, system-compliant designs faster.
- Designed and developed four new components end to end in 2024, including a flexible Stepper component that simplified user flows across multiple product areas.
- Led the migration from Figma styles to variables, significantly reducing component variants and improving maintainability.
- Launched and authored a quarterly design system newsletter reaching 1,000+ employees and executives, increasing system visibility and accelerating adoption.
- Developed AI-powered automations for system intake and documentation updates, reducing manual touch points by approximately 50%.
- Mentored team members and developed onboarding resources for new designers and engineers.

PRODUCT DESIGNER (PRINCIPAL LEVEL), GEM; SAN FRANCISCO, CA – JUNE 2022-APRIL 2023

- Led design for Gem's Analytics suite, collaborating with engineering and product to ship features supporting strategic workforce planning and recruiting operations.
- Served as lead designer for Gem's Capacity Planner, owning the product end to end. Partnered with my PM to conduct research with 35 customers, leading synthesis and ideation. Created low- and high-fidelity prototypes and ran cross-functional workshops to define a scalable planning tool used by startups and enterprise talent teams.
- Designed and prototyped concepts for Gem's flagship sourcing tool, including AI-powered suggestion and automation features.

STAFF PRODUCT DESIGNER, GUSTO; SAN FRANCISCO, CA – APRIL 2020-APRIL 2022

- Led the revitalization of Gusto's design system, rebranding it as Workbench and driving strategy for both the public documentation website and Figma library.
- Rebuilt the product design Figma kit, achieving 100% adoption across design in 4 months and establishing 1:1 parity between design and code components over an 8-month period.
- Introduced 12 new components and comprehensive documentation for 50 components, including usage guidelines and accessibility standards.
- Established governance models, contribution frameworks, and design specifications to scale the system effectively.
- Defined and documented Gusto's design language and token system, creating supporting Figma plugins and templates for implementation.
- Developed intake processes and automated workflows for system requests, contributions, and updates.
- Created a real-time dashboard to track adoption metrics and report system health to EPD leadership.
- Implemented cross-functional working groups and team rituals to boost collaboration and system adoption.

STAFF PRODUCT DESIGNER (DESIGN SYSTEMS LEAD), SPROUT SOCIAL – CHICAGO, IL – AUGUST 2010-APRIL 2020

- Joined as Sprout's first design hire, growing with the company from 8 to 700 employees and \$0 to \$120M ARR before its IPO.
- Built and led a design system team of four, serving as the individual contributor lead and product owner.
- Led the design of Sprout's public-facing Seeds Design System, achieving 100% adoption across the web platform in 14 months and establishing the foundation for the company's 2019 product redesign.

- Designed over a dozen components end-to-end and established documentation standards for 40+ components.
- Led two enablement-focused working groups, partnering with product and engineering to drive adoption and monitor system health.
- Worked closely with engineers to define component APIs and co-authored the system's open source design tokens.
- Launched Sprout's design operations practice in 2020, auditing tooling needs, establishing recurring team rituals, and mentoring designers.

DESIGNER, EMMIS INTERACTIVE – CHICAGO, IL – JANUARY 2009-SEPTEMBER 2010

- Established responsive HTML/CSS standards and implemented a template system while collaborating with the design team.

ANALYST/DEVELOPER, CAXY CONSULTING CHICAGO, IL – AUGUST 2006-DECEMBER 2008

- Led front-end development for enterprise clients projects including Ford Motor Company and Hyatt, focusing on accessible HTML/CSS implementation and UI design.

Education

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI – BBA, E-Business Design (CIS), Graduated

Writing

- ["Small Steps, Big Changes"](#) (2020) - Blog post on *Design Systems For Figma*
- ["Designing Our Design Systems Team"](#) (2018)
- ["Design System Ambassadors"](#) (2018)
- ["How we Build Prototypes at Sprout Social"](#) (2014) - Prototype Camp Chicago Talk
- ["Building a Custom Icon Font"](#) (2013)

Talks, Citations, and Press

- [Toronto Design Systems Community Meetup](#) (2021) - Inside Design Systems: Workbench
- Perez-Cruz, Y., *Expressive Design Systems* (2019) - Quoted p.110

- Couldwell, A. *Laying The Foundations* (2019) - Quoted p.282, p.284, work cited p.262, p.263
- Inside Design by InVision: "Steal these ideas from the Sprout Social design team" (2018)
- Smashing Magazine: Color Theory for Designers, Part 1: The Meaning of Color (2010)
- Smashing Magazine: Showcase of Academic and Higher Education Websites (2010)