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Michael Higgins

AI Transformation Lead | Solution Architect & Forward Deployed Engineer | Product Leader with Design DNA

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Professional Summary

Senior Director leading AI transformation for Corporate Development at UnitedHealth Group as solution architect and forward deployed engineer. Embedded in the M&A function, designing and shipping agentic systems and answering for them in security and governance review. Previously six years leading product for corporate platforms serving 400,000+ employees and underpinning $20B in annual procurement spend, most recently as Head of Product. 20+ years across design, UX research, product leadership, and now architecture.

Core Competencies

Agentic System Architecture | Forward Deployed Delivery | LLM Evaluation and Human-in-the-Loop Design | AI Governance in Regulated Environments | Enterprise AI Program Leadership | Build-vs-Buy and Vendor Evaluation | Executive Stakeholder Management | Product Strategy | Human-Centered Design

Professional Experience

Senior Director, AI Transformation Lead | Solution Architect & Forward Deployed Engineer (Corporate Development), UnitedHealth Group, Remote, US — Aug 2026 to present

Lead AI transformation for Corporate Development, the company's M&A function. A program role and a build role at once.

- Embedded inside the function, mapping how the work happens decision by decision and document by document before designing anything
- Design and build the agentic systems, covering agent architectures, data boundaries, evaluation harnesses, and human-in-the-loop checkpoints for confidential, high-stakes work
- Lead a four-workstream program covering the platform roadmap, governance, and the organizational change that comes with putting agentic AI inside a corporate function
- Build the agents and the platform they run on, extending the M&A document analysis work that surfaces revenue concentration, risk factors, and the assumptions worth pressure-testing
- Set the evaluation discipline for AI vendor and build-versus-buy decisions, with structured proofs of concept, scored evaluators, and explicit proceed criteria
- Answer for every design in security, privacy, and AI governance review inside a HIPAA-regulated enterprise

Senior Director, Head of Product, Corporate, UnitedHealth Group, Remote, US — Feb 2020 to Jul 2026

Led AI and digital product transformation for Corporate Services, with platforms serving 400,000+ employees and underpinning $20B in annual procurement spend and 8,500+ contracts negotiated annually, across Real Estate, Procurement, EOHS, M&A, Analytics, and ESG.

- Unified fragmented point solutions into a single AI-augmented procurement platform serving the full workforce
- Designed AI-assisted intake that eliminated manual categorization and cut request triage from days to hours
- Shipped predictive intent detection, automated risk scoring across $20B in spend, and ML-based Delegation-of-Authority identification
- Shipped autonomous customer service resolution and agents for Real Estate services, risk assessment, and M&A document analysis

- Created the enterprise AI literacy program and adoption playbooks, and led cross-business alignment across Technology, Operations, Legal, Finance, and Clinical stakeholders
- Led and mentored a cross-functional team of product managers, technical product managers, and UX/UI designers

Director, Product and Experience Strategy, KPMG, US Mar 2014 to Feb 2020

- Led digital transformation engagements for Fortune 500 clients across healthcare, financial services, and regulated industries
- Guided C-suite and executive leadership teams through transformation roadmaps and technology investment decisions
- Designed enterprise product strategies integrating AI and emerging technology for complex, regulated organizations
- Helped implement design thinking frameworks that became standard practice for KPMG's national transformation practice

Manager, User Experience Strategy and Design, Cynergy Systems, US Aug 2007 to Mar 2014

- Led UX strategy and design for large enterprise clients, establishing a systems-thinking approach to complex product experiences
- Built and scaled design thinking practices adopted across the organization

Early career design roles, ChannelNet, Enlighten, Catalyst Design, US 2005 to 2007

Senior UX/UI Designer, Lead Web Designer, Web Designer and Front-End Developer. Design practice from 1999.

Independent Product Work

- michaelhiggins.ai: live AI chat agent built end to end (Next.js, Claude API, Resend, Upstash), streaming answers on my own record
- Multiple production platform launches on modern web infrastructure, from architecture through deployment and search optimization

Education and Executive Development

Anthropic, Claude 101 and Introduction to Claude Cowork (certificates of completion) 2026

Carnegie Mellon University, Tepper School of Business, Cert in AI for Business Leaders, Optum Executive Program 2021

EMERITUS Institute of Management, Cert in Innovation of Products and Services: MIT Design Thinking 2016

Central Michigan University, BFA in Graphic Design, Art History, Photography (study abroad, University of Groningen, NL) 1999