

Max Pfennighaus

SENIOR CREATIVE DIRECTOR

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PROFILE

Senior creative leader with 25+ years shaping consumer brands, identity systems, campaigns, and digital platforms for complex organizations. Builds and develops multidisciplinary teams, translates business strategy into compelling audience experiences, and scales creative operations across brand, product, editorial, motion, and AI-enabled workflows.

LEADERSHIP FOCUS

- Creative vision & design strategy
- Consumer brands & digital platforms
- Identity systems & campaigns
- Multidisciplinary team leadership
- Executive & cross-functional partnership
- Motion, emerging technology & AI workflows

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Senior Design Director

Sia/Addison

Oct 2023 – Jul 2026

Manhattan

Led brand, reporting, corporate communications, and client-facing design work for complex organizations across financial services, legal, industrial, hospitality, and professional services sectors.

- Directed creative development across annual and ESG reports, identity systems, pitch presentations, digital communications, and executive-level storytelling.
- Partnered with strategy, account, copy, production, and client teams, and advanced AI-enabled creative workflows and visual exploration practices.

Enterprise Brand Design Director

Johnson & Johnson

Nov 2021 – Aug 2023

New Brunswick, New Jersey

Led the internal design team overseeing Johnson & Johnson's enterprise rebrand, guiding the partnership with Wolff Olins and helping modernize one of the world's most recognizable healthcare brands.

- Oversaw design strategy, brand governance, visual system development, and implementation guidance across complex stakeholder groups and business units.
- Partnered with brand, marketing, communications, digital, legal, and agency teams across brand expression, presentation systems, campaign concepts, and enterprise communications.

VP, Enterprise Brand Creative Director

Synchrony

Mar 2020 – Nov 2021

Stamford, Connecticut

Led enterprise brand and creative direction for Synchrony, guiding how the brand appeared across marketing, communications, digital, and stakeholder-facing channels.

- Built and directed creative systems for complex financial products, corporate communications, and customer experiences.
- Partnered with senior leadership, marketing, product, communications, and agency teams to connect brand strategy with business goals and cross-channel execution.

Partner, Design

Lippincott

Apr 2017 – Feb 2019

New York, NY

Led design work for brand transformation, identity, and experience programs for major corporate and consumer clients, including Al Jazeera, Marriott, Optum, and Virgin Money.

- Partnered across strategy, verbal identity, experience, and client teams; led and mentored designers from concept development through presentation and implementation.

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Executive Creative Director

VSA Partners

Oct 2015 – Apr 2017

New York, NY

Led creative work across brand, communications, digital, environmental, and corporate reporting programs for major enterprise clients including Bank of America and USPS.

- Oversaw multidisciplinary teams of 20+ across design, writing, UX, strategy, illustration, and account/project management, while growing key client relationships.

Executive Creative Director

The New York Times

Sep 2014 – Aug 2015

New York, NY

Led the 50+ person Brand Creative organization, setting creative direction across marketing campaigns, digital products, brand standards, and design systems supporting subscriber growth.

- Directed audience-facing work across NYT Crosswords, Cooking, Men's Style, Times Insider, and the NYT Apple Watch app; redesigned the online subscription flow.
- Contributed during a period in which the company passed one million digital subscribers.

Director, Enterprise Brand

NPR

Apr 2013 – Sep 2014

Washington, D.C.

Created and led NPR's brand marketing practice alongside the organization's first Chief Marketing Officer, establishing audience strategy, brand direction, and marketing goals across a national media organization and its digital platform ecosystem.

Lead Interaction Designer

NPR

Nov 2010 – May 2013

Washington, D.C.

Led interaction design across three Agile teams, overseeing the development and design of NPR's digital product suite and unifying the experience across NPR News, NPR Music, npr.org, mobile apps, and a network of sites for more than 250 member stations.

Created the product concept and experience framework for NPR One and designed the national public media membership and donation experience.

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

Associate Creative Director | ISM / Connelly Partners

Boston, MA | Oct 2007 – Nov 2010

Led digital creative and development for integrated brand, campaign, and direct-marketing programs for clients including American Express, Best Western, Emirates Airlines, and Four Seasons.

Senior Art Director | Arnold Worldwide

Boston, MA | Jun 2002 – Aug 2007

Developed integrated advertising campaigns for Southern Comfort, Volkswagen, and "The Truth" across broadcast, print, digital, outdoor, and experiential channels.

Multimedia Designer | RDW Group

Providence, RI | May 1998 – Jun 2002

Designed early digital, broadcast, and brand communications work, beginning as a television storyboard and production artist and expanding into multimedia, web, and graphic design.

EXPERTISE

Creative Direction / Brand Strategy / Consumer Brands / Visual Identity / Campaign Development / Motion Design / Digital Products & UX
Editorial Design / Design Systems / Creative Operations / AI-Enabled Workflows / Executive & Client Leadership