

ELISSA JAMES FITZGERALD

Creative Director



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foreverfitzcreative.com

Elevating brands through innovative design, strategic storytelling, and market research...

Successfully owned and operated design business, bringing the same care and results driven dedication to yours.

Visionary leader, seamlessly blending creative design with program and change management, business analysis, and strategic communication. Known for transforming complex data into powerful, human-centered narratives that are consumable, and propel industries forward. Over 15 years of transforming challenges into breakthrough successes, and creating designs that engage global audiences, inspire action, and drive impact.

CORE EXPERTISE / SKILLS

Brand & Marketing:

Brand Development, Architecture, & Management;
Brand Integration, Optimization, & Performance Analysis;
Marketing Strategy; Asset Management; Campaigns

Design, Web & Visual Storytelling:

User Experience Design; Strategy & Execution; Web
Design/Development; Video Production; Data Analytics

Project & Change Management:

Oversight & Planning from concept to final delivery; Agile
Methodologies; Dashboard Development; Metrics (KPI)
Tracking; Workflow Automation

Technical Proficiency:

Adobe Creative Cloud (Adobe CC); Typography, Video;
Midjourney; AI-driven Solutions; Microsoft Office; Figma; Tableau;
ORACLE Eloqua; Miro; Power BI; Jira; Apple & Windows OS

Leadership & Organizational Support:

Executive Communications & Presentations; Leadership & Partner
Relationships; Stakeholder & People Management; Customer
& Vendor Management; Mentorship; Coaching; Organizational
Support; Facilitation & Planning; Interviewing & Recruitment;
Software Training; Technology Training

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cisco Systems Inc. • RTP, NC / Remote

2014 - 2024

Creative Director, Design & Brand Marketing

Dec 2018 - Nov 2024

- Achieved a 240% YoY increase in brand visibility and engagement at the Cisco Live customer summit by crafting and executing a data-driven marketing strategy.
- Garnered a 40% increase in global corporate awareness and engagement with an improved brand marketing strategy and KPI tracking, resulting in improved customer experience across Cisco.
- Launched the usage of innovative tools, including the first-ever announcement bot, reaching 80,000 recipients, and securing features on Cisco global TV and the employee website.
- Led UX design for executive dashboards, leveraging experience strategy and AI-driven insights to improve customer support workflows and decision-making.
- Pioneered Agile methodologies to elevate team performance, fostering a culture of iterative delivery, shared ownership, and adaptive planning.
- Directed cross-functional teams while facilitating executive-level alignment through regular stakeholder check-ins – ensuring visibility, accelerating decisions, and keeping key priorities on track.

UX & Brand Manager | Business Analyst | Change Manager

Mar 2017 - Dec 2018

- Successfully executed the seamless development, launch, and ongoing ownership of the global UX across three distinct web platforms (WEM, SharePoint, CloudBuilder/SalesConnect), ensuring a unified and intuitive experience for users.
- Created dynamic Tableau dashboards for quarterly operational reviews, enhancing performance tracking and enabling stakeholders to quickly identify trends, uncover inefficiencies, and take informed, data-driven actions.
- Managed successful migration of internal website platforms with UX research, user testing, and design improvements.
- Designed infographics and human-centered UX solutions, aligning user needs, business goals, and capabilities.

Executive Communications Specialist

- Enhanced resource access and internal engagement by designing and managing the VP's Employee Community webpage.
- Facilitated Director-level web sessions for over 300 attendees, aligning teams with business objectives.
- Developed enablement videos that supported the Sales organization's alignment with Customer Experience offerings.

Program Manager | Design Lead

Dec 2014 - Mar 2017

- Led leadership summits and planning offsites for the executive staff, building strategic alignment and collaboration.
- Organized and marketed the Global Pi-athlon program, improving engineering scripting skills across global teams.
- Produced and edited a global awareness video spotlighting the millennial workforce and their perspectives – presented to leadership to drive engagement and influence strategy.

Program Manager | Design Lead

Jan 2014 - Dec 2014

- Directed strategic planning and change management initiatives integrating and aligning two organizations under a single head office.
- Developed a metrics framework to manage organizational KPIs efficiently, ensuring alignment with strategic goals.
- Conducted quarterly financial and workforce heat mapping and reporting, providing insights for decision-making.

The AroundCampus Group • Chapel Hill, NC

2013 - 2014

Design & Marketing Manager | Customer Relations Manager

- Lead a team of multidisciplinary creatives at varying levels of experience and worked cross-functionally with sales teams.
- Spearheaded student recruitment initiatives across 40+ college markets nationwide, leading the execution of high-impact marketing projects to drive enrollment growth.
- Enhanced team performance while coaching and training over 600 sales interns and 20-40 production interns.
- Led the rebranding of a 40-year-old company, developing a comprehensive corporate brand guide and overseeing its implementation.

Elissa James Designs • Raleigh, NC

2007 - 2014

Owner | Creative Director

- Developed compelling marketing campaign and designs supporting military initiatives, displayed in retail stores and restaurants along the entire U.S. East Coast.
- Created branding, including the logo and an elaborate website for the Cisco-founded Connected Women of NC group, promoting women's empowerment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).
- Partnered with non-profit HerSpark to develop brand and marketing strategies, enhancing women's participation in STEM.
- Boosted revenue for Meridian North Pharmacy by redesigning its brand and updating existing assets for consistency.
- Increased attendance at Pergo's factory outlet's grand opening through the design of impactful static and animated advertisements as part of a strategic marketing campaign.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

- **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design**, Bowling Green State University • Ohio

OTHER CONTINUOUS LEARNING & TRAINING:

Prosci Certified-Change Management | Lean Change Management Training | Agile Methodologies | PMP Training-PMI
Forrester CX Professional Certified | Design Thinking Training | Data Story Workshop-Duarte Academy
Stand & Deliver Leadership Development | JUMP-Women's Leadership Program

KEY ACCOLADES

- Won Cisco's global contest for best 20th Anniversary design.
- Branded & Designed Cisco's first site-wide learning series to promote cross-functional knowledge.
- Developed the interior design strategy and 3D mockup for Cisco's Critical Incident Center (CIC).
- Established a recruitment-focused marketing film with Cisco TV to attract potential new hires.



"Elissa James is the consummate designer. She took a basic concept and made it come alive. She was able to capture the essence of the project and tie in elements of my content. I have no doubt that sales were significantly improved as a result of Elissa's design. An amazing talent, on time and very reliable, I would HIGHLY RECOMMEND Elissa for any graphics project where the client wants to stand head and shoulders above the competition."

– **Chuck Hester** *Owner - Entrepreneur*

"Elissa, You've been through many situations that have been less than desirable – despite difficult, short cycle times, lack of clarity, and changing business requirements, you've always delivered. I applaud your growth, resilience, & strength."

– **Scott Lawrence** *Director - Cisco*

"Elissa, you are a phenomenal professional."

– **Claudia Kittredge** *Sr. Director - Cisco*

"Elissa has a unique blend of technical and creative skills to complement her can-do attitude. Whether she's setting up the back end of a chatbot or webpage, or designing a visually appealing front-end, she reliably creates and delivers impactful solutions. She is also talented at communications and storytelling, creating engaging content. As a fellow creative, I greatly valued collaborating and running ideas by her. I could always rely on her to provide constructive feedback and ask important questions that I had not considered, to improve project outcomes. Not only is she a joy to work with, her dedication and expertise make her an invaluable member of any team. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her."

– **Tori Salmon** *Content Designer - Cisco*

"Your talent is rare and quite special - it has the power to both make work more effective and recognizable, but also to just make people HAPPY! Thank you for sharing your gifts with us."

– **Nancy Galligan** *Sr. Director - Cisco*

"EJ, Thank you for the amazing work you have done in moving our NPS program to a continuous cadence. Cisco has taken a major leap forward toward our goal of embedding customer feedback into daily routines, and it's in no small part thanks to your persistence and leadership! Your contributions to this project were invaluable and greatly appreciated. Your hard work, dedication, and attention to detail have not gone unnoticed, and I am proud to have you on our team."

– **Evan Reiss** *VP - Cisco*

"Another great keeper of the culture. Much appreciated."

– **Tom Berghoff** *SVP - Cisco*

