# Karen Yao, MDEI | Product Designer & Owner



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## Summary

**I think. I do. I lead.** I am a hands-on, strategic, product-minded designer who turns user needs, business goals, and technical constraints into intuitive, useful, and engaging digital products. With 10+ years of experience across digital, I've combined expertise in product strategy, ownership, UX, UI, CX, interaction, and communication design to shape ideas, define solutions, and bring products from concept to delivery in collaboration with cross-functional teams.

## Skills

- Product strategy, roadmap planning & prioritization
- Problem identification, definition & solving
- Agile product development & delivery
- Experience (UX/CX), Interaction, UI, Communication, Presentation and Graphic design
- User research, empathy & validation
- Research & analytics (user, lead, market), including usability and digital state analyses
- Roadmapping, requirements gathering, PRDs, user stories & acceptance criteria
- Wireframing, prototyping & design systems
- Information architecture
- Data analysis, management & visualization
- AI-assisted workflows, research synthesis & product documentation
- Content creation and administration
- Graphic design and video production (editing and 2D animation)
- Branding and brand ideation
- Digital marketing and optimisation
- Website and social media management
- Event and collateral development, procurement, and management
- Project, product, reporting, and team management & collaboration

## Experience

**PRODUCT DESIGNER & OWNER**
ThoughtExchange & Sparrow Connected
Jan 2025 - Present (post-acquisition)
thoughtexchange.com

- Expanded product design and ownership across Sparrow and ThoughtExchange products, including multi-channel communication experiences.
- Partnered with leadership and stakeholders on product strategy, roadmap planning, prioritization, and customer validation.
- Defined product direction and translated business objectives, customer needs, and technical considerations into actionable product requirements and shippable solutions.
- Led user, market, and competitive research initiatives; created comprehensive, executive-ready insights reports that aligned stakeholders and validated product decisions.
- Continued to lead end-to-end design for Sparrow across web, mobile, Microsoft Teams, and Microsoft SharePoint products.
- Designed product concepts, prototypes, and high-fidelity mockups for both product delivery and customer-facing solution explorations across Sparrow and ThoughtExchange.
- Consulted on and designed communication-focused experiences for ThoughtExchange Connect, including email, SMS, and multi-channel engagement workflows.
- Owned product documentation, including PRDs, feature definitions, user stories, acceptance criteria, success metrics, and roadmap management.
- Collaborated with Engineering, Sales, Marketing, and Customer Success on feature delivery, release communications, product demos, and customer-facing assets.

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## Experience (Cont'd)

**LEAD PRODUCT DESIGNER**
Sparrow Connected | Dec 2020 - Dec 2024
sparrowconnected.com

- Led end-to-end product design (UX, UI, communication, and interaction) across web, mobile, MS Teams, SharePoint, and email channels.
- Owned product discovery and roadmap input, translating business and user needs into requirements, prototypes, and actionable solutions in collaboration with Product, Engineering, and stakeholders.
- Built and scaled cohesive design systems to ensure consistency across products, brand identity, websites, and multi-channel products and assets.

**RESEARCH & ANALYTICS INTERN**
Hope & Healing Intl. | Jul 2020 - Dec 2020
hopeandhealing.org

- Led social media audits and audience research, delivering strategic reports and recommendations to marketing teams and senior leaders.

**DIGITAL STRATEGY CONSULTANT**
The Sean Ward Show | Sep 2019 - Dec 2019
theseanwardshow.com

**DIGITAL MKTG & EVENTS SPECIALIST**
IDP IELTS Philippines | May 2017 - Jun 2019
idp.com/philippines

**LEAD CONVERSION & COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**
IDP IELTS Philippines | Oct 2016 - Apr 2017
idp.com/philippines

**FIELD VOLUNTEER & GRAPHIC DESIGNER**
World Vision Inc. | Aug 2016 - Nov 2016
worldvision.org.ph

**REPORTER & INTERN**
The Manila Times | Jun 2015 - Aug 2015
manilatimes.net

## Education

**MASTER OF DIGITAL EXPERIENCE INNOVATION (MDEI)**
University of Waterloo, Stratford, ON, CA
Graduate Studies | 2023 - 2025
uwaterloo.ca

**INTERACTIVE MEDIA MANAGEMENT**
Centennial College, Toronto, ON, CA
Ontario College Graduate Certificate With Honours | 2019 - 2020
centennialcollege.ca

**B.A. MAJOR IN JOURNALISM**
University of Santo Tomas, MNL, PH
Bachelor's Degree | 2012 - 2016
ust.edu.ph

## Recognition

**GLOBAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS**
IDP Education Ltd. | 2018 - 2019

- Terrific Transformation (Awardee '19)
- Outstanding Leadership (Nominee '18)

**SOUTHEAST ASIA ALL STARS**
IDP Education Ltd. | 2018 - 2019

- Leadership Impact (Finalist '19)
- Rising Stars Leadership (Finalist '19)
- Rising Stars Leadership (Finalist '18)
- Terrific Transformation (Nominee '18)

## Daily Tools

- Claude, Gemini, Google, and ChatGPT
- Figma, Adobe XD, Sketch, InVision, or similar prototyping platforms
- Lucid, Miro, FigJam, MS Visio, and similar collaboration platforms
- Adobe CC (Ai, Ps, Ae, Pr, Id), and Canva
- Jira and Microsoft DevOps
- Microsoft Office and Google Workspace
- Website, content, events, and ads management platforms (HubSpot, WordPress, Cvent, Eventbrite, etc.)
- HTML & CSS