MICHAEL MASON

Product Designer

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Product designer with 15+ years across agency and product. From award-winning digital craft in Australia to leading AI-native learning design in Japan, building a startup's core product from four people to twenty-plus and reaching millions of users. Fluent across the whole arc: user research, product strategy, hands-on design, and enough code to prototype and ship independently.

Australian citizen with full work rights in Australia.

EXPERIENCE

SpeakBuddy formerly appArray · Tokyo2017 — 2026

Founding designer of a four-person startup; grew with it to a 50+ person company, shaping the product for nearly a decade from its earliest learning flows to its AI-native direction and visual language.

Head of Product Design 2025 — 2026

Set product-wide design direction as SpeakBuddy expanded its AI conversation experience, design system, and core learning flows. During this period, the app passed five million downloads.

- Owned product strategy and planning across the design org, translating user research and analytics into roadmap decisions.
- Assisted with TVC productions and agencies.

Lead Designer 2023 — 2025

Directed BuddyChat, the product's first major LLM conversation feature, alongside a broader character and visual-language system.

- Established design processes and presentation formats across product and engineering as the team scaled.
- Recruited and freelancers; briefed and reviewed external production partners.

Principal Designer 2017 — 2022

Designed the core learning product: Daily Curriculum, Free Chat, progression, and personalisation as the company moved from early startup to established app. Named designer on SpeakBuddy's 2021 Good Design Award.

- Ran user-insight and research work directly, shaping curriculum and UX decisions from evidence.
- Self-taught Swift-UI and Python to prototype working prototypes rather than static mockups to product conversations.
- Negotiated and managed third-party contracts (Mixpanel, Sana Labs)

Isobar formerly Visual Jazz Isobar · Melbourne, Australia2009 — 2016

Digital Designer2009 — 2016

Designed campaigns, websites, games, mobile apps, and emerging digital experiences at Visual Jazz / Isobar, twice named AdNews Digital Agency of the Year during my time there. Worked across accounts including Holden / GM, ANZ, Jetstar, Cadbury, and Uniqlo, alongside developers, UX/CX designers, strategists, motion, 3D, and illustration.

SKILLS

User research & insights · Product strategy · Product planning · Design systems · AI / LLM product design · Prototyping · Workshop facilitation · Art direction · Brand identity

LEADERSHIP

Hiring & team building · Vendor & contract negotiation · Cross-team process · Directing freelancers, UX studios & TVC production

BUILD

Self-taught developer pre-AI era.

Python for User Insights and LLM prototyping.

SwiftUI Shipped two apps solo, end to end, to the App Store.

AWS for app and website.

TOOLS

Figma · Adobe CC · Python

EDUCATION

Diploma of Graphic Design
Victoria University · 2008

Diploma of Graphic Arts
Victoria University · 2005–2007

Certificate IV in Design
RMIT University · 2005

LINKS

michaelmason.com.au
LinkedIn