

Pedro Couto e Santos

Head of Product Design · Design Systems · AI-Enabled Design

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Professional Summary

Design leader with 25+ years of experience building digital products and the teams that make them. The last decade has been focused on healthcare, medical devices, and analytics platforms: FDA-cleared products, Parkinson's care, pharmaceutical research. Recently moved into construction SaaS, leading a 10-person design team at Causeway Technologies.

I own design systems, build research operations from scratch, and integrate AI into both design workflows and product strategy. I'm equally comfortable setting direction at the strategic level and doing the work myself. I believe the best design leaders do both.

Leading Design

Over 15 years of design leadership across three organizations, I've built and led teams of 5 to 15 designers, at SAPO, Impossible, and Causeway Technologies.

In each case the challenge wasn't just managing a team, it was building a design function: establishing ways of working, raising quality standards, and creating the conditions for good work to happen consistently.

At Causeway I moved the team away from a constraining design rule book to an open collaborative practice. At Rune Labs, I established a cross-platform design system that held together through a 50% team reduction without impacting delivery. At Impossible, I grew from Lead Designer to Design Director while managing a 15-person team and co-running a 40-person studio. At SAPO, I

brought together the five most senior designers to help set direction for the entire ecosystem, and work on innovative initiatives, such as the first design framework.

Core Competencies

- Product & Design Strategy · Direction-setting, system thinking, problem framing
- Design Systems · Ownership, evolution, scalability, cross-platform consistency
- AI-Enabled Design · AI in design workflows; AI as a user interface paradigm
- UX Research Operations · Research infrastructure, synthesis, insight activation
- Team Leadership · Remote international teams, coaching, design culture building
- Languages: English (fluent), Portuguese (native)

Experience

Causeway Technologies

(Hybrid - Lisbon / Remote - UK) *Head of Product Design* | 2025 (current)

- Lead and develop a 10-person design team serving a 500-person construction SaaS organisation, managing prioritisation, design quality, and team growth across web and mobile products
- Own and evolve Concrete, a cross-platform design system for web and mobile. Currently leading the effort to completely automate it using AI to both create in Figma and output to code.
- Built a UX research operations function from scratch: structured research repository in Confluence, custom AI-powered query tool for research retrieval and synthesis

- Ran alignment sessions and produced design artefacts for key enterprise client presentations (Balfour Beatty, Kier, Vinci)

Rune Labs

(Remote – US) | *Director of Design (Europe)* | 2022 – 2025

- Built cross-platform design system → halved design time
- Refreshed StrivePD iOS app → improved patient experience in Parkinson's care
- Led concept for StrivePD 3.0 → conversational AI pivot
- Designed data analytics tool (StriveStudy) → key pharma revenue enabler
- Conducted remote research with patients, caregivers, clinicians

Clarivate

(Remote – Freelance) | *Sr. Product Designer / PM* | 2024 – 2025

- Led client acquisition → converted pitch into signed contract
- Managed and executed complex data viz platform redesign (DRG Fusion)
- Delivered production-ready UI for global enterprise use

Impossible / Kwamecorp

(Hybrid – Lisbon + US Clients) | *Design Director* | 2015 – 2022

- Managed 15-designer team, ran Lisbon studio ops (40+ people)
- Acquired Fortune 500 client Leica Biosystems → \$250k project win
- Led design for Genentech, Roche, and other healthtech clients

SAPO / Portugal Telecom

(Lisbon) | Head of Design / Senior Web Designer | 2003 – 2015

- Managed SAPO's most senior design team (5 designers), contributing to the creative direction of a 30+ person design organization across Portugal's top web portal
- Led the full rebranding of SAPO - the first in over 30 years - including design strategy, stakeholder alignment, and implementation across digital and offline assets
- Co-led the creation of Pond, an experimental multi-platform social network that aggregated activity from Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and more
 - Recognized as a SXSW Interactive Awards nominee for Technical Achievement
 - Managed a cross-functional team of 8; designed for Web, Android, and iOS
- Spearheaded development of Ink, an open-source frontend framework (HTML/CSS/JS) used across internal platforms (<https://ink.sapo.pt>)
- Designed and coded dozens of digital products (websites, platforms, internal tools), blending UX principles with robust frontend execution

NitroDESIGN

(Remote / Lisbon) | Founder & Managing Partner | 1998 – 2003

- Founded one of Portugal's early digital design studios during the emergence of the web
- Led client projects across web design, branding, and early UX, pioneering user-centered design locally

- Built and managed a small team; delivered digital experiences for commercial and cultural clients
- Developed core technical and leadership skills that later shaped strategic design roles at SAPO and beyond

Flagship Work

- StrivePD 3.0 – Designed AI-powered UX pivot for Parkinson's remote care
- DRG Fusion – Data analytics dashboard with complex visual storytelling
- Roche DP200 – Led research, UX and UI for pathology scanner used in labs worldwide
- Pond @ SAPO – SXSW Award-nominated cross-network social product

Education

5-Year BA in Communication Design (Master's equivalent) at Faculdade de Belas Artes, Lisbon