

FRANKLIN J. WARD

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(708)-426-6657

CHICAGO, IL

LINKEDIN: FRANKLIN J. WARD
WWW.FJWARD.COM

Event Marketing & Experience Strategy Leader

Creative Director | UX Designer & Strategist | Brand Experience Architect

Multidisciplinary marketing and creative leader with 10+ years of experience designing and executing high-impact brand activations, digital ecosystems, and immersive experiences across tech, fashion, and lifestyle sectors. Adept at uniting storytelling with systems thinking to transform brand touchpoints and streamline operations. A proven team leader skilled in experiential strategy, UX design, and stakeholder alignment—bringing creative vision and business rigor to every engagement. I specialize in building emotional resonance and operational excellence into events, campaigns, and product experiences. Now seeking a senior role in a creative or tech-forward agency where leadership, innovation, and culture-shaping brand work meet.

CORE SKILLS & EXPERTISE

Leadership & Strategy – Team management, strategic planning, workflow optimization, cross-functional collaboration

Event Marketing – Experiential campaigns, end-to-end event production, brand activations, vendor management

Creative Direction – Visual identity, content development, art direction, environmental and spatial design

Product & UX Design – UX/UI design, wireframes, design systems, user research, agile collaboration

Digital Tools & Platforms – Figma, Adobe Creative Suite, Asana, Notion, Airtable, Salesforce, Miro, Jira

Specializations – DEI-centered storytelling, identity-affirming experiences, CRM/event analytics, \$100K+ budgets

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Creative Director | FRWD Style Weddings & Events

Chicago, IL | 2018 – Present

- Lead all brand and client experience operations for a boutique agency specializing in immersive, identity-forward events and digital storytelling.
- Direct 30+ events with 100% positive client feedback, managing \$10K–\$150K budgets and multi-vendor coordination.
- Developed the FRWD Style brand ecosystem, content strategy, and digital experiences to reflect faith-rooted, culture-conscious storytelling.
- Produced styled shoots featured in national publications, elevating visibility and attracting luxury-tier clientele.

UX Designer | Valtech Inc. (Formerly Kin + Carta)

Chicago, IL | 2021 – 2025

- Owned design initiatives for enterprise mobile and web platforms across Fortune 500 clients.
- Spearheaded UX strategy and design for enterprise web and mobile platforms, including a B2B logistics dashboard redesign (see portfolio), improving cross-functional team workflows and user satisfaction.
- Created design systems that improved design/development collaboration and reduced design-to-dev handoff issues by 30%.
- Led user research and iterative prototyping, resulting in a 15% increase in satisfaction and 5% uplift in platform engagement.
- Facilitated strategy workshops with global stakeholders to drive consensus around user journeys and MVPs.
- Served as co-lead for “Black+Kin” ERG, enhancing DEI programming and engagement across teams.

Product Designer (Contract) | Kotoo Earth

Remote | 2020

- Led a rapid rebrand and digital redesign (see portfolio) that increased conversions and sign-ups by 20%, which is a featured
- Delivered end-to-end UI/UX overhaul, including design systems, high-fidelity screens, and responsive prototypes.
- Embedded with the dev team to streamline design implementation and reduce production cycles.

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ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Merchandise Coordinator | LEVI STRAUSS AND COMPANY Chicago, IL. 2015-2020. Managed 6 business segments within key chain and department stores, accounting for \$5 million in annual revenue. Analyzed vendor reports to make profitable execution decisions regarding product placement, fixture layout, and visual enhancements. Educated and directed store staff on core product and presentation guidelines. Provide feedback to corporate partners regarding actionable insights on accounts. Developed and executed creative merchandising techniques to enhance in-store presentations to elevate the consumer shopping experience and increase brand recognition. Conducted daily in-store visits to monitor stock levels, audit marketing and visual directives in store. Managed 3rd party staff to assist in the achievement of sales plan goals for accounts.

Men's Designer Manager | MACY'S INC. | Chicago, IL. 2012 to 2015. Monitored sales and merchandising standards for Men's Designer and Impulse departments. Executed and communicated corporate and vendor directives to sales staff. Partnered with store management to develop specific strategies for designer and impulse vendors. Developed creative strategies to train staff on sales incentives and merchandising techniques. Fostered vendor relationships during store visits and various communications to ensure vendor standards were within Macy's guidelines.

Merchandise Team Manager | MACY'S INC. | Chicago, IL. 2008 – 2012. Managed a successful team of associates on merchandising standards and quarterly guidelines. Directed merchandise receipt placement, replenishment and sales promotion set-up according to corporate and vendor guidelines. Partnered with planners and merchants to develop plans to drive sales and exceed business goals. Developed strategies to execute price changes, markdowns and fixture/floor moves efficiently.

Customer Service Coordinator | TJ MAXX | Chicago, IL. 2006 – 2011. Assisted customers directly by processing purchases, returns, and credit applications. Trained and developed associates on front-line techniques and customer service standards provided by the company. Motivated associates provide superior customer service and achieve loyalty goals. Utilized daily line-up report to effectively determine associate breaks, lunches and floor zone coverage for maximum coverage during peak times.

CERTIFICATIONS

Certification; ERG Leadership - ERG Leadership Alliance | 2024

UI/UX Design Certification – FlatIron School | Chicago, IL | 2020

Wedding/Event Planning Certification – Triton College | River Grove, IL | 2013

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts; Business Marketing, Fashion Design & Merchandising

Clark Atlanta University | Atlanta, GA | 2005

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES

Figma | Adobe Creative Suite | Jira | Miro | Notion | Trello | Confluence | G Suite | Microsoft Suite | Canva | Zoom