Ava M Allen, EdD
missavaproductions@gmail.com

RESEARCH INTEREST Workplace Research, Employee Experience, Human Behavior, Learning & Talent Analytics,

PORTFOLIO avaexplores.com

WORK EXPERIENCE

User Research Lead (Sr Design Researcher II) McKinsey & Company, Sep 2021 - Present

Staff User Experience Designer Blackbaud, Oct 2020 - Aug 2021

Product Designer Citrix, Jul 2019- Sep 2020

Data Integration Manager The Walt Disney Company, Sep 2013- Jul 2019

Continuous Improvement Consultant Florida Blue, Nov 2006 - Aug 2013

Management Engineer NCH Healthcare System, Oct 2005 - Nov 2006

Business Process Consultant BlueCross BlueShield of SC, Oct 2000 - Oct 2005

Manufacturing Industrial Engineer Publix SuperMarkets, Inc., Dec 1997 - Oct 2000

EDUCATION

EdD in **Applied Learning Sciences**
University of Miami, Aug 2025 *merit honors*

MS in **Human-Computer Interaction**
DePaul University, Dec 2021 *distinction*

BS in **Industrial & Systems Engineering**
University of Florida, Dec 1997

Certifications
User Experience Design, UCSD
Scrum UX, Scrum.org

RESEARCH LEADERSHIP AND INSIGHTS

- **McKinsey & Company:** Led research strategy with a design spike for initiatives that delivered measurable outcomes, including user satisfaction (+20-40%), usability (+15-40%), and adoption (+20-30%). Launched five new capabilities across Risk, Legal, and Digital Workplace Experience domains, providing thought leadership in genAI valuation and capability building for design and insights. Impacting ResOps through creating insights taxonomy and architecture for future of research work and AI success.
- **The Walt Disney Company:** Led analytics initiatives for guest and sales optimization across Disney's portfolio (WDW, DLP, Aulani, Media Networks). Created a program for group booking offer efficiency to decrease lead time for pricing strategy development for DLR. Program concept converted to an application used for all theme park resorts in the US.

INNOVATION AND EXPERIENCE DESIGN

- **The Walt Disney Company:** Transformed end-to-end UX design and data strategy, managing UX operations through an offshore team across ESPN, ABC, Freeform, and AE Networks. Redesigned user experience for commercial proposal workflows by launching five ad-optimization applications that streamlined internal business processes and advertising placement decisions.
- **Blackbaud:** Led 0-to-1 product vision and experience design for Prospect Insights, bridging UX and Data Science to create a seamless customer journey that addressed critical user pain points. Enabled product launch in 2022, $1.1M annual revenue.
- **Citrix:** Architected customer-centric design solutions, including an AI-powered Virtual Assistant (conversational design) that transformed user support experiences and a Developer Admin UI that streamlined internal workflows and reduced operational friction.

LEADERSHIP AND TEAM MANAGEMENT

- **McKinsey & Company:** Manage 2 direct reports (designers), providing coaching, feedback, and career development opportunities.
- **The Walt Disney Company:** Mentored 3 professional interns, assigning tasks and offering guidance in UX design and analytics projects
- **BlueCross BlueShield of SC:** Led the Business Analysis and Reporting team for the Technology helpdesk, managing 8 team members. Oversaw the development of insights on operational performance, quality, process improvements, training needs, and technical documentation, fostering team collaboration and growth.

INDUSTRY EXPOSURE

Manufacturing, Health Insurance, Healthcare / Hospital, Resorts, Media Networks, SaaS, Social Impact Sector, Management Consulting

METHODOLOGY EXPERTISE

UX Design, User Research, Analytics, Survey Design, Learning Sciences, Process Improvement, Operations Research, Mentoring, Lean, Six Sigma, Industrial Engineering, Statistics

TOOLS & PROGRAMMING

DoveTail / Axure / Sketch / Figma / Adobe CC / Miro / Mural / Abstract / Qualtrics / PowerBI /Tableau / MixPanel /SQL / SAS / SPSS / R / HTML / CSS / JavaScript / JIRA / Github / Agile / AI Prototyping (Cursor, FigmaMake)

ACTIVITIES

ADPList org 500+ UX Mentoring Sessions
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Golf, Tennis, Musician

AWARDS

McKinsey Way We Work Award, genAI (2024)
ADPList.org Top 100 Most Impactful / Top 38 Most Beloved Mentors (2022) / Top 10 Mentors in NA (2022, 2021) / Annual Golden Mentor Award (2021)
BPMO Award, Florida Blue (2010)

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PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- **Food Manufacturing (Publix SuperMarkets, Inc.):** Redesigned operational processes, developed labor standardization protocols, and implemented capacity modeling methodologies to optimize production workflows. Achieved $4.6M in savings and a 160% increase in throughput, creating a more efficient and collaborative work environment for employees.
- **Insurance Operations (BlueCross BlueShield of SC, Florida Blue):** Enhanced claims processing and service delivery by identifying inefficiencies and implementing solutions that improved workflow clarity and accuracy. Identified $15.4M savings in process optimization and staffing capacity models. Focused on creating human-centered processes that supported employees in delivering better service to customers.
- **Healthcare Service Delivery (NCH Healthcare System):** Improved operational workflows to enhance patient care and staff efficiency. Conducted statistical analyses and enabled healthcare professionals to focus on delivering high-quality care while optimizing work design to reduce administrative complexity.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

- **Doctoral Research:** *"Transforming Workplace Dynamics: Addressing Social Practices and Networking Barriers for Diverse Employees"*: Conducted research on systemic barriers to equity in workplace experiences, proposing actionable learning interventions using employee survey extensions and human resources analytics. Developed an intervention dashboard for organizational learning modules and a stackable recommender system to address vulnerabilities for diverse personas based on social identity and organizational learning theories.
- **Conference Presentations and Speaking Engagements:**
  - Workshop, "Improving Your Capstone Experience" as a guest speaker for the University of Miami APLS course (2025).
  - "Measurement-Driven Design Thinking: Industrial Engineers and UX Strategy" at the IISE Annual Conference (2025)
  - "Meet Ava Allen - MS HCI Alum", Depaul University (2023)
  - ADPList.org BeMore Festival (2022), presenting "Is your workflow 'close-minded'?: An engineering approach to finding research insights with a classic tool."
  - Lightning talk at Women Talk Design (2021) titled "Living Minimally Viable: Managing the Designer's Psyche."
  - DePaul Grad Student Ambassador, Prospective Student Panels (2020-21)
  - "UX: Humanizing Technology" at Disney DDSI Tech Talk (2019)
  - Track Speaker, Florida Blue SDLC Conference "Leveraging BPMO in Initiative Work" (2011)
  - Track Speaker, Florida Blue SDLC Conference "Avoid Automating Bad Processes: Business Requirements Readiness" (2010)
- **Mentoring:** Design / Research Mentor, ADPList.org (2021–present), User Research Mentor, McKinsey & Company (2023): Women in Tech Mentor, McKinsey & Company (2022), DePaul XD Roundtable Professional Mentor (2022): Mentored two DePaul students in Design/HCI for three months, focusing on professional growth and skill-building.
- **Teaching:** Instructor-led training at Florida Blue (2012–2013): Designed and delivered courses on Provision, Lean 5S, and Advanced Excel . Statistics course for beginners at NCH Healthcare System (2005):

APPLIED SKILLS

Design & Research - Design Thinking, Workshop Facilitation, User Testing, Usability Studies, User Interviews, Persona Development, Concept Validation, User Journey Mapping, Thematic Analysis, Employee Listening, Survey Design (including MaxDiff / Conjoint), Data Visualization, Databoard Creation, Data Storytelling, A/B Testing, Statistics, Information Architecture, Qualitative / Quantitative (Mixed Methods), Insights Development, Process/Task Analysis, Wireframing / Prototyping, Service Design, Ethnography, Diary Studies

Analytics / Operations Research / Engineering - Industrial Engineering, Human Factors, Lean, VSM, Observational Research, Workflow/Queuing analysis, Labor Standardization, SPC, Cost-Benefit Analysis, Capacity Planning, Data/Product Analytics, Work Design, Simulation, Activity-Based Costing

Learning Sciences - Learning Theory, Instructional Design, ADDIE, SAM, Kirkpatrick Model, OK-LCD, Educational Research, Evidence-Centered Program Evaluation, Learning & Talent Analytics

PUBLICATIONS

Allen, A.M. (2025). Measurement-Driven Design Thinking: Industrial Engineers and UX Strategy. In IISE Annual Conference Proceedings (pp. 1-6). Institute of Industrial Engineers (IISE).