

ASHLEY E COOK

USER EXPERIENCE DIRECTOR

UX Strategy & Maturity • UX Research • Human-Centered Digital Transformation

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CONNECTING WHAT MATTERS TO PEOPLE WITH WHAT MATTERS TO BUSINESS

Transformational UX leader with 20+ years aligning human needs and business strategy to drive meaningful outcomes. I build partnerships that enable intuitive, productive, and delightful digital experiences, especially during moments of change. Known for balancing rigor and pragmatism to drive better questions, smarter decisions, and stronger results.

RELEVANT CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Built and scaled user research and insights practices that drive business value.** Led the creation and growth of UX research capabilities within multiple organizations, embedding insight-driven methods into delivery and strategy. Drove millions in consulting revenue annually, while elevating team and client UX maturity.
- **Integrated research into fast-paced delivery environments.** Embedded mixed-methods research into Agile workflows, shifting perceptions that UX slows delivery. Accelerated product decisions, improved stakeholder alignment, and increased demand for insight-driven work.
- **Led high-impact programs across sectors.** Directed UX strategy and research for digital transformations in Fortune 100 and federal environments. Improved adoption, de-risked decision-making, and aligned human needs with mission-critical outcomes.
- **Enabled organizations to listen, measure, and evolve.** Designed benchmarking programs, defined experience KPIs, and established feedback loops to measure and mature customer and employee experiences at scale.
- **Cultivated next-generation UX leadership.** Mentored early, mid and senior career professionals and coached clients to build internal capability. Fostered cultures of curiosity, storytelling, and shared ownership that advanced UX maturity across teams and programs.
- **Selected Clients:** Johnson & Johnson, Gilead, MetLife, Hertz, Truist, Cisco, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Catholic Health Services of New York, Department of Veteran Affairs (VHA, VBA & NCA)

RECENT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director, Research & Insights

Veracity Consulting Group, an RGP Company • Richmond, VA (Hybrid)

Aug 2018 – Jun 2025

- Built and led Veracity's Research & Insights practice, integrating UX research into delivery and business strategy, contributing to \$6M+ in sales and elevating the firm's consulting maturity.
- Integrated user research into Agile and SAFe workflows, adapting methods for speed and rigor. Enabled teams to make fast, insight-driven decisions aligned with product and user goals.
- Led user research for Fortune 100 and federal clients, aligning insights with transformation goals to de-risk decisions and improve user outcomes across industries.

- Developed the concept for a “research cookbook” and led its creation and curation to support democratized research across consulting practices. Equipped consultants with adaptable methods, tools, and guidance, enabling broader application of user research within service offerings and enhancing the integration of insights across strategy, design, and delivery.
- Created UX benchmarking programs and defined KPIs to measure experience quality, enabling clients to track progress and prioritize improvements over time.
- Coached clients to embed insight-driven thinking into their work, using radical transparency and continuous listening to elevate the voice of the human in executive decisions.
- Mentored UX researchers to lead with confidence in high-stakes work, strengthening delivery and scaling insight impact across complex programs.

Master Human Factors Engineer & Manager

General Dynamics Information Technology • Richmond, VA (Remote)

Dec 2015 - Jul 2018

- Built and led a 7-person human factors team delivering approximately 1,200 UX research and design projects for a large federal agency focused on healthcare delivery. Resulted in measurably improving usability across complex systems and established a model of research excellence.
- Overcame resistance to UX research in Agile by adapting methods for speed and value, embedding researchers in delivery teams and proving that insights could enhance velocity, not slow it down.
- Led the development of a Usability Body of Knowledge (BoK) and supporting practices to operationalize user research at scale. Advanced the democratization of research and enabled rapid upskilling of practitioners, equipping teams to deliver consistent, high-quality insights across hundreds of projects.
- Improved research impact by coaching teams to tailor insights for varied audiences, increasing executive engagement and ensuring findings influenced key product and business decisions.
- Encouraged publication and conference talks across the team, leading to 8 team-authored peer-reviewed papers that raised visibility of UX research and reinforced the team’s credibility.

Principal UX Consultant

SRA, a CSRA Company • Richmond, VA (Hybrid)

Oct 2002 - Nov 2015

- Served as UX strategist for complex federal programs, aligning user needs with business goals to guide product strategy and improve adoption and mission outcomes.
- Mentored early-career UX professionals during the formative years of SRA’s practice, helping build lasting research capability and a strong foundation for UX maturity.
- Taught “Agile & UCD” for three semesters and coached delivery teams to embed UX into iterative workflows, accelerating feedback-driven improvements and improving usability.
- Applied UX research to feature prioritization by mapping user needs to business goals and technical feasibility, reducing rework, aligning delivery with real user value and increasing delivery efficiency.

PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- User Experience Designer & Consultant, Independent Freelance, Arlington, VA (Hybrid)
- Senior Software Development Specialist, First Consulting Group, McLean, VA (On-site)

HONORS & AFFILIATIONS

- SRA Knowledge Star, FCG Innovation Award, Doghouse Technology Services Top Dog Award
- Instructor: “Agile & User Centered Design” (SRAU), “Agile for Government” (SRAU), “Introduction to Information Architecture” (FCG Conference)
- Member: UXPA DC Chapter, ACM SIGCHI & ACM-W
- Security Clearance: Top Secret (not current)

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

- UX Certified: Nielsen Norman Group (NN/g) UX Management Specialty (UXC#1022314)
- Agile Certified: SAFe Agilist
- Short Course: Sociotechnical Systems (SEIPS)
- Coursework: Introduction to Human Computer Interaction (University of Maryland)
- Bachelor of Arts, Biology (Cell and Genetics Specialization) (University of Virginia)

SKILLS & CAPABILITIES

Leadership: research team development, mentorship, professional development, career and consultancy coaching, team and individual workload management, strength-based leadership, distributed teams, conflict mediation, team retrospectives, continuous improvement

Research Techniques & UX Methods: mixed methods research (qualitative, quantitative, behavioral, attitudinal), user needs analysis, contextual inquiry, Cognitive Task Analysis (CTA), interviewing (structured, semi-structured, unstructured), diary study, rapid ethnography, focus groups, surveys, cognitive walkthrough, card sorting (open and closed), heuristic evaluation, first click testing, A/B testing, usability testing (formative and summative, moderated and unmoderated, remote and in person), Rapid Iterative Testing and Evaluation (RITE), qualitative data coding (inductive and/or deductive), statistical analysis, Business Process Model Notation (BPMN), requirements traceability and management, persona centered Agile user stories and scenario based epic development, journey mapping, service blueprinting, persona development, story mapping, story boarding, scenario development, wireframing, UI design and pattern development, insight synthesis, research roadmaps, product roadmaps

Research Operations & Enablement: democratized research models, scalable research enablement, insight repositories, reusable research frameworks, research training & onboarding, cross-functional research facilitation, learning agenda development, research alignment with product strategy, portfolio-level insight management and tracking, portfolio-wide research planning

Strategic Influence & Communication: executive stakeholder engagement and alignment, research storytelling, tailoring insights for diverse audiences, insights-to-action translation, facilitated action prioritization, executive research briefs, senior leadership presentation, cross-functional alignment

Industries: Healthcare (provider & payor), Pharmaceuticals, Technology, Transportation, Finance, Professional Services, U.S. Federal Government

Business Functions: Core Service Delivery, Digital Transformation & Business Optimization, Information Technology & Enterprise Architecture, Global Talent Management & Human Resources, Supply Chain, Procure to Pay, Mergers & Acquisitions, Customer Service & Call Center Performance