

Marcelo Paiva

Design engineer

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I design experiences and ship accessible code that runs them. Two decades of that has been spent on enterprise software, several years of it on HR and talent — the systems that decide who gets hired, onboarded and promoted — where the hard part is keeping something powerful approachable. I build design systems other engineers want to use, and that accessibility is something the system enforces rather than something a checklist catches at the end.

WHAT I DO

- Design systems in code — tokens, component contracts, and the contribution path
- TypeScript, React, CSS. Design tokens as the interface between design and code
- WCAG 2.2, ARIA and assistive technology, as constraints designed around rather than audited for
- HR, talent acquisition and HCM product surfaces at enterprise scale
- Agent-assisted development, and what a design system has to become to survive it

EXPERIENCE

Head of UX and Accessibility · ClearCo

Sep 2024 – Present

Talent management platform — applicant tracking, onboarding, performance.

- Built the design system template repository that designers and product managers now build in: a running application on the real component library and tokens, with mock data, that installs on any machine without the legacy Windows stack.
- Moved design handoff from static files to working code. Designers and product managers ship pull requests through the same review gate as engineers, and drift found downstream flows back upstream as a PR against the template.
- Wrote the design rules, accessibility standard and writing guidelines as markdown in the repository, so both people and coding agents read them before anything is generated. The platform conformance target is now answerable from the repo rather than from me.
- Set WCAG 2.2 AA as the target for the new platform and moved accessibility from an end-of-line audit into the components, where keyboard behavior, focus, structure and contrast ship with the starting material.
- Made deskless and mobile the default case: multi-tenant test data modeled on frontline customers — logistics, nursing, food service, higher education — so phone behavior is decided alongside desktop rather than after it.

CASE STUDIES

ClearCo: fourteen HCM products, one experience

CCDS: a design system that ships itself

Our vendors' accessibility is our accessibility

Accessibility and User Experience Lead · AEM Corporation

Apr 2023 – Sep 2024

The Rhonda Weiss Center for Accessible IDEA Data, which AEM leads under a multiyear U.S. Department of Education (OSEP) grant to improve state capacity to publish IDEA data accessibly.

- Led design and development of an accessible reporting system for IDEA Part B and Part C data — what states report on how children with disabilities are served — working with 80 stakeholders including disabled people.
- Extended the U.S. Web Design System with design tokens carrying accessibility decisions, so downstream teams inherited contrast, focus and categorical data palettes rather than re-deciding them.
- Ran 30+ usability studies with disabled participants, including blind and neurodivergent users, reaching the highest applicable conformance level on the delivered tool.
- Made equitable data representation the core design problem, and presented the approach at CSUN and Closing the Gap.

CASE STUDIES

Data about disabled students, in a tool they could not use

UX Manager — Portfolio and Great Place To Work · UKG (Ultimate Software / Kronos)

Apr 2018 – Mar 2023

Joined Ultimate Software on the recruiting team; Ultimate and Kronos merged to form UKG, an HCM suite used by 5,000 organizations and 15 million employees.

- Owned experience design across the portfolio — HR, payroll, recruiting, onboarding, performance and workplace culture analytics — and Great Place To Work alongside it.
- Led a team of 10 designers and researchers, and drove accessibility conformance across every product in it.
- Designed the employee belonging and DEI analytics hub, mapping demographic data against sentiment, including hiring funnel analysis by gender and ethnicity.
- Carried the HCM experience through a cross-platform rebrand without losing accessibility ground.

CASE STUDIES

UKG: ten designers and researchers, one portfolio

Great Place To Work Hub: turnover and belonging, read together

Creative Director · ProcessMAP

Florida · 2015 – 2016

- Built and led a team of 8 designers and developers, shipping a modern front end and a design system component library.

Creative Director · Sapient Global Markets

New York · 2014 – 2015

- Introduced Lean UX practice, halving design iteration time and embedding designers inside agile delivery teams.

User Experience Director · Thomson Reuters

New York · 2007 – 2013

- Led interaction design for Thomson Reuters Eikon across wearables, smartphones and tablets.

THINGS I HAVE BUILT

- WCAG Plugin for Figma (<https://www.figma.com/community/plugin/1373362852131056921/wcag-plugin>) — Free and open source. Guideline search, annotation cards, and accessibility utility tokens imported as Figma variables, so the accessible choice is the default one.
- No Latin (<https://nolatin.com>) — Turns content blocks into an accessible HTML prototype, so screen reader users can be included in research on day one instead of being excluded by placeholder text.
- a11y-tips-statusline (<https://github.com/mpaiva/a11y-tips-statusline>) — All 87 WCAG 2.2 success criteria in the Claude Code statusline, rotating while you work, with a /wcag search command. One-line install.
- wcag-mcp-server (<https://github.com/mpaiva/wcag-mcp-server>) — WCAG 2.2 as an MCP server, so a coding agent can look a criterion up mid-generation instead of guessing at it. Works with Claude Code, Cursor and VS Code Copilot.
- Atomic (contributor) (<https://github.com/bastani-inc/atomic>) — Accessibility contributions to the open-source coding agent runtime by Bastani.ai: a WCAG contrast gate over the interactive theme, measured against rendered output rather than declared colors.

- **docuseal-a11y** (<https://github.com/mpaiva/docuseal-a11y>) — Accessibility remediation of DocuSeal, the open-source DocuSign alternative used for onboarding signatures: landmarks, alt text across Rails and Vue, accessible names on icon buttons, and keyboard support for the custom elements that do the signing.
- **atomic-cockpit** (<https://github.com/mpaiva/atomic-cockpit>) — A control surface for running a team of agents across projects — planning, a human approval gate, and verification by an agent that did not write the code.
- **This site** (<https://github.com/mpaiva/jupiter>) — Next.js and TypeScript with a hand-rolled token layer. CI fails the build if any color pair drops below WCAG AA in either theme, or if any image ships without alt text.

STANDARDS AND TEACHING

- Invited Expert, W3C Accessible Platform Architectures (APA) Working Group, since December 2025 — the group reviews emerging web standards for their effect on disabled people.
- Contributing to W3C specification discussions since 2019, with authored proposals to ARIA Practices (aria-owns with late-mounted descendants), WCAG 3 (a content API), and the AI Accessibility work (including disabled people as AI content creators, not only as end users).
- Authored a 10-week UX curriculum for a design bootcamp and taught it to over 200 entry-level designers.
- Coach design and product teams on design systems, accessibility and working in code.

SELECTED SPEAKING

- **Into Design Systems, 2024** — Creating accessible design systems; WCAG tokens as design decisions
- **CSUN Assistive Technology Conference, 2022–2024** — Rapid prototyping with accessibility in mind; design tokens for equitable data representation
- **W3C TPAC, 2023** — Design tokens for accessibility settings
- **ICT Accessibility Testing Symposium, 2020** — Focus first: a new front-end approach — Best Presentation award

EDUCATION

- Electrical Design — State Center of Technology Ferreira Viana, Rio de Janeiro