Mike Pennella

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Profile

Master's-level learning experience designer with a proven business development track record and a 10+ year history of delivering innovative educational solutions. By combining immersive storytelling, dynamic visual design, and cutting-edge edtech, I am reinventing education to be more relevant, engaging, and effective.

Areas of Expertise

- Learning experience design
- Business development
- Creative problem solving
- Strategic leadership
- Instructional technology
- Digital storytelling

LX Design Experience

- Project management
- AI and learning
- Marketing and branding

Senior Learning Experience (LX) Designer | Ellucian | 2016 - present

- Attracted \$1M+ in new LX design billings: My courses were showcased in several successful new business pitches to demonstrate Ellucian's cutting-edge prowess in course design.
- **Consistently exceed client norms in post-course surveys** with learners citing innovative assessments, superior organization, and standout visual design as reasons for high satisfaction and future course-taking interest (>6/7 average rating).
- **Spiked sales interest in service offerings**. Scripted and animated a series of short videos where a witty conversational robot (ElAIne) aids academic administrators in need.
- Enhance student acquisition and program success by differentiating academic offerings: Collaborate with academic leadership to implement innovative pedagogical strategies, driving improved program outcomes like higher completion rates and stronger retention.
- Drive the end-to-end development of next-generation online and hybrid courses, creating immersive and interactive content that fosters engagement and persistence within the constraints of expedited development timeframes.
- Leverag AI to streamline course development and enhance quality: Utilize tools like ChatGPT to draft content, refine directions, and support multimedia production, reducing development time and increasing course effectiveness.
- **Demonstrate thought leadership in LX innovation and AI integration**: Author and deliver conference and internal presentations on cutting-edge learning experience design and the transformative role of AI in course delivery.
- Boost student acquisition through targeted marketing materials: My course and program introduction videos are frequently repurposed to support marketing initiatives.

Learning Architect & Educational Technologist | iDesignEDU | 2015 - 2016

- **Prepared hundreds of higher ed instructors to transition to online teaching** by authoring iDesignEDU's first commercial course, *Preparing to Teach Online*, later leveraged by multiple institutions during COVID.
- Boosted client's instructional reputation with award-winning redesign of high-risk course. My reimagining of Ashford University's <u>BUS 330</u>, <u>Principles of Marketing</u>, won the prestigious ADEIL College Course of the Year, a surprising achievement for a for-profit institution, thanks to its innovative design and measurable impact on student engagement and retention.

• Enhanced the relevance and effectiveness of internal onboarding. Redesigned the company's handbook into an engaging, LMS-based course that exemplified the innovative course design principles the company sought to embody.

LX Designer, Instructor & Digital Media Consultant | Lafayette College | 2014 - 2015

- Revolutionized educational pedagogy through an immersive campus-wide experience:
 - Conceptualized and unified narrative elements: Created and marketed Victor Neurotech (VNt), a convincingly real tech company, as the central thread of <u>Frankenstein 2029</u>, a massive cross-disciplinary exploration of transhumanist issues.
 - **Sparked intellectual curiosity and word-of-mouth through edutainment materials:** Designed and wrote VnT website, developed marketing strategies, created social media presence and on-campus posters, and conceived in-person events.
 - **Expanded engagement and deepened intellectual debate**: Created Society Against Victor Neurotech (SAViN), triggered social media flamefest with VnT, orchestrated realistic campus demonstrations, and sparked multiple classroom conversations.
 - **Elevated institutional impact:** Related websites garnered 15K pageviews, while the on-campus "performance" drew 1,000+ attendees and received extensive media coverage. The project inspired philanthropy for the burgeoning Williams Art Campus.
- Designed and co-instructed a new multimedia journalism course to student acclaim: Leveraged free web technologies and a smart classroom setup, earning an exceptional 4.7/5 in student surveys and shifting program perceptions from theoretical to practical.

Additional Business Experience

Partner (also Director of Business Development & Marketing) | Hudson River Group | 1998 - 2013

- Won millions of dollars of new business by delivering compelling RFP responses and persuasive virtual and in-person presentations to cross-disciplinary stakeholders at companies like Disney, REI, Take Care Health Systems, and JCPenney.
- Drove >\$1B in marketing ROI improvement. Leveraged big data analysis in Fortune 500 consulting relationships at C-suite level to guide strategic marketing spend reallocations.

Copywriter | Foote, Cone & Belding, NYC | 1993 - 1997

• Authored innovative multimedia ad campaigns for a diverse portfolio of international clients. Won the 1995 Ad Age Year to Learn challenge demonstrating creative problem solving skills.

Education

Master of Educational Technology | Boise State University

Project-oriented coursework in instructional design, edutainment, theoretical foundations, virtual world learning, online community building, gamification, social media, html design, and evaluation,

Bachelor of Arts (Communications) | University of Virginia

Interests

Creative writing, neuroscience, ultimate frisbee, music, Thomas Pynchon, time travel, lucid dreaming