DAVID WILLIS

EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR | CREATIVE STRATEGY & HANDS-ON DIGITAL CRAFT

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SUMMARY

Creative leader with 26+ years in design, digital advertising, performance media, and scalable creative operations. Began as a hands-on designer and front-end-minded creative, then grew into department and ECD-level leadership across creative strategy, team development, financial accountability, and cross-functional systems. Known for building practical creative infrastructure that helps teams move faster, learn faster, and produce stronger work without losing craft, brand judgment, or human creative direction.

CORE CAPABILITIES

Creative Direction & Campaign Strategy | Hands-On Art Direction & Design | Copy & Messaging Strategy | Performance-Driven Digital Creative | Paid Social, Display, Search, Programmatic & Landing Pages | Modular & Feed-Driven Personalization | Creative QA & Production Systems | AI-Enabled Workflow Acceleration | Team Leadership & Mentorship | Cross-Functional Partnership | Financial Accountability, Scoping & Margin Discipline | New Business & Executive Storytelling

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Executive Creative Director / Creative Director

Delve November 2019 - September 2026 | Boulder, CO

Lead Delve's Creative Department across design, copywriting, creative development, and performance-focused creative strategy for global nonprofits and growth-stage brands. Role expanded into ECD-level ownership across department direction, creative operations, cross-functional leadership, AI-enabled systems, and financial contribution.

- Own creative strategy across programmatic display, paid social, paid search, landing pages, and modular campaign systems, aligning creative decisions to audience insights, media plans, testing priorities, and business outcomes.
- Remain hands-on when the work requires it, including campaign concepts, messaging frameworks, presentation decks, ad systems, QA reviews, template logic, creative troubleshooting, and direct design and art-direction feedback.
- Built and operationalized an audience-first creative system that connects strategy workbooks, creative briefs, messaging matrices, targeting keys, modular templates, QA processes, and post-launch learning loops.
- Develop reusable personalization frameworks that scale creative variation across audiences, campaign pillars, funnel stages, offers, and channels without requiring proportional increases in headcount.
- Partner with Media, Client Advisory, Measurement, and Programmatic teams to ensure creative strategy is practical, measurable, traffickable, and aligned with client growth objectives.
- Lead concept development and executive-level storytelling for key client accounts, renewals, agency positioning, and major new business opportunities.
- Use AI and automation as an internal accelerator for strategy synthesis, message-matrix drafting, creative QA, performance-insight summaries, documentation, and workflow consistency while maintaining human creative judgment, brand stewardship, and final review.
- Built a distributed creative team across designers, developers, copywriters, video resources, interns, and international support, with clearer role accountability, QA standards, documentation, and leadership development.
- Own creative scoping, capacity planning, forecasting input, and department margin discipline, including guardrails that reduce overservicing and better connect creative value to fee structure.
- Implemented structured creative performance reviews and learning-capture processes so each campaign can inform future messaging, templates, tests, and audience strategy.

Creative Director / Senior Art Director

Rhythm Creative, LLC January 2017 - November 2019 | Longmont, CO

- Founded and led an independent creative consultancy delivering branding, digital experiences, websites, campaign creative, and social content across industries.
- Directed brand systems, digital interfaces, acquisition-focused campaigns, and client presentations from concept through production.
- Operated as sole principal, balancing strategy, client management, creative execution, vendor coordination, timelines, budgets, and final delivery.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Design Director
IMM April 2012 - January 2017 | Boulder, CO

- Promoted from Senior Designer to lead a multidisciplinary creative team supporting large-scale digital campaigns for national brands.
- Managed senior designers, designers, and copywriters across brand and performance-driven campaign work while staying close to visual direction and execution quality.
- Aligned creative planning with media strategy, KPI goals, ROAS targets, development requirements, and production timelines.
- Built scalable production systems to support high campaign volume while maintaining consistency, speed, and quality control.

Senior Designer
IMM August 2009 - April 2012 | Boulder, CO

- Designed ROI-focused websites, landing pages, CRM campaigns, digital acquisition assets, and campaign systems for Fortune 500 clients.
- Combined visual craft, sales-driven digital strategy, and pixel-precise front-end development to bridge concept and execution.

Graphic, Web & Video Designer
The Creative Alliance 2005 - 2009 | Lafayette, CO

- Delivered brand systems, websites, video, print campaigns, and integrated marketing materials across B2B and B2C clients, taking work from concept through production across multiple media.

Graphic Designer
MWH Americas, Inc. 2001 - 2005 | Broomfield, CO

- Produced web and print marketing materials, proposals, presentations, and collateral systems for one of the country's largest engineering firms.

Graphic / Web Designer
Volan Design LLC 1999 - 2001 | Boulder, CO

- Began career designing websites, brand identities, and marketing materials while developing foundational skills in visual communication, layout, production, and client service.

EDUCATION

Northern Arizona University | B.F.A., Visual Communication

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

- Hands-On Creative Director: Can lead the room, build the deck, shape the campaign, write the messaging, review the work, and jump into execution when needed.
- Performance + Systems Builder: Builds modular, testable creative systems across display, paid social, landing pages, decks, dynamic feeds, and campaign-refresh workflows.
- Practical AI Operator: Uses AI as an efficiency layer for research synthesis, QA, documentation, workflow automation, and creative-system scaling, not as a replacement for human-led ad craft.

SELECTED CREATIVE SYSTEMS & TOOLS

Creative strategy | Art direction | Digital design | Campaign concepting | Messaging matrices | Modular templates | Google Studio | Campaign Manager 360 | Display & Video 360 | Google Ads | Paid social creative | Dynamic feeds | QA systems | Figma | Adobe Creative Suite | Presentation design | Workflow documentation | GPT, Claude & Gemini for internal synthesis and workflow acceleration | Apps Script and automation-enabled production support