

Alex Cowles

Born: 7th August 1983 in Scotland.

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What Am I?

Most recently I was **Creative Director** at Brainnwave.

I was doing the job of **head of product design and UX** by defining and creating our visual product language, wireframes, prototypes, platform layouts, library and digital assets.

I was the **marketing and graphic designer**, meaning anything from designing marketing and sales materials for both web and print, to managing video production and editing.

I was **web designer and front end developer**, involving conceptualising, designing and building external facing websites for the company and our products right through to building and maintaining documentation sites.

I was also on the **leadership and executive team**, so had a hand in company strategy, and managed other designers during a period of growth.

My Approach

In the 20 years I've been designing the user has always come first, so to call myself "user focused" or a "user experience" designer feels somewhat redundant. I feel any designer worth their chops should be considering the end user as standard (and this was always the case before "UX" or "UCD" appeared as distinct disciplines).

I find the combination of content **and** context to be paramount to effective design work. Physical context in terms of device, delivery and environment and context

in terms of where on the user journey does this piece of design exist? Content should, wherever possible, precede design and with both content, context and an understanding of the user - I can design most effectively.

Add to that the ability to span the gap between C-suite desires and user expectations, the gap between product needs and delivery capabilities and the gap between sales or marketing promises and the reality of an MVP and I find myself with a reasonably holistic view of design.

What I'm Hoping For

I'm most comfortable working in small organisations or with small teams. I find the pace of larger corporations can hamper creativity within design disciplines, but with the right autonomy and responsibility there's a degree of flexibility.

Having come from a product-based SaaS company

I would entertain agency work or consultancy-led approaches but I would be at home with the world of SaaS development, product management, release schedules, MVPs and so on.

The most important thing to me is finding a group of talented people to work with in order to do great things.

Experience

Brainnwave Ltd Creative Director

July 2017 - October 2024

- Promoted to the executive team and took a leadership role as Creative Director.
- Boosted brand awareness and company profile by re-designing and building Brainnwave's brand identity, website and marketing materials from the ground, up.
- Worked closely with teams in Canada and Australia to manage complex product development with investors.
- Responsible for marketing and sales support materials, internal and external documents and all creative aspects.
- Defined a full product design system and created suite of platform layouts, user flows and all interfaces.
- Managed a design team during a period of expansion and high workload.
- Took responsibility for recruitment processes, re-working company culture pages and recruitment postings making them the most visited pages on our website.
- Asked to additionally take on a sustainability officer role as I was confident with challenging the C-suite.

Mono Solutions Senior Designer

July 2016 - July 2017

- Swiftly embraced a SaaS product-orientated way of working with weekly releases and product development.
- Took ownership of "education" area of business, travelling to clients and running workshops.
- Brought in on multiple new product development threads to provide ideas, feedback and a strong understanding of the overall product.
- Contributed to both internal interface design, external-facing template design and marketing materials.
- Taken to Los Angeles alongside CTO and CCO to help on-board our biggest ever (multi-million-dollar) client.

East Creative Owner

July 2013 - July 2016

- Founded East as a limited company, set up to solve design and brand related problems for clients.
- Rebranded a private medical practice, increasing online enquiries and appointment numbers. The first crucial step towards current expansion.
- Created a high-end recruitment agency brand ID & site and helped launch it alongside their existing organisation.
- Worked with one of Scotland's premier investors to bring lasting value and improved market position to a number of new investments.
- Designed websites for a brand new brew-pub in Glasgow's city centre, a popular gin & spirits brand, a web content agency, a big-data analysis company, a NYC-based law firm and many other clients.

QueryClick
Senior Designer
October 2010 - July 2013

- Head hunted to be QueryClick's first designer.
- Rebranded the entire company, including everything from folder structure and internal documentation, to websites, stationary and even office decor and signage.
- Defined processes for creative work, setting a workflow and structure for future client work and employees.
- Proudly became brand ambassador as the small search marketing company grew from 6 to a 20-strong team in 2 prime locations with multinational SEO clients. Consistent branding played an integral part in this growth, making the company attractive and effective for potential clients as well as employees.
- Provided design as a service for clients including Ryanair, Hunter Boots, Allsaints and Aggreko.
- Brought back 3 years after leaving to fulfil a contract refresh of the website (with a focus on speed) as well as a number of additional brand items and illustrations.

Line Digital Designer
April 2007 - October 2010

- Fuelled by a desire to learn and improve I went from junior to senior designer in just 3 years.
- Managed IKEA's email marketing in Scotland, with regular emails to lists of 50,000+ recipients, and received a DADI Awards commendation for my work in 2009.
- Worked as part of a 3-strong team with Running Productions, LG and 20th Century Fox on a "Mission 1212" site linked to the 2008 film The Day The Earth Stood Still. The site and work received a BAFTA Scotland New Talent award.
- Won both a BIMA award and a DADI Best Use Of Visual Design award in 2010 for my work on the Digital Podge.
- Seconded to Tesco Bank for a month to manage their internal staff website design and updates.
- Worked on complex catalogue and ticketing sites for Edinburgh International Film Festival, Fringe Festival and Book Festival.
- Worked regularly with BBC International on countless marketing materials for Top Gear Magazine.
- Worked on a number of large financial websites for AEGON, Scottish Life and Standard Life.

Other Design Related Achievements

- 2022: Facilitated a work experience week for high-school student to help them understand the industry.
- 2017: Provided mentoring and guidance for a fellow designer in Edinburgh.

Designer
2006 - Present

- 2015: Attended the TEDx conference in Riga.
- 2014: Attended the last ever Brooklyn Beta conference in NYC.
- 2011: Presented my thoughts on the future of email marketing at Refresh Talks in Edinburgh.
- 2007: Won a number of awards for the design of my own portfolio site.
- 2006: Took a key role in the design of the USA-wide "Film Your Issue" campaign.

Education

BA(Hons) - Computer Arts

- Although admittedly not strictly design-led, I did learn a huge range of skills on the course, from traditional life drawing and photography to 3D modeling and animation in 3D Studio Max, HTML coding, Flash animation, Photoshop and even audio production methods.

University of Abertay Dundee

- My final year paper was on the notion that a picture can tell a thousand stories. I explored the history of non text-based, visual storytelling from cave paintings, to modern day advertising, including reading on the rhetoric of the image and how we perceive visual information from images.

Nice people saying nice things...

Alex is a very supportive manager, a very talented designer and an all round decent human being!

I learned a lot from our time working together, always felt I could come to him with questions or for advice and feel very grateful for the trust and faith he put in me in my first official product design role.

Helen Davies - Product Designer, Elevate Supply

Despite his seniority, he never imposed unnecessary pressure on me and instead created an atmosphere of collaboration and growth.

Alex's transparency and clarity during meetings not only fostered a productive work environment but also enhanced our understanding of overall product goals. I will genuinely miss working with Alex and learning from him!

Victoria Ameringer - Product Manager, Sinch ClickSend

Alex came on board at QueryClick and transformed our company brand. He has an excellent process and vision and is a great chap to boot.

I have no hesitation in recommending Alex as a designer, he's a first class professional.

Chris Liversidge - Director, QueryClick

Alex is among the rarest breed of designer I know: A genuinely creative thinker with all the taste, technical chops and efficiency to consistently execute his ideas to the full (and somehow on time).

Robbie Manson - Senior Product Designer, Facebook