Jess Orellanes Petrillo

User Research Lead | Continuous Discovery & Research Practice

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Profile

I'm a User Research Lead with eight years of UX research experience in B2B SaaS. I help teams build a current understanding of their customers and use that knowledge to frame problems, evaluate ideas, and decide where to focus. My work combines leading studies with establishing and sustaining research practices, coaching colleagues, and managing research operations.

Professional experience

Balsamiq | B2B wireframing and prototyping software

March 2016-Present | Bologna, Italy

Multiplatform SaaS serving customers across North America, Europe, and Australia.

User Research Lead

November 2024-Present

- I help teams clarify problems and identify what they need to understand before committing to solutions.
- I develop and maintain a deep understanding of our customers, keeping the team informed as their needs, behaviours, and ways of working change.
- In collaboration with Product Management, I set research priorities around business goals and upcoming decisions.
- My findings and recommendations inform quarterly product planning and backlog refinement.
- I help design experiments and interpret their results to assess which solutions work best.
- I consolidate and sustain continuous discovery, adapting the practice to changing product priorities and ways of working.
- Through coaching, guides, training, and workshops, I help colleagues conduct research and develop their research skills.
- I manage research operations, including participant access, tools, processes, data, training, and shared resources, to keep research running.
- Alongside continuous discovery, I lead end-to-end studies, from research questions and study design through findings and recommendations.

UX Researcher

October 2018-November 2024

- I established a continuous discovery practice, making weekly customer research part of how teams explored problems and assessed ideas.
- I built recruitment processes and shared research resources to sustain the practice.
- I introduced regular concept and usability testing and worked to extend it across the product lifecycle.
- I addressed ad hoc research questions, choosing and conducting methods suited to the question and the evidence needed.

Selected contributions across research roles

- **Research practice:** Participation expanded from me alone to four interviewers. Annual customer interviews grew 3.6-fold, from 34 in 2022 to 121 in 2025.
- **Product priorities:** Research informed a shift from enhancing the AI agent to prioritising the integration. Customer workflows shaped proposals for its write and viewer capabilities.
- **Product direction:** The proposed prototyping concept appealed to participants, but testing exposed a cumbersome implementation. Findings helped the team reconsider the pivot and identify improvements to the existing product.
- **Core workflows:** Repeated testing showed that proposed WYSIWYG text editing slowed users down, providing evidence against launch. Arrow testing informed optional magnetic behaviour, more discoverable controls, and revised defaults.
- **Pricing:** Research gave marketing evidence to back the proposed prices and a clear case for revising tier names, explaining AI credits, and strengthening the middle tier.

Earlier experience

Community & Content Specialist, UX Team | Balsamiq

March 2016-October 2018 | Bologna, Italy

I built relationships with customers and created resources and product information for the Balsamiq community. Those relationships later became the foundation of research recruitment.

Digital Marketing & UX Specialist | Ingenio Mesh

April 2014-February 2016 | Bologna, Italy

At this digital agency, I translated client needs into website structures, interfaces, and content, then worked with developers through implementation.

Strategic Communications Assistant | CAF, Development Bank of Latin America

February 2008-February 2013 | Caracas, Venezuela

I produced digital communications, created visual materials, and maintained the corporate intranet. The role involved working with senior public-sector stakeholders in a multinational environment.

Education and professional development

UX Master Certificate, UX Research specialty | Nielsen Norman Group

Product Management programme | Product Heroes
Enrolled; scheduled November 2026-January 2027

Additional training: usability testing; survey design and analysis; behavioural design; Jobs to Be Done & Outcome-Driven Innovation.

Social Communication | Universidad Católica Cecilio Acosta
Technical secondary school diploma, Administration and Data Processing | Instituto Técnico Jesús Obrero

Languages

Spanish: native | English: full professional | Italian: full professional