



UX MANAGEMENT — HOW I LEAD

How I Lead

Using trust, collaboration, and open communication to grow high-performing teams.

Sally Holman-Hebert · UX Design & Research Leader

WHO I AM

A UX designer who leads by building trust first

- 15+ years in UX design, with 3 years operating as an unofficial lead. That means mentoring, building team process, and driving cross-functional alignment without the formal title.
- 8+ months as a formally titled UX Research Manager, applying years of leadership experience under the title to match.
- Background as IC UX design and team-lead work. I've scaled research operations, grown teammates into product-owning designers, and been the person PMs and directors come to when a project needs structure.
- What I care about most: creating the conditions for people to do great, collaborative work, but not controlling how they get there.

My leadership thesis:

"I lead from trust by default. I have the track record to back it up."



01

Leadership Philosophy

Three principles of how I actually work with people — pulled straight from my written philosophy that I give my own reports.

Three principles I lead by

1

Lead from trust by default

Autonomy and ownership come first. I set the destination clearly; how you get there is largely yours to own.

2

Collaboration over ego

How we treat each other matters as much as what we ship. I build a culture of respect and belonging where every voice counts and there's no room for egos.

3

Open communication

My goal is to build a team culture where we're open with each other, listen to each other's ideas and feedback, and lift each other up.



02

Proof: My Leadership Approach

Two stories: building the operational backbone of a research team, and growing one designer into a leader in her own right.

2A • BUILDING TEAM OPS

I built the operational backbone for a growing research team

As UX Research Manager, I noticed gaps in efficiency and ops as the team scaled from 1 to 4 — and built the structure to close those gaps.

100%

completion on team-ops OKRs
(working agreement, onboarding
playbook, company visibility
+ partnerships)

1→4

team growth, supported by
the process I built

50%

faster new-hire ramp time
(6 weeks → 2-3 weeks)

What I built

- Team working agreement
- New-hire onboarding playbook
- Team goals
- Office hours + monthly meetings with ProServ and Sales teams
- Partnered on building a centralized research repository

“Sally was able to see gaps in efficiency and ops and worked with the team [on] how to increase our visibility and impact.”

— Melissa, Sr. UX Researcher, team member (direct report)

Mentoring Krissy: from missed deadlines to owning UX for a product team

1

The gap

Director flagged missed deadlines, stress, and unfocused work. I stepped in as her mentor.

2

The plan

Built a shared spreadsheet & gameplan. Weekly check-ins, clear goals, continual feedback.

3

The shift

She started hitting deadlines. Used our time as a sounding board. 1:1s became less frequent as she improved.

4

The outcome

Grew into leading meetings, then moved into owning UX for one of our product teams.

“When Sally became my mentor, I grew... not just as a designer, but also as a professional. She taught me, both directly and by example, how to walk into a design review with confidence and lead it.”

— Krissy, former mentee, later UX lead for a product team

HOW I MANAGE PEOPLE

An excerpt from “How to Work with Sally”

A living document I actually give my reports.

You shouldn't have to read my mind

I'll ask directly in our 1:1s what you need from me and where I can do better.

Safe space to vent

Talk it out, feel heard — then let's point our energy toward what we can change.

Mistakes are part of the work

I'll acknowledge mine openly, and I hope you'll feel safe doing the same.

I'll follow through and advocate for your growth

I'll show up consistently, follow through on what I say, and advocate for your growth — in this team and beyond it.

“Sally strikes a balance between hands-on when needed and providing space for the team to work autonomously... she leads with kindness without sacrificing the professional relationship.”

— Melissa, direct report

HOW I WORK CROSS-FUNCTIONALLY

Cross-functional collaboration, not handoffs

From my UX Design Process framework: partners are looped in at each phase, not just at the end.



Eng and QA join at Ideation & Design — not after the fact.



Krissy

Mentee / Designer

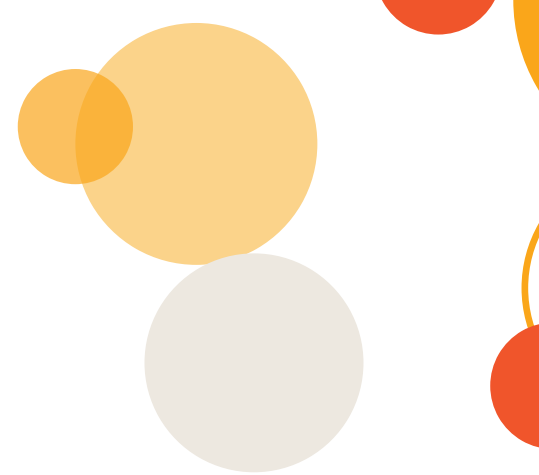
“She had a knack for bringing engineering, product, and stakeholders into the design process early rather than treating design as something handed off.”



Nir

Product Manager

“She's incredibly strategic, thoughtful, and great at making sense of complex problems... she brought a perspective that consistently made the work better.”



In short:

Trust, collaboration, and open communication — that's how I lead, and how I show up for my teams.

“Sally is positive, empathetic, and decisive — the essential ingredients of a great leader. When you find someone like that, you do whatever you can to keep working with them.”

— Krissy