

Fernando Casanova Ricaldoni

[linkedin.com/in/fernandocasanova](https://www.linkedin.com/in/fernandocasanova)

<https://fcasanova.vercel.app/>

Design Director | Head of Design | AI Products · Design Systems · Product Design

fcasanova@gmail.com · +55 48 99123 8473 · Florianópolis, Brazil
Portuguese citizen (EU) · UK right to work

Design leader with 20+ years of experience turning complex business problems into simple, human-centred products. Currently the founding design lead at a legal AI startup, building an AI-native B2B SaaS product from the ground up: product strategy, UX, design system, brand, and production frontend code. For me, design is fundamentally a problem-solving process.

My path spans industrial design and engineering, a consultancy I founded and ran for 12 years, and product design leadership across enterprise environments, with work for British Airways, Santander, AMEX, the NHS, and Titanbay. Most recently, as Design Director at Merkle, I led a UX/UI design team across four countries for brands including Disney, Kellogg's, and ASDA/George.

I'm most useful where things aren't completely figured out yet: shaping product direction, building teams and systems, and exploring what happens when AI becomes part of the product itself.

Professional Experience

Founding Design Lead @ Stealth AI Startup (Legal Tech)

Florianópolis, Brazil | 02/2026 - Present

- Leading product design for an AI-native legal intelligence platform from zero to one: product strategy, UX architecture, interaction design, design system, and brand.
- Designing and shipping production frontend code (React, TypeScript) through AI-assisted development (Claude Code, Codex), merged via engineering pull request review.
- Built the product design system as a single source of truth: Figma component library connected to the codebase via MCP, with synced design tokens and components.
- Defining the product's core interaction model for AI reasoning, provenance, and document generation in partnership with the founding team.

Design Director @ Merkle, a dentsu company

Merkle is a global experience consultancy with a heritage in data science and business performance.

Lisbon, Portugal | 05/2025 - 01/2026

- Led a global team of UX/UI designers across the UK, Portugal, India, and Brazil, acting as a hands-on design leader to shape vision, remove blockers, and deliver connected, human-centred experiences at scale for enterprise clients.
- Drove experience design strategy at the intersection of creativity, technology, and business, orchestrating digital, physical, and in-store touchpoints to increase customer engagement and measurable business outcomes.
- Partnered with global brands including Disney, Kellogg's, Santander, and ASDA/George to translate business objectives into customer-centric digital experiences across markets.
- Shaped Merkle's design vision as a player-coach, staying close to the craft through strategic discovery, problem framing, and key design reviews, while embedding AI-driven insights and rapid prototyping into future-ready design practices.
- Hired and onboarded three designers for the Lisbon team, and mentored the wider Merkle and dentsu design community, championing cross-market collaboration and the balance of craft, strategy, and innovation.
- Represented design externally and internally: speaker at UX Talks '25 (Lisbon, Web Summit Week), lecturer in Dentsu Lab's School of Big Thinking programme (London, Portugal, Edinburgh), and contributor to Merkle's Fast Currents series.

<http://www.merkle.com>

Manager, Customer Experience · Product & Service Design @ adidas

adidas GBS is the shared services organisation within adidas Group, one of the world's leading sports brands.

Porto, Portugal | 09/2023 - 05/2025

- Led cross-functional teams to deliver customer experience solutions across Finance, Procurement, and HR.
- Designed and implemented performance management and KPI tracking tools, improving usability, streamlining feedback, and establishing company-wide CX standards.
- Conducted user research and data analysis to uncover behavioural insights, reducing bottlenecks and enhancing overall experience.
- Managed global stakeholders to align user needs with business goals, ensuring smooth solution integration and adoption.
- Mapped and optimised customer journeys and internal systems using KPIs and analytics to drive continuous improvement.

<http://www.adidas.com>

Lead Product Designer @ Sparck / BJSS (now CGI)

Sparck is the design arm of British technology consultancy BJSS, now part of CGI.

Porto, Portugal & London, United Kingdom | 01/2022 - 09/2023

- Contributed to a high-impact consulting engagement for British Airways, leading to a comprehensive redesign of the customer experience and digital platform with significant improvements in usability and performance.
- Led a product design team to develop Titanbay's scalable B2B SaaS investment platform and design system, accelerating product development and reducing time-to-market.
- Collaborated with a multi-consultancy team to design and launch Banco de Fomento Angola's mobile banking app.
- Partnered with the NHS to design a new digital service supporting health innovators and providers, centralising resources and enabling data-driven technology adoption in healthcare.
- Consulted for William Hill on an ethical, engaging mobile app for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, prioritising responsible gambling and regulatory compliance.

<http://www.sparck.io>

Scientist · Design Researcher @ Fraunhofer AICOS

Fraunhofer AICOS is part of Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Europe's largest organisation for applied research.

Porto, Portugal | 06/2020 - 01/2022

- Managed projects and conducted research in UX, UI, and interaction design for smart devices and mobile apps, including self-reporting, ergonomics, and Industry 4.0 technologies such as exoskeletons.
- Key member of the Human-Centred Design team, leading conceptualisation, design, and user evaluation of new technologies in specialised scenarios.
- Translated user research insights into products and digital experiences integrated with real-world use.

<http://www.aicos.fraunhofer.com>

Design & Development Engineer @ Petainer

Petainer sets the benchmark in sustainable high-performance container packaging.

London, United Kingdom | 08/2018 - 06/2020

- Led new product development for sustainable packaging: design, prototyping, and testing for regulatory compliance and real-world reliability.
- Engineered injection-moulded components using DFMA to streamline manufacturability and assembly at scale.
- Partnered with suppliers and production teams to optimise processes, improving efficiency and product quality from concept to launch.

<http://www.petainer.com>

Co-Founder & Lead Product Design Consultant @ Quantum Design

Quantum Design was a design and consulting company focused on designing to strengthen relationships between people and brands.

Belo Horizonte, Brazil | 04/2006 - 07/2018

- Founded and led a design consultancy for 12+ years: strategy, operations, business development, financial planning, and team leadership.
- Directed product and graphic design projects from concept to production across consumer electronics, medical devices, and packaging, applying human-centred, research-driven methods.
- Built long-term client relationships and led consulting teams in close collaboration with engineering, marketing, and business stakeholders.
- Gained expertise in materials and manufacturing processes such as plastic moulding, metal fabrication, and composites; supervised prototyping and production to ensure quality and adherence to design standards.

<http://www.quantumdesign.com.br>

Earlier Experience (2014 - 2018)

- **Customer Experience Manager, CI Intercambio** · Dublin, Ireland (2018): customer journey design and CX standards for Brazil's largest student travel organisation.
- **Design Professor, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora** · Brazil (2016-2017): taught design methods and CAD to 80+ undergraduate students.
- **Business & Product Design Consultant, Techmall S.A.** · Brazil (2015-2017): mentored startups in business design, branding, and UX at a national accelerator.
- **Design Professor & Researcher, Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais** · Brazil (2014-2015): taught product design, co-coordinated the curriculum, and founded Eureka!, the university's startup incubation programme.

Education

- **MSc, Materials Engineering** · UFOP, Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil (2011-2013)
- **MBA, Strategic Business Management** · University Center UNA, Brazil (2008-2009)
- **Postgraduate Degree, Design Management** · UEMG, State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil (2007-2008)
- **Bachelor, Product & Industrial Design** · UEMG, State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil (2001-2005)

Certificates

- **Figma Certified Service Partner** · Figma, issued Nov 2025 (valid through Nov 2026)
- **Journey Mapping** · Interaction Design Foundation (IxDF), 2024
- **Data Landscape of GenAI for Project Managers** · Project Management Institute (PMI), 2024
- **Generative AI Overview for Project Managers** · Project Management Institute (PMI), 2023
- **Learning from Users: User Research Methods for Technology Design** · Fraunhofer Portugal, 2021
- **AgilePM® Agile Project Management Foundation** · University of Westminster, 2020

Speaking & Community

- **Speaker, UX Talks '25 · Lisbon, Web Summit Week:** panel on the skills designers need in the era of AI.
- **Lecturer, School of Big Thinking** · Dentsu Lab creative innovation programme across London, Portugal, and Edinburgh.
- **Contributor, Fast Currents** · Merkle's digital experience transformation content series.

Skills Profile

Design Leadership and Strategy

- Leading and managing design and cross-functional teams; stakeholder management.
- Aligning UX and product design strategy with business objectives.
- Redefining design and engineering workflows: designers shipping production code through AI tooling, collapsing the traditional handoff gap.
- Establishing and scaling design systems for product consistency.
- Data-driven decision-making and KPI tracking.

Design Engineering & Prototyping

- AI-assisted development: shipping production frontend code (React, TypeScript) via Claude Code and Codex, merged through engineering PR review.
- Design-to-code workflows: Figma-to-code pipelines using MCP-connected design systems (tokens and components synced between Figma libraries and codebase).
- Version control: Git and GitHub workflows (branching, pull requests, code review) in collaboration with engineers.
- Rapid prototyping with AI: from concept to working interactive prototype in hours, validating interaction models in real code rather than static mocks.
- Figma (expert, Figma Certified Service Partner): design systems, component libraries, variables and tokens, Code Connect.

User Experience & Research

- Product Design, UX/UI Design, Service Design, Customer Journey Mapping.
- Qualitative and quantitative research: user interviews, analytics, A/B testing.
- Accessibility and inclusive design (WCAG, usability testing).
- Interaction design and information architecture.

Project Management & Agile Methodologies

- Agile (Scrum, Kanban); product strategy and roadmapping.
- JIRA, Azure DevOps, Trello; Miro and FigJam for workshops and ideation.
- Confluence and Notion for documentation and knowledge management.

Languages:

- **Portuguese:** Native
- **English:** Full Professional Proficiency