

Gabriel Guevara

VP, User Experience and Design Operations

gabguevara@me.com · (949) 306-2288 · Lake Forest, CA · gabguevara.me · linkedin.com/in/gabguevara

SUMMARY

Design executive with 12+ years leading UX and design operations in regulated, high-complexity environments. At City National Bank, I lead a multidisciplinary team across multiple digital products and value streams, translating executive strategy into operating frameworks, practices, and outcomes that reduce risk, accelerate delivery, and build lasting organizational capability. I have served as a strategic partner on major platform decisions, led teams through reductions and reorgs without degrading delivery, and built the cultures of transparency and trust that sustain high performance over time.

EXPERIENCE

VP, User Experience

City National Bank, Los Angeles, CA · Dec 2024 – Present

- Define UX strategy across a growing portfolio of digital banking products, balancing short-term delivery with long-term experience vision.
- Partner with executive leadership and cross-functional teams to set priorities, resolve ambiguity, and deliver cohesive product experiences at scale.
- Advocate for user needs through research, usability testing, and data-driven insights embedded in the product development process.
- Communicate design vision and impact to executive stakeholders, translating design rationale into business outcomes.
- Lead and mentor a cross-functional team of designers, writers, and researchers across multiple value streams.

VP, Design Operations

City National Bank, Los Angeles, CA · Nov 2021 – Dec 2024

- Served as strategic partner on a platform-level build-vs-buy decision; advocated for building in-house and led the design team that delivered a full end-to-end consumer banking redesign on time and under budget.
- Established web accessibility as a product quality standard, embedding it into the definition of done and partnering with product to prioritize remediation across the portfolio.
- Built a research-integrated delivery model enabling multiple rounds of user research and testing within committed timelines, adopted internally as a reference for continuous learning.
- Established peer review and design QA standards driving a 70% improvement in feature quality and visual consistency.
- Led a cross-functional initiative to bring design tooling into compliance with enterprise risk and access management standards, navigating legal, security, and technology stakeholders.
- Transitioned the team to a SAFE-based framework, improving delivery predictability by 40% and strengthening design's influence in product development.
- Led the team through multiple organizational restructures and a team reduction, maintaining delivery commitments and culture without degrading output.
- Managed up to 10 direct reports across 3 value streams, including a 100% team expansion in 2023; introduced specialized roles that created structured career growth paths.

Design Operations Lead (Contract)

City National Bank, Los Angeles, CA · Sep – Nov 2021

- Assessed and restructured the team's operational model within 6 weeks — created intake and prioritization frameworks, established design review cadences — and was converted to a full-time VP-level role.

Design Operations Manager → Head of Design

Applaudo Studios, Remote · Jan – Sep 2021

- Scaled a fully distributed team of 21 designers and 10 trainees across multiple countries.
- Led design for a major global hospitality brand, conceptualizing a dynamic pricing tool for hotel operators enabling real-time revenue management.
- Built and led a design team for a Fortune 500 retailer's enterprise data pipeline tool, managing full delivery and client transition.
- Led multi-product design for a major professional sports franchise, including a season ticket holder mobile experience and internal player scouting tools.
- Defined specialized career tracks for UX, UI, Visual Design, and Research; positioned design as a commercial value stream with dedicated pricing strategy.
- Team recognized as Top 10 UX/UI Design Company (The Bogota Post) and Top App UX Designers (Wimgo) in 2020.

Product Design Manager

Applaudo Studios, Remote · Aug 2020 – Jan 2021

- Scaled the team from 6 to 12 designers in under a year through structured hiring across multiple countries.
- Established inclusive hiring practices and collaborative cross-functional workflows; supported the company's shift to fully distributed remote operations.

UX Lead

Applaudo Studios, El Salvador · Dec 2017 – Aug 2020

- Led UX design for Fortune 500 companies and startups across B2B, B2C, and e-commerce; contributed to 0-to-1 launches of multiple digital products.
- Established UI patterns, information architecture models, and component foundations adopted across the team's client portfolio.

Creative Director

Local:27, El Salvador · Oct 2016 – Jan 2020

- Led creative direction across brand, digital, and campaign work; defined visual and experiential standards across client engagements.

Lecturer, UX and UI Design

Escuela de Comunicacion Monica Herrera, El Salvador · Jul 2018 – Dec 2019

- Designed and delivered UX and UI curriculum at the college level; five students launched careers in product design after completing the program.

EDUCATION

Bachelor's Degree, Graphic Design · Universidad de Buenos Aires 2011–2016

Diseno Estrategico · Escuela de Comunicacion Monica Herrera 2009

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified SAFe Product Owner/Product Manager · Scaled Agile Inc. 2023

Enterprise Design Thinking Practitioner · IBM 2022

UX Management: Strategy and Tactics · Interaction Design Foundation 2020

Agile Methods for UX Design · Interaction Design Foundation 2022

Agile Product Delivery for Leaders · City National Bank 2023

AI in UX/UI Design · Uxcel 2023

Design Accessibility · Uxcel 2023

SKILLS

Leadership UX Strategy · Design Operations · Cross-functional Leadership · Stakeholder Management · Executive Communication · Organizational Design · Team Development · Mentoring & Coaching

Design Product Design · User Experience Design · UX Research · Accessibility (WCAG) · Information Architecture · Usability Testing · Service Design · Design QA · Design Thinking

Process Agile · SAFe · Lean UX · Figma · Risk Mitigation · OKR Planning · Design Operations Maturity

LANGUAGES

English (native) · Spanish (native)