

Joanna Peña-Bickley

PRESENTLY

CEO/Chief Product Design ,Vibes AI

BOARD MEMBER & ADVISORY

USC Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Academy
EarthDNA & Global Refuge

ALUMNI

Design Executive at Alexa Devices at Amazon Lab126, Amazon Web Services, IBM, Samsung & Uber

BIOGRAPHY

Joanna Peña-Bickley, a design engineer, is known as the mother of Cognitive Experience Design and a pioneer in generative AI. Growing up dyslexic, she hacked text interfaces to teach herself to read, and learned a lesson that has guided her ever since. She designs technology that amplifies curiosity, courage and care, because that is humanity at its best.

Curiosity has made her an inventor. A hands-on builder with multidisciplinary acumen in research, design, engineering and media, she has produced 150+ enduring, market-making products and holds patented inventions. In 1999, she designed the first-of-its-kind Matrix phone and mobile games for Warner Bros., putting voice recognition in people's hands long before talking to machines was normal. In 2014, she coined Cognitive Experience Design, the belief that humans and AI are meant to work in symbiosis, each making the other capable of bolder discoveries.

Courage has made her a leader of firsts. She built and led teams that created one of the first streaming video players for ABC News, the first banking experience on the Apple Watch for Citibank, a smart mobility platform for General Motors, Alexa devices used in over 100 million homes, and Samsung's reimagining of the touch-first Android experience as a voice-first Agentic OS. IBM, Uber, Nokia, Land Rover, L'Oréal, Sephora, American Express, NASA, Boeing, MTV, Pepsi and Jay Z have all benefited from her customer obsession and tenacious leadership.

Care is shaping her next decade. As founder and CEO of Vibes AI, Joanna is building a near future where technology moves from screens to voice, and agents don't just respond, they truly listen. Vibes AI Studio builds with Spatial Hearing AI to create conversational, context-aware products for automotive, financial services and insurance, healthcare, travel and hospitality, technology, consumer electronics and media. Vibes AI Labs leads research in neurolinguistics and voice biomarkers, decoding human intent from subtle shifts in speech, delivered through Vibes AI Cloud. And VAIA, the company's consumer product, brings Mind Care to everyone: because your brain has a frequency, and in an age of infinite noise, everyone deserves the power to tune it. Her ten-year goal: AI that strengthens human resilience, helps people stay present and works for 100% of humanity.

Named one of Fortune's Most Powerful Women and an MIT Fellow in Agentic AI Design, Joanna founded the AI Design Corps to champion workforce up-skilling and has contributed to state and federal AI governance policy. From the stages of CES, SXSW, Cannes Lions and MIT to podcasts around the world, she shares a protopian vision: the future is something we build together.

SPEAKER TOPICS

Artificial Intelligence

AI: The Human Made Species
What if the most significant species on Earth in 2030 isn't born, but built? Today, we'll explore how AI is evolving from tool to companion, creating what experts are now calling 'a new digital species' that will journey alongside us through life. + View Talk Overview

The Four AIs: Intelligence Reimagined
We're not in an AI revolution—we're in an intelligence renaissance, where four distinct forms of intelligence are converging to create something entirely new. + View Talk Overview

The Wisdom Continuum
Are we creating AI in our image, or are we remaking ourselves in AI's image? What wisdom from our ancestors might save us from the pitfalls of unchecked technological advancement? + View Talk Overview

The Wisdom Drought: Surviving in a World Drowning in Cheap Intelligence
We're witnessing the final days of expensive AI. DeepSeek's MoE architecture and FP8 precision have slashed inference costs by 90%. But as we enter this era of intelligence abundance, we're facing an unexpected crisis: a wisdom drought that threatens to undermine everything we've built. + View Talk Overview

The Intelligence Divide
In the attention economy, your value as a worker isn't determined by your skills or education—it's determined by whether you have access to intelligence-augmenting technology. *What happens to the 70% projected to be left behind?* + **View Talk Overview**

Cognitive Health & Wellness

The Voice of Your Mind: How Speech Reveals Cognitive Health
What if I told you that the subtle patterns in your everyday speech could reveal early signs of cognitive decline years before traditional symptoms appear? Today, we'll explore how your voice might be the most powerful health monitoring tool you already use. + View Talk Overview

Hearing the Future: Voice Biomarkers as Predictive Tools for Cognitive Health
What if we could identify those at risk for Alzheimer's years before symptoms appear? A recent study from the Framingham Heart Study showed that voice-based linear classifiers can predict incident dementia with an area under curve of 0.812. + **View Talk Overview**

The Sound Bath That Cleans Your Brain: 40Hz and the Cognitive Washing Machine
MIT's Studies show that 40Hz sound therapy assists with glymphatic clearance—essentially washing toxic proteins out of your brain. What if the solution to maintaining your cognitive reserve isn't another supplement, but simply the right frequency? + **View Talk Overview**

Beyond Pills: The 40Hz Sound Revolution Your Neurologist Won't Tell You About
While pharmaceutical companies race to develop the next dementia drug, researchers have discovered that 40Hz sound therapy can reduce amyloid beta plaques, tau pathology, and synaptic loss—the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease. Why isn't this non-invasive approach making headlines? + **View Talk Overview**

Product Design

Vibe Coding: The Death of the Professional Designer
In 25% of the most recent batch of startups at YC, 95% of the code was AI-generated. What happens when anyone can 'vibe code' an interface into existence without design training? Your job title might survive, but your job won't.
+ View Talk Overview

The Hook That Breaks: When Addictive AI Design Becomes a Public Health Crisis
If you let your users invest in an app, they're more likely to form a daily habit of using it. But what happens when AI supercharges the hook model to create interfaces so addictive they become classified as public health threats? Are you designing the next digital epidemic?
+ View Talk Overview

Beyond Buttons: The Extinction of Traditional UI in the Agentic Era
In just a few years, we've gone from laughing at AI to fearing it. Now we're designing for it—but we're still using interfaces from the pre-AI era. What if I told you that by 2026, 95% of your current UI patterns will be obsolete?
+ **View Talk Overview**

The Self-Healing Design System: When Tokens Become Autonomous
Agentic AI can integrate with CI/CD pipelines—updating design tokens, ensuring code components remain consistent with design libraries, and automatically generating documentation. Welcome to the era of self maintaining design systems. + **View Talk Overview**

AI & Workforce Development

Beyond Displacement: Workforce Transformation in the Agentic Era
Agentic AI will displace certain jobs—that's inevitable. But the more important story is how it will transform others and create entirely new roles. Today, we'll explore how to prepare your organization and employees for this shift.
+ View Talk Overview

Hire, Contract, or Create? The End of Human-Only Workforces
Your workforce planning now involves a critical third option: hire an employee, hire a contractor, or simply create an AI agent to do the work. Which jobs in your organization are already obsolete?
+ **View Talk Overview**

The AI Tax Credit: Why Governments Should Pay You to Keep Humans Employed
What if companies received tax incentives not just for AI adoption, but for maintaining human employment levels during digital transformation? This isn't science fiction—it's already happening in Singapore, where the government offers up to 70% salary support for workers re-skilled during AI transitions. + **View Talk Overview**

Joanna Peña-Bickley Speaker Introduction

Joanna Peña-Bickley learned early that technology should bend to people. Growing up dyslexic, she hacked text interfaces to teach herself to read, and she has been building ever since, with her own hands, toward a future where technology works for 100% of humanity.

Her ingenuity shows up as firsts. In 1999, she designed the first-of-its-kind Matrix phone and mobile games for Warner Bros., using voice recognition and natural language processing long before talking to machines was normal. In 2014, she coined the term Cognitive Experience Design, grounded in a belief she has held all along: that humans and AI are meant to work in symbiosis, each making the other capable of bolder discoveries.

She is equally known for the teams she builds and builds alongside. As IBM's Global Chief Creative Officer, she led designers and engineers bringing Watson into automotive, banking, healthcare, government and consumer electronics. As head of research and design for Alexa Devices, her teams created products and AI skills that made Alexa an essential assistant in over 100 million homes. At Samsung, she led the reimagining of the tap-first Android experience as a voice-first Agentic OS.

Today, Joanna is designing the next chapter of human and machine collaboration: conversational, context-aware agents. As founder and CEO of Vibes AI, she is still prototyping, coding and shipping, leading research and development in Spatial Hearing AI, the auditory sensor that lets agents truly listen. That work is the foundation of Vibes Studio, which designs new AI products for automotive, financial services and insurance, healthcare, travel and hospitality, technology, consumer electronics and media.

At Vibes Labs, she leads work in neurolinguistics and voice biomarkers, decoding human intent by measuring the subtle acoustic and physiological shifts in speech that reveal emotion, stress and cognitive state. That research powers the Labs' cloud products and VAIA, her invention that makes Mind Care a lifestyle accessible to all, each designed to strengthen human resilience, help people stay present and deliver a return on attention in every interaction.

An MIT Fellow in Agentic AI Design and a lifelong Star Trek fan, Joanna brings to the stage an earnest, protopian optimism: that the future is something we build together, and that AI, designed with care, can help all of us boldly go further than we could alone.