

GARRY BURNS

Lead Experience Designer (Service & Product)

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Nationality British / Australian **Visa** UAE Resident, self-sponsored **Languages** English (native)

PROFILE

UAE-based Experience Designer with 15+ years of experience across luxury hospitality, telecommunications, finance, aviation and government products and services.

I help organisations clarify ambiguous goals, build stronger teams and deliver more coherent customer experiences. My work connects customer insight, business priorities and technical delivery so leaders can make better decisions and teams can act with confidence.

Better customer experiences › **Clearer prioritization** › **Stronger business value**

A note on data and AI: Most organisations already hold more data, insight and technology than they can act on. I turn that complexity into clear priorities, creating the conditions for meaningful innovation.

I help organisations design practical AI-enabled services by defining where AI should support customers, employees and operations, how human hand-offs should work, and how adoption, trust and value should be measured.

15+ Years in Experience Design & Innovation	6 Sectors: Hospitality, Telecom, Finance, Aviation, Government, Social Impact	4 Recent Markets: UAE, Australia, Serbia, Saudi Arabia
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CAPABILITIES, METHODS & TOOLS

Capability	Used for	Methods	Tools & platforms
User research, secondary research and problem framing	Understanding user needs, business context, service friction and opportunity areas when goals are unclear or evidence is fragmented.	Research planning, stakeholder and user interviews, contextual enquiry, service audits, voice-of-customer analysis, market scans, AI-assisted secondary research, synthesis, personas, opportunity framing and insight storytelling.	Dovetail, Miro, FigJam, Gamma; ChatGPT / Claude / Perplexity for secondary research and synthesis assistance.
Service and experience definition	Translating evidence into coherent journeys, service concepts, operating requirements and experience principles.	Journey mapping, journey management, service blueprinting, ecosystem maps, stakeholder maps, design principles, prototyping and design-to-technology communication.	Smaply, Figma, FigJam, Miro, Adobe Creative Cloud, Figma Make, Cursor, Codex, Claude Code, Make.com, Zapier.
Prioritisation, alignment and measurement	Helping teams decide what matters, sequence work, clarify ownership and measure progress.	OKR and KPI framing, prioritisation, roadmaps, responsibility mapping / RACI, initiative tracking, decision papers, governance rhythms and success measures.	Jira, Confluence, ClickUp, Miro, FigJam, Gamma.
Facilitation, leadership alignment and capability building	Securing executive buy-in and building the design capability of teams so change outlasts the engagement.	Executive workshops, co-design sessions, design thinking training, team coaching, role clarity and governance rhythms that move boards and steering committees from insight to funded action.	Miro, FigJam, Gamma.
AI-enabled Service Design and measurement	Defining where AI can improve customer, employee or operational services, and how its role, adoption and value should be designed and measured.	AI opportunity framing, AI touchpoint design, service blueprinting with AI moments, human hand-off design, customer and employee impact assessment, trust and risk considerations, adoption planning and feedback loops.	Figma, FigJam, Miro, Smaply, Dovetail, Make.com, Zapier; with product and technology teams where AI platforms or APIs are required.

EDUCATION & TEACHING

University of Dundee BSc Product / Service Design 2004 – 2008
RMIT University Invited Service Design Mentor, RMIT Online 2019

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Essential Craft

May 2020 – Present

Dubai, UAE

Founder & Principal Consultant

Independent Experience Design practice delivering engagements across the UAE, GCC and internationally.

Kerzner International

2024 – Present

Dubai / Global

Service Design & Value Enablement Consultant, via Essential Craft

Retained to connect luxury guest experiences to commercial outcomes across the One&Only, Atlantis and SIRO brand portfolio.

- Developed a commercial value-enablement playbook that strengthened the operating model, clarified ownership and improved commercial prioritisation across brand, CRM, operations, data and finance.
- Created lifecycle frameworks for portfolio-level guest relationship growth, moving beyond single-property conversion towards long-term share-of-life value.
- Shaped an Experience & Innovation Management Office concept and a 3-year strategy connecting guest and employee experience to Board-level targets. These initiatives are currently pending budget approval.

Arthur D. Little Consulting (ADL)

Jan 2024 – Mar 2025

UAE, Saudi Arabia, Serbia

Senior Service Designer / CX Designer, via Essential Craft

Engaged by ADL Middle East to guide CX and digital transformation assignments for financial services and telecommunications clients.

- Supported ADGM's CR&M Digitalisation project: customer lifecycle and ecosystem mapping, international benchmarking, and prioritised initiatives across Salesforce optimisation, knowledge-base governance, customer-facing AI service channels and internal GenAI support for employee experience.
- Co-facilitated a Customer Experience training programme for senior leaders at stc, Saudi Arabia's leading telecommunications provider, covering customer-centricity, persona building, journey mapping, employee empowerment, CX metrics and data-driven personalisation.
- Developed Telekom Srbija's "Value of CX" leadership narrative, connecting CX to organic growth, market resilience, cost efficiency and customer-centric culture.

XWORX Design Services

Feb 2023 – Jan 2024

Dubai, UAE

Principal Designer, via Essential Craft

Hired to build XWORX's Service Design capability and delivery quality, and grow the team behind it.

- Led design, innovation and Service Design engagements across government, aviation, energy and mobility, developing innovation roadmaps and coaching design teams.
- Selected work: ADQ design thinking training (100+ participants), TAQA COP28 innovation bootcamp, Dubai Future Foundation telecoms foresight, Etihad Airways airport journey mapping, ADNEC executive coaching.

Thought Collaborative / Telstra

Feb 2022 – Feb 2023

Canberra, Australia

Senior Service Designer, via Essential Craft

Brought in to design and align a national connectivity roadmap for Telstra's hardest-to-reach customers.

- Researched and designed customer journeys and touchpoints for connectivity propositions serving the final 8% of the population beyond standard fibre reach.
- Aligned technical, business and customer stakeholders around a north-star experience and iterative multi-technology roadmap by introducing customer evidence into product discovery and architecture decisions.
- Conducted hybrid customer research, service-record audits and business-case development for 5G Home Wireless, and improved data-sharing approaches within the Telstra API ecosystem.

Senior Service Designer, via Essential Craft

Engaged to bring structure and evidence-based prioritisation to a distributed, resource-constrained digital function.

- Created personas, feature blueprints, journey maps and prioritisation frameworks to help digital channels extend mission impact by reaching previously under-represented social groups.
- Rallied geographically distributed leadership to introduce a metric-driven prioritisation approach, focusing limited resources on higher-value outcomes and creating a unified digital roadmap.

Audacity Wines

2015 – Present

Mauritius

Experience Design Consultant, via Essential Craft

Long-running advisory relationship shaping the end-to-end customer and visitor experience for a boutique wine producer.

- Designed brand and customer experience across digital, direct-to-consumer and on-site visitor touchpoints, advising on positioning and proposition as the business grew from launch to established operation at one digital and two physical storefronts.

Belong

Nov 2017 – Apr 2021

Melbourne, Australia

Senior Service Designer (2019 – 2021) · Service Designer, Consultant (2017 – 2019)

Hired to build Service Design as a capability from the ground up, first as a consultant [via ASG Group / NRI – confirm], then appointed directly and promoted.

- Built and led UX and Service Design capabilities, bringing customer evidence into product, architecture and business decision-making.
- Developed OKRs, personas, service blueprints and journey maps to align teams around customer-led prioritisation, and coached teams in facilitation and human-centred design.

Nomura Research Institute (NRI) (formerly SMS Management & Technology)

Sep 2017 – Feb 2019

Melbourne, Australia

Service Designer, Consultant

Engaged to bring Service Design and Customer Research capabilities into enterprise technology delivery.

- Led customer research, stakeholder engagement, facilitation, service strategy and agile product ownership across enterprise technology contexts.
- Developed a connected-car strategy for a global automotive manufacturer and established a Customer Lab. Clients included Belong, Honda and the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority.

EARLIER CAREER

Push...Design	Freelance Service / CX / UX Designer (concurrent practice)	Sep 2002 – May 2021	UK / Australia
lyPa	Experience Product Owner	Aug 2014 – Nov 2016	Perth, Australia
Self-employed	Designer / Builder	Mar 2012 – Jul 2014	Perth, Australia
EPIK Korea	TEFL English Teacher	Feb 2010 – Feb 2012	Pohang, Korea
NFU Mutual	Business Analyst and Sales	Sep 2008 – Feb 2010	Glasgow, UK
Insight Innovations	Designer and Photographer	Apr 2006 – Apr 2008	Scotland
HBOS	Service Consultant	Aug 2004 – Jul 2008	United Kingdom
Medea International	Graphic Design Intern	2001 – 2003	United Kingdom