

Alex Cowles

Born: 7th August 1983
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Studied:
BA Computer Arts (w/ Hons)
Abertay University
Graduated: 2005

I'm a user-obsessed design lead with 20+ years experience seeking a new role where I can develop a robust design system, collaborate with cross-functional teams to create innovative solutions to difficult design challenges and help grow exciting brands and their digital products.

My product portfolio: <https://product.alexcowles.com>

Jul 2017 - Nov 2024

Brainnwave
Creative Director

“Alex was exceptional. He showed creative vision and was always pushing us forward in evolving our product, our UX and corporate identity. He always delivered on time (in most cases ahead of time) and was a great member of the leadership team.”

- Steve Coates
(CEO & Co-founder of Brainnwave)

“Alex is a very supportive manager... 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
(direct report at Brainnwave)

“I worked with Alex for nearly two years, during which I quickly discovered his professional & understanding nature. Despite his seniority, he never imposed unnecessary pressure on me and instead created an atmosphere of collaboration and growth.”

- Victoria Ameringer
(junior colleague at Brainnwave)

Sales boost: Within first year I re-designed the core product UX, helping the company achieve over £1m in customer sales.

Helped secure funding: Completely re-vamped our visual identity to boost brand awareness from websites and logo, to pushing clarity in copy and tone of voice, workshopping and developing our brand values and ensuring consistency across all touch-points. Rebranding the company with a fresh corporate image helped the company secure £1m in further seed funding.

Data platform designs for Aggreko: I worked with the development team and had design control over the data platform we developed for Aggreko which resulted in a 25% increase in their pipeline and phenomenal 1000%+ ROI.

Further investment: In 2019, I redesigned the core company platform to make it relevant for a joint venture partner helping to secure a \$10m Series A investment.

Strategic Direction: As part of the leadership and executive team I was trusted with decision making and autonomy with regard to design and creative decisions.

Stakeholder Engagement: I worked with all business teams regularly, following product design features from concept to completion. I was able to contribute to user interviews, dig into analytics and bridge any gaps between executive requests, product requirements, development team abilities and user expectations.

Leadership and Mentorship: In addition to a general leadership role with Brainnwave, I also hired and managed a direct report, helping, understanding and working with them to create designs and encouraging them to build autonomy.

International team collaboration: Worked closely on developing multiple product designs with Hatch design teams and engineers in Canada, the USA and Australia.

Refinement of recruitment process: Seeing low numbers of job applicants I took the initiative to analyse and improve our job descriptions, company culture website pages, interview process and onboarding. This involved everything from analysing gender coded words and understanding what items were missing or could be added to encourage diversity right through to post-interview chats with potential applicants and those who had just started. We went from very few applicants to 100s of diverse applicants for every position and the job pages being the top performing parts of our company website.

Also: Became very literally “the voice of Brainnwave” after recording our telephony system answering messages and voicing most of our platform walkthrough videos.

Designed the literally and metaphorically bittersweet cider bottle labels (“Appley Ever After”) for our final team building activity in 2024.

Jul 2016 - Jul 2017

Mono Solutions

Senior Designer

“Alex has a knack for simplifying and communicating high level conceptual ideas. Beyond being a design and product champion, Alex was an joy to work with and a great team member.”

- Matt Matergia
(Colleague at Mono Solutions)

Education: Repeatedly trusted to represent the business and onboard new clients (including our biggest ever multi-million dollar client) through in-person education sessions and Q&As leading to stronger uptake from enterprise clients and users.

User research: The education & onboarding sessions also became valuable user research, gathering feedback and a strong understanding of how users were working with the platform.

Collaboration: I was brought in to assist the design team with feature development, I worked with product and marketing to help support with required materials, I worked with the three founders to help implement design requirements and I worked closely with the development team.

Jul 2013 - Jul 2016

Freelance

Designer/Director

Solving design and brand related problems for freelance clients.

This included re-branding a private medical practice (and seeing an increase in new patients), a C-suite recruitment agency, a new bar and restaurant in Glasgow's West End, a NYC-based law firm and countless others.

I often worked with one of Scotland's biggest investors to bring lasting value and improved market position to his projects.

Oct 2010 - Jul 2013

QueryClick

Head of Design

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.”

- Chris Liversidge
(CEO & Founder of QueryClick)

Creative Leadership and Brand Development: Overhauled QueryClick's brand identity and processes. From internal documents and structures to complete web, visual and logo redesigns, my work touched every aspect of the business.

Strategic Direction: Defined and rolled-out new creative offering. This meant business operations expansion and a shift towards more powerful marketing work.

Repeat Business: 3 years after leaving QueryClick I was brought back to refresh the website, some branding and put together new visuals for a suite of tools.

Profile boost: In my time at QC we grew confidently from a team of less than 10 to 30-strong team in a prime location, driven by strong identity and brand identity.

Apr 2007 - Oct 2010

Line Digital

Designer

“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
(Product Design Lead - Meta)

Asset and full project production: Banner ads, email marketing, website designs as well as full project design: I was often tasked with full end-to-end design processes for websites and branding pieces.

Development: One of the only designers at Line who was also able to take a design and hand-code it in clean HTML/CSS to hand over to the back-end developers.

Client management: Given direct contact with a number of clients e.g. IKEA, BBC International and a number of large financial organisations.

Secondment: Seconded 1 day a week for a few months to help Tesco Bank design and integrate their new intranet system.

DADI & BIMA awards in 2009 for visual design: For work on Digital Podge.

BAFTA Scotland New Talent award: 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.

DADI Awards commendation in 2009: Managed IKEA's email marketing in Scotland, with regular emails to lists of 50,000+ recipients.

Everything Else

2023: Attended Catalyst #2 in Edinburgh - an innovation, leadership & design conference.
2022: Facilitated a work experience week for high-school student to help them understand the industry.
2022: Attended Catalyst #1 in Edinburgh - an innovation, leadership & design conference..
2017: Provided 6 months mentoring and guidance for a fellow designer in Edinburgh.
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.

Music-related achievements

2006-present: Under two aliases (DFRNT and subsequently Stillhead), I have produced over 10 albums (so far) and over 30 EPs and around 50 remixes as well as appearing on a number of big record label mixes and compilations.

Had international press coverage, and national radio airplay for many of my releases, including a track on Sasha's BBC6 Music mix, support from Mary Anne Hobbs, Annie Mac and both BBC and local radio in the UK, Italy, Czech Republic, Denmark and many more places.

I have been fortunate enough to DJ and perform all over the world. From the USA and Puerto Rico to Europe and the UK (even a slot at a festival within the Arctic Circle in Greenland).

For 10 years I produced and hosted a regular podcast called Insight. For a short period, I also presented the podcast live to tens of thousands of listeners on FM Radio in Latvia.

Have run a number of successful Kickstarter/crowdfunding campaigns for various musical releases over my musical career.

Launched a successful subscription-based record label Cut, which delivered a new release every month to members, and a small electronic record label Brightest Dark Place releasing vinyl and digital EPs.

Launched a course platform and educational blog called How To Self Release to help people self release their own music and run their own record labels.

Created "How To Send Me Music" in response to a decline in the quality of communication from new producers and promo companies. The site was referenced by many labels as an authority on best practice for sending demo materials.

Ran successful club nights in Riga, Latvia, booking international artists, arranging everything from visuals and promotion, to logistics, set times, accommodation and travel.

Miniature Painting

After returning to the Warhammer hobby in 2018, I started competition-level painting in 2024 and have won a number of awards for miniature painting.

Golden Demon UK & Europe: 2 finalist pins, 2 commended entries.

Scale Model Challenge: 2 Silver awards.

Scale Scotland: 2 Gold awards and Best of Show in Fantasy/Sci-fi.

South Wales Miniature Open: Bronze award.

MPO Online: 2 Bronze awards.

Squidmar Open: 1 Silver, 1 Bronze award.

YouTube: Started and grew my miniature painting Youtube channel from 0 to 8,000 subscribers in less than 6 months. It continues to grow!

The growth of the channel and my brand has resulted in brush manufacturing deals and a range of pre-release products being sent for review/sponsorship opportunities.