

Kesha M. Watson

PMP, PMI-ACP, CSPO, CSM, UXMC, CUA

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Introduction Video: <https://bit.ly/meetKeshaWatson>

Technology & User Experience Program Manager

Accomplished professional with substantial experience championing emerging technologies, delivering innovative user experiences, managing complex global projects, and improving digital interactions of both international & domestic organizations.

Proficient in UX methodologies, including research, strategy development, personas, task flows, usability testing, and heuristic evaluations to influence technology adoption. Adept at integrating UX into project planning to drive user-centered outcomes. Strong in Agile and Traditional Project Management, with extensive expertise in risk mitigation, financial governance, and cross-functional team leadership. Skilled in creating innovative user experiences that improve customer satisfaction and business outcomes.

Collaborative leader with a servant leadership mindset, focusing on excellence, innovation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Areas of Expertise

- Executive Leadership
- Product Management
- Program Management
- Strategic Planning & Project Execution
- Agile Methodologies
- Design Thinking & Workshopping
- User Experience Strategy
- Team Building & Resource Allocation
- Systems Development Lifecycle (SDLC) Management
- Cloud Computing Technologies
- User Research
- Cost & Budget Management

Accomplishments

- Partnered with the City of Chicago to combat food insecurity by developing COVID-safe workshops that led to the creation of a community-based application, enabling communication, data collection, and resource sharing among urban growers, academia, and government officials.
- At Press Ganey, reduced the time to market for the Integrated Analytics Dashboard by 6 months, helping hospitals manage healthcare data during COVID and beyond. The dashboard, powered by advanced algorithms, provides actionable insights for healthcare providers and policymakers, enabling swift, informed decision-making.
- At BMW, achieved the complete elimination of all defects in the OAP application code base, a first in the application's history, ensuring flawless performance and post-release stability of the iOS and OAP platforms.
- At TIAA, led the user experience and development of the Enterprise-Level Telephony Toolbar application, reducing call handling times from 8 minutes to under 5 minutes. This innovative softphone product with voice biometric integration revolutionized call center operations and improved overall efficiency.

Career Experience

Career Break January 2023 – November 2024: Took a planned career break to fully recover from a medical condition, emerging stronger and more focused. Now fully recovered and eager to apply my expertise in technology, UX, and program management to drive innovation and business impact in a new leadership role.

UX Operations Program Manager, McDonald's Corporate, Chicago, Illinois

April 2022 – Dec 2022

Product: Food Services - Global App, Kiosk and Website

Managed capacity across internal design teams and external vendors, overseeing the Global McDonald's design agency relationship, budget, and capacity roadmap. Ensured role clarity and smooth collaboration across teams. Focused on evolving McDonald's offerings to align with customer needs, ensuring delivery of exceptional products and services. Led the UX department through strategic design growth and operational transformation to enhance collaboration, foster a positive creative environment, and drive the achievement of product goals. Collaborated with product management to integrate customer requirements into the design and development of core McDonald's global products—App, Kiosk, and Web. Partnered with research, analytics, engineering, accessibility, and external design teams to deliver detailed, end-to-end designs.

- Reduced design handoff timelines by 10% through the establishment of an internal design team and implementing a weekly rapid prototyping cycle.
- Implemented gift card payment functionality within McDonald's app, enhancing the user experience.

- Scoped, tracked, and reported on 20-30 global projects per quarter from brief to completion, monitoring cross-product dependencies, impacts, and opportunities for optimization.
- Championed the adoption of Agile Experience Design practices and Scrum methodology. Trained teams on agile processes, guided implementation, and ensured agile practices delivered customer value.

IT Program Manager, Press Ganey, Chicago, Illinois

Sep 2019 – Dec 2021

Product: Healthcare – Data Visualization, Analytics and Reporting Applications

Oversaw strategic initiatives to enhance the patient experience for over 26,000 healthcare organizations, with a commitment to continuous, sustainable improvement in healthcare delivery. Aligned time, budget, forecasting, and resources to ensure completion within program guidelines. Collaborated with Product and Application Development management to plan and monitor program progress, ensuring milestone achievement across various projects.

- Steered user research for the Nursing Excellence Program during the COVID pandemic, identifying user needs, pain points, and behaviors.
- Delivered the Integrated Analytics (IA) Dashboard, the flagship tool of Press Ganey that provides comprehensive cross-domain analytics. This solution enhances clients' capacity to fulfill the patient promise of safe, high-quality, and patient-centered care, supported by an engaged and resilient workforce.
- Developed IA Solutions grounded in research that highlights the intersections of performance across safety, quality, experience, and workforce engagement, empowering healthcare organizations to make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement.
- Identified and resolved project and program-level issues, risks, and dependencies while serving as the centralized point of contact for IA Go-To-Market preparation activities.
- Strategically managed a \$7M+ portfolio of projects, providing transparency to executive leadership regarding technology health and project status across 15-20 projects per quarter. Focused on creating high-veracity, high-availability healthcare data for hospitals.

IT Program Manager, BMW Technology, Chicago, Illinois

Jan 2019 – Sep 2019

Product: Automotive - In-car Head-Unit Displays (Dashboard) & Connected Drive App on iOS devices

Coordinated software engineering efforts for BMW's Connected Drive Application on iOS devices and in-car head-unit displays, while supporting Agile transformation across development teams. Led Scrum ceremonies, planned, tracked, and organized daily activities for iOS and Online Application Platform (OAP) head-unit teams during 2-week Agile sprint cycles.

- Guided automated unit testing, test-driven development (TDD), behavior-driven design (BDD), pair programming, refactoring, and continuous integration/continuous deployment (CI/CD) activities to enhance development quality and efficiency.
- Worked closely with business, UX design, and technology teams, providing mentorship on Agile principles and practices. Acted as a servant leader, resolving blockers and ensuring smooth progress.
- Achieved 100% elimination of defects in the OAP code base, marking a first in the history of BMW's application. Delivered post-release defect-free code for both iOS and OAP platforms.

Senior IT Project Manager, PEOPLESOUT, Chicago, Illinois

Feb 2018 – Jan 2019

Product: Human Resources - Applicant Tracking System, Middleware Data Integrations, Enterprise Websites

Headed the Affinix mobile-first, cloud-based platform that enhances candidate experience and optimizes sourcing processes with cutting-edge technology, integrated with PeopleScout's global talent solutions. Administered updates, execution, and results for the Enterprise-Level PeopleScout IT Portfolio across all projects. Structured and coordinated the Middleware Development Team through 3-week Agile sprint cycles using the Scrum framework, ensuring efficient development and delivery.

- Built trust and facilitated process development by working with all organizational levels (executives, infrastructure teams, and vendors). Oversaw Affinix change control, deployment, and release management for new and existing clients.
- Integrated quality, security, and CI/CD processes utilizing AWS, Kubernetes, Docker, Git/GitHub/GitLab, and Jenkins, accelerating Go-To-Market speed for Affinix.
- Streamlined team processes and encouraged Agile best practices, enhancing accuracy and meeting client implementation deadlines for major clients such as Hallmark, Reinhart, and Save-A-Lot.

- Developed a 16-step technical process for SaaS delivery of Affinix, optimizing expectations for delivery and identifying continuous improvement opportunities for technical teams.

IT Project Manager, Northern Trust, Chicago, Illinois

May 2017 – Feb 2018

Product: Financial Services - Digital Transformation, Enterprise Website

Steered the user-centered redesign of the NorthernTrust.com website, focusing on enhancing user experience for one of the world's leading financial institutions. Navigated a diverse financial audience of decision-makers through an iterative redesign process, engaging all levels from C-suite to developers, ensuring on-time delivery of key milestones. Analyzed user feedback and data, providing strategic recommendations to executive stakeholders to inform the direction of the digital transformation.

- Directed a \$1.8M+ project portfolio, overseeing all phases of the website redesign, including Agile project management, vendor onboarding, budget management, and project reporting.
- Conducted comprehensive research across Northern Trust's Wealth Management, Asset Management, and Asset Servicing lines of business. Led over 125+ stakeholder interviews and focus groups with Ultra High-Net-Worth clients to identify user needs, pain points, and behaviors.

User Experience Manager, HeathWallace UX Agency, Chicago, Illinois

Nov 2016 – April 2017

Product: Financial Services - Digital Transformation, Enterprise Website

Developed and delivered user interfaces for HSBC, the sixth-largest British-based multinational bank, as part of the Deposit Onboarding Workstream. Directed UX and front-end development activities to deliver a global product onboarding solution for HSBC retail banking staff, coordinating 3-week Agile Sprint cycles.

- Spearheaded the development of creative talent and onboarding resources for the Chicago office, ensuring alignment with project goals and international standards.
- Conducted comprehensive user testing across multiple interfaces for various international financial markets, utilizing tools like Axure, HTML, CSS, Bitbucket, and SourceTree to ensure optimal user experience and functionality.

Freelance Work

User Experience Director and Technology Program Manager | Bennumedia, Chicago, Illinois

2009 – Present

At Bennumedia, we're dedicated to crafting media that's bold, fun, beautiful, sophisticated, functional, energized, and professional, designed to convey our clients' ideas and messages directly to their target audience. Our approach centers on providing exceptional technology consulting and developing strategic programs and operational models to deliver deeply Human-Centered Digital Experiences.

Our offerings include Executive-Level Management, high-performance team building, and strategic planning with OKRs, KPIs, and Product Roadmaps. We support Agile Transformation, develop and implement user experience strategies, conduct UX research, and gather comprehensive requirements to stand up and manage specialized teams tailored to each project's unique needs. Our services range from creating user profiles and personas to delivering high-impact visual designs (for both print and web), content management systems, software development, and usability evaluations.

We collaborate with design and engineering audiences using a number of Technologies: Management (Atlassian (JIRA, CONFLUENCE), Notion, Meeting and Workshop Facilitation, Design (User Zoom, Adobe Creative Suite, Axure, Sketch, Figma), Front End (HTML, CSS, React, Angular, etc.), Content Management Systems (CQ5, FATWIRE, SharePoint, Drupal, WordPress, etc.), Middleware (MuleSoft), Back End (Java, .Net, JBoss, Redis, Enterprise Data Warehouses, etc.), DevOps (Maven, Jenkins, etc.) and Cloud Technologies (Azure, AWS, GCP, SAP). We speak the language of technology, ensuring seamless integration and exceptional results across all digital touchpoints.

Additional Experience

IT Project Manager & UX Researcher at TIAA | Chicago, Illinois

Technology Manager at American Bar Association | Chicago, Illinois

Project Manager & Web Developer at Moraine Valley Community College | Palos Hills, Illinois

Project Manager & Web Developer at Axel Springer Digital TV | Berlin, Germany

Communications Officer & Web Developer at JPMorgan Chase | Chicago, Illinois

Certifications, Training, & Awards

Project Management Professional (PMP) | PMI, Credential ID: 5580062

Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP) | PMI, Credential ID: 2774228

Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO) | Scrum Alliance, License: 1251382

Certified Scrum Master (CSM) | Scrum Alliance, License: 638529

NN/g UX Master Certified (UXMC) | Nielsen Norman Group, Credential ID: 1001001

Certified Usability Analyst (CUA) | Human Factors International, Credential ID: 2020-7869

Applied Project Management Certification | Northwestern University

My Fair Lady Poster (Silver - 2012) | National Council for Marketing and Public Relations Medallion Awards, District 3

Education

Master of Science in Human-Computer Interaction | DePaul University, Chicago, IL

Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management | Chicago State University, Chicago, IL

Interactive Media Design | The Illinois Institute of Art, Chicago, IL

Community Leadership & Volunteering

Product Manager & Delivery Lead | Community Food Navigator

Philanthropy: Led the development of digital platforms aimed at addressing food insecurity in Chicago's BIPOC communities. Worked with urban growers and partners to create resilient local food ecosystems, applying a phased approach to technology implementation for community impact.

Board Member - Director of Technology & Media Delivery | Dorothy J. Pilgrim Women's Haven

Social Services: Directed technological solutions and media outreach to support the shelter's mission of helping troubled teens and young adults with life skills, education, and resources.

Realtor® & Leasing Agent | Coldwell Banker Realty

Economic Empowerment: Empowering clients in building generational wealth through real estate investment and leasing.

Volunteer | Pacific Garden Mission

Poverty Alleviation: Supporting efforts in poverty alleviation through service at one of Chicago's oldest homeless shelters.