RAFAEL CARVALHO
HANDS-ON PRODUCT DESIGN LEADER

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Permanent resident of Germany, no visa sponsorship needed

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Design leader with 10+ years in digital product design and 5+ years leading design at head-of-discipline level inside a large-scale e-commerce business. I build teams, set direction, and deliver product experiences that work for users and for the business. I'm as comfortable shaping strategy with a CPO as I am in a design critique with a junior designer.

I've transformed how design works inside organisations, not just what it outputs. That means embedding designers into cross-functional teams, building systems that scale, and making design's impact visible at board level. I balance craft and outcomes: UX rigour, visual quality, and systems thinking aren't a nice-to-have in my teams, they're the standard.

I've grown design organisations from scratch, developed designers from junior to senior level, and built cultures where people stay and grow. I know how to navigate ambiguity, influence senior stakeholders, and make the case for design in the language of the business.

I'm genuinely excited about AI as a shift in how we design, build, and lead. I'm already testing what it means for the craft, for team velocity, and for how we make decisions.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Home Shopping Europe (HSE) · E-commerce (~€800M annual revenue) · Munich, Germany
Team Lead Product Design (head-of-discipline scope) · Mar 2020 - Present

- Led Product Design across web and app for one of Germany's largest e-commerce businesses, reaching 46M+ households. Operated at head-of-discipline scope: setting strategy, building the organisation, and partnering at executive level with Product and Engineering leadership.

- Organisational transformation: Converted a reactive internal agency model into embedded designers within cross-functional product teams, fundamentally changing how design creates accountability across the business.

- Scaling the team: Built the Product Design organisation from 2 to 9 professionals across Product Design and User Research. Defined roles, growth paths, hiring standards, and design culture from the ground up.

- Design System: Established HSE's first enterprise-wide Design System, creating shared standards that contributed to ~15% faster delivery and measurable improvements in consistency and accessibility.

- Quality and reliability: Introduced a structured visual QA process with veto authority on critical journeys, reducing UI regressions and bug tickets by ~25% and increasing release reliability.

- Commercial impact: Helped shift HSE's channel mix from ~35% digital in 2020 to ~50% by 2026 by improving trust, clarity, and decision-making quality across key purchase journeys, directly reducing dependency on call-centre sales.

- 0 to 1 product leadership: Led Product Design for HELLO, a creator-led live commerce mobile app, from concept validation to launch. The app reached 100M+ viewers and increased return likelihood by 2.3x, establishing a new digital growth pillar for the business.

- Executive influence: Partnered closely with Product Management and Engineering leadership at exec level to shape roadmap priorities, clarify trade-offs, and move strategic decisions upstream.

AutoScout24 · Automotive Marketplace (~190M annual revenue) · Munich, Germany

Senior UX Designer · Jun 2018 - Feb 2020

- Part of a strategic 0 to 1 initiative to transition a classifieds platform into a fully transactional online marketplace, one of the most complex trust and behaviour-change problems in automotive e-commerce.

- Designed trust mechanisms including inspection transparency, quality signals, and purchase and return flows. Led user research and usability validation to de-risk the shift to online purchasing. Contributed to proving both product and organisational feasibility of digital vehicle transactions at scale.

trivago · Hotel Metasearch (~€1B annual revenue) · Düsseldorf, Germany

Senior UX Designer · Jan 2016 - May 2018

Worked inside a global, highly experimentation-driven product culture serving 720M+ users. Led the strategic redesign of trivago's member area, aligning logged-in experience with measurable growth goals. Delivered ~70% increase in registrations through improved activation and engagement flows.

SKILLS

Hands-on design · Design leadership and strategy · Scaling and transforming design organisations · People development and coaching · Design Systems · Stakeholder management and exec influence · End-to-end product design · User research and testing · Measuring design impact · Figma and prototyping · HTML/CSS working knowledge · AI tools in design workflows

EDUCATION

- **Executive MBA**: Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)
- **Exchange Program, Product Design**: Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach, Germany
- **BSc in Industrial & Product Design**: Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)

LANGUAGES

- **English** (Full professional)
- **German** (Professional, TELC B1)
- **French** (Basic)
- **Spanish** (Basic)
- **Portuguese** (Native)