

Pekka Toppi

Design Lead | Head, Lead and Staff Product Design

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PROFILE

Design leader with 25 years in complex B2B and enterprise domains: telecom, broadcast, dealer management, industrial ERP. Currently design lead on a dealer management SaaS replacing three legacy platforms across 400+ dealerships, and building an AI-assisted design practice used across a media group.

I build products and the organisations that make them, and I own product definition alongside UX. Deliberately hands-on through three lead roles of increasing scope.

EXPERIENCE

Design Lead, Alma

2023 - present | Jyväskylä, Finland

Design lead on a dealer management SaaS replacing three legacy platforms serving 400+ Finnish dealerships. Own product definition and PRDs alongside UX/UI. Line-manage one UX designer.

- Rebuilt an early-stage project (roughly 25% of views, an outdated requirements document) into a shipped product: new PRDs and business definitions, new design language, essentially every view redesigned. Alma's largest development undertaking to date.
- Drove the core architectural decision to abandon enforced sales workflows in favour of flexible deal-building with heavy activity monitoring, winning over resistant architects, executives and clients through prototypes and sustained argument.
- Now in production, with dealerships migrated from our own legacy systems and others won from competing platforms.
- Modernised how a mature design organisation works: a product operating model, and a shift from handovers to overlapping co-working across business, design, development and QA.
- Built an AI-assisted design practice across four architectural generations (Python and Azure AI scripts, to skills, to an agentic workflow). In daily use by design and product staff across two enterprise SaaS products; reduced a designer-week of work to one or two days.
- Member of Alma's group-wide Core AI team, one of two representing UX and product design across the group's companies. Mentor other teams building their own AI-assisted workflows.
- Mentored a junior designer to intermediate level over the course of the project.

Independent Design Consultant, Self-employed

2016 - 2023 | Finland

Ran my own design practice, helping Finnish startups and SMEs brand, build and launch their first products.

- Delivered full 0-to-1 engagements spanning brand, product definition and UX, as well as focused UX and strategy mandates.
- Clients ranged from startups to large multinational corporations.
- Continued as expert design consultant to Qvantel following my departure.

Lead Designer, Qvantel

2015 - 2016 | Finland

Following Qvantel's 2014 acquisition of Onesto and full integration in 2015, our design team became Qvantel's central design organisation, covering around 12 core products in a 1000-person company.

- Grew the design organisation to 14 and established UX as a core role in every product team, a permanent change to how products were built.
- Created Qvantel's first design system, adopted across all new products and still in place today. Refreshed brand and style guides.
- Scaled the enterprise design operating model across product teams, pairing each designer with a business architect and a solution architect for joint product definition.
- Supported and mentored designers embedded in customer teams outside my reporting line.

Lead Designer, Onesto

2011 - 2015 | Finland

First design hire at a sub-10-person company with no design function. Built it to a quarter of company headcount.

- Headhunted and hired the entire design team including the creative director. Split leadership so I retained design and content leadership while he took line management.
- Established design as the company's competitive differentiator, enabling a small firm to win international telecom IT contracts against far larger incumbents, and a direct factor in Qvantel's decision to acquire.
- Developed the enterprise design operating model: product-led definition with business, design and technology contributing equally, and experience considered in layers from usability through service design to employee and stakeholder experience.
- Most designers from the team now hold leadership positions elsewhere. Many stepped from mid or senior to lead level during their time on the team.

Senior UX Designer, Digia

2010 - 2011 | Finland

- Concept creation and solution design for large enterprise clients. Acted as product owner and project leader for the mobile concept creation team.

Interaction Designer, BBC

2009 - 2010 | London, United Kingdom

- Core design team. Created designs and guidelines for pan-BBC design patterns and main website elements.
- Lead interaction design on the unified membership platform, consolidating more than 10 separate login systems into a single pan-BBC account. Shipped and still in production.

Earlier roles, Various

2000 - 2009 | Finland

- Usability specialist in the industrial sector. Software developer and client-side architect (Java, C#). Self-employed front-end developer (LAMP stack, payment gateways, single sign-on integrations).

EDUCATION

M.Sc. (Economics), University of Jyväskylä

Focus on human-computer interaction and organisational theory.

SKILLS

Leadership: design organisation building, hiring, mentoring, line management, operating model design, design systems.

Product: product definition, PRDs, business requirements, product strategy, stakeholder alignment.

Design: UX design, UI design, service design, interaction design, prototyping, user research, usability testing.

Technical: front-end and full-stack background, AI-assisted design workflows, agentic tooling, Figma.

Languages: Finnish (native), English (fluent).