

# Ashley Cook

User Experience Leader, Researcher & Designer

## MAKING UX BETTER

### INFORMATION



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### PROFILE

Practicing user evangelist and leader, zealously dedicated to making User Experiences better by relentlessly acquiring specialization in any skill necessary to ensure intuitive, productive and delightful interactions with technology.

### SPECIALTIES

user experience strategy and team leadership, user research and analysis (generative and evaluative), requirements engineering, business process modeling and re-engineering, information architecture, communication design, user-centered design, user interface standards, interaction design, mixed method customized usability evaluation, front-end software development and software release planning, agile and waterfall software development methodologies, data analytics and visualization, usability in database design and policy development, teleworking, management of remote distributed teams

### EXPERIENCE

2018 – Present **Veracity Consulting Group**, Senior User Experience Consultant  
*Client: Veteran Benefits Administration (Benefits Appeals and Memorials Portfolio and Benefits Integration Platform)*

- Partnered with an interdisciplinary team to design and form a portfolio for the management of IT investments.
- Supported the new portfolio through a SAFe Agile transformation, consulting on the integration of user experience and human centered design practices.
- Developed user satisfaction metrics for measurement across the portfolio.
- Led user research initiatives and design thinking workshops to support identification of innovative solutions for the decommissioning of VA's legacy mainframe database.
- Designed and led strategic communications, enabling solution teams and executives across divergent business organizations to successfully collaborate to identify, define, develop and deploy solutions to the field.

2002 – 2018 **General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT)/CSRA/SRA**, Master Human Factors Engineer & Manager  
*Selected Clients: Veteran Health Administration (Human Factors Engineering), Environmental Protection Agency (ENERGY STAR, Superfund, Automated System Security Evaluation and Remediation Tracking System)*

- Led teams of human factors professionals in usability design, engineering, and evaluation methods, as well as user centered requirements gathering and analysis. In my final contract engagement, over a period of 5 years, I:
  - Led a team of 7 engineers (at varying levels of expertise) and managed the execution of approximately 1200 usability research, evaluation and design projects of varying levels of complexity employing a wide variety of methods.
  - For each project, led the team in proactively identifying, defining and prioritizing high value UX research opportunities that align with key business strategies and objectives.
  - Ensured my team members proactively partnered and directly integrated into agile delivery teams to confirm the right research methods were leveraged at the right time in the delivery process to maximize value.
  - Coached my team in communicating UX research findings and insights in a clear, concise, and compelling manner that was tailored to align with organizations' needs and focus.
  - During this time, my team published 8 academic articles or posters, and presented at various conferences including the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) and Healthcare Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS) annual conferences.
- Practiced as an advanced usability researcher, analyst and designer, focusing on challenging or strategically critical deliverables, applying a broad set of user-centered research, design and evaluation methods.

### *GDIT/CSRA/SRA Experience Continued*

- Mentored team members, individually and collectively, to continuously improve the individual's and team's ability to produce better user experiences.
- Identified usability goals with stakeholders and development teams for the purposes of strategically selecting appropriate usability design and evaluation methods to accomplish goals.
- Served as a consultant and liaison to stakeholder and software development teams throughout IT product lifecycles, coaching through the tradeoffs with technology, resources and software development methodology to maximize positive impact on the user experience of the final product.
- Worked directly with key stakeholders and executives to identify and align business and software product goals with user needs to deliver valuable user experiences and optimal business value.
- Facilitated decision making for prioritization of software product features by identifying interdependencies, mapping those to user needs and development constraints, and thereby establishing and maintaining a roadmap to deliver maximum value to the user base and business owners as efficiently as possible

#### 2002 (Feb-Jun) **Independent User Experience Designer & Consultant**

*Client: Consumer Electronics Association*

- Planned and conducted usability testing, provided recommendations on correcting issues and assisted the development team in revising documentation and code.
- Provided consultation on technology selection and implementation strategy.

#### 1999 – 2002 **First Consulting Group, Senior Software Development Specialist**

*Clients: Blue Cross Blue Shield, Catholic Health Services of NY*

- Designed user experiences for a variety of internet and intranet websites and web-based applications.
- Directed teams in design and documentation of user experiences, including information architectures and user interfaces.
- Implemented user experiences, coding in front-end Internet technologies and graphics development.
- Evaluated and consulted on selection of third party software such as Content Management Systems and Portal solutions.

### **EXPERTISE**

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**Leadership Skills:** mentorship, career and consultancy coaching, team and individual workload management using Kanban, positive motivation strategies, team retrospectives, conflict mediation, strength-based leadership

**Techniques and Methods:** user needs analysis, Cognitive Task Analysis (CTA), interviewing, diary study, rapid ethnography, focus group, survey design, cognitive walkthrough, contextual inquiry, qualitative data coding (inductive and/or deductive), Business Process Model Notation (BPMN), requirements traceability and management, Agile story development, journey mapping and service blueprinting, persona development, story mapping, story boarding, scenario development, wireframing, UI design and pattern development, card sorting (open and closed), heuristic evaluation, participatory heuristic evaluation, usability testing (formative and summative, moderated and unmoderated, remote and in person), Rapid Iterative Testing and Evaluation (RITE)

**Tools:** Morae, Optimal Sort, UserZoom, SurveyMonkey, Reflector, Atlassian Suite (JIRA, Confluence), Trello, Snagit, iRise, Balsamiq, Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Acrobat), MS Power BI, MS Office (advanced skills in Visio, Excel, PowerPoint and Project), Web Conferencing (WebEx, Skype, Zoom)

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

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- Dobre, J., Harrington, C., Herout, J., Weir, C., Cook, A., Carter, T., Baggetta, D., & Relihan, W. (2017). Rapid Heuristic Evaluation: Ensuring Fast and Reliable Usability Support. Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Annual Meeting, 61(1), 610–614.
- Haun J.N., Chavez M., Nazi K., Antinori N., Melillo C., Cotner B.A., Hathaway W., Cook A., Wilck N., Noonan A. (2017). Veterans' Preferences for Exchanging Information Using Veterans Affairs Health Information Technologies: Focus Group Results and Modeling Simulations. Journal of Medical Internet Research, 19(10)
- Cook, A., & Herout, J. (2015). Developing a Usability Ranking System for Findings in Health Information Technology Products. Proceedings of the International Symposium on Human Factors and Ergonomics in Health Care, 4(1), 23–28.

## HONORS & AWARDS

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- 2012 Recognized as SRA Principal and SRA Knowledge Star.
- 2011 Accepted as an instructor for SRAU. Designed and instructed the course “Agile & User Centered Design: Creating Usable Products with Scrum” for the Fall 2011, Spring 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters. Invited as a guest speaker for the Fall 2012 semester course offering “Agile for Government”. These courses were taught entirely via remote technologies and made extensive use of Cisco’s WebEx clients.
- 2007 Recognized as SRA Civil Sector Employee of the Month (as a full time teleworker).
- 2004 Nominated and received an Annual Staff Bonus for three consecutive years (2004, 2005, 2006) for exceptional contributions during a fiscal year.
- 2001 First Consulting Group (FCG) Innovation Award. Invited as an instructor for FCG University. Designed and delivered the course “Introduction to Information Architecture.” Doghouse Technology Services Top Dog Award.

## EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION

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- 2019 Certified SAFe® 4 Agilist
- 2018 Nielsen Norman Group (NN/g) UX Certified: UX Management Specialty (UXC#1022314) Including the following courses: Engaging Stakeholders to Build Buy-In, Leading Highly Effective UX Teams, Being a UX Leader: Essential Skills for Any UX Practitioner, User Experience Deliverables, Managing User Experience Strategy
- 2017 Short Course in Sociotechnical Systems (Systems Engineering Initiative for Patient Safety (SEIPS))
- 2001 Introduction to Human Computer Interaction (University of Maryland)
- 1999 Bachelor of Arts, Biology with Specialization in Cell and Genetics (University of Virginia)

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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- User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA), Washington, DC Chapter
- Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), Special Interest Group Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI) and ACM Committee on Women (ACM-W) (Member #8561816)
- Ladies that UX (LTUX), Richmond Chapter
- Richmond UX (RUX)

## SECURITY CLEARANCE

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Top Secret (*not current, debriefed January 2011*)