

# Ayaka Uriu

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Innovation strategist with a proven 10-year track record of leading transformative growth for global Fortune 500 companies. Recipient of honorable mention for Fast Company's 2023 Innovation by Design Award for data-driven solutions. Served as Vice President in a major bank, achieving USD 48 million in annual gross profit. Skill set includes design thinking, strategic foresight, and system-level problem-solving. Excels at steering multidisciplinary teams towards a shared vision to tackle complex business problems.

Core competencies include:

- Growth strategy development and execution
- Client relationship management and stakeholder engagement, including C-suite executives
- Quantitative and qualitative market research and translating insights into an actionable roadmap
- Breakthrough development of future-oriented offerings and prototypes
- Extensive industry experience with emphasis on aviation, financial, and food & beverage sectors in the global field

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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### Strategy Consultant & Futurist

Stratnauts, Remote

12/2023 - Present

- Developed internal processes for Stratnauts to offer future foresight consulting services by leveraging speculative design methodologies, such as the Future Wheel framework, Future Cone, and Backcasting.
- Conducted extensive research to understand society, technology, economic, environmental, and political trends and inform insights for building sustainable and future-proof strategies in the urban development of Tsukiji town in Tokyo.
- Aligned future strategies with organizational vision and purpose, using narratives to engage stakeholders in these visions.

### Innovation Strategist

Mizkan America, Chicago, IL

05/2023 - 08/2023

- Led the end-to-end growth strategy for Mizkan's Japanese condiment brand to innovate and expand in the US market.
- Orchestrated consumer research by writing questionnaires and discussion guides, interviewing 10 participants, and conducting field visits that informed the creation of a journey map and highlighted three key behaviors and needs for Japanese cuisine adoption.
- Designed and facilitated an ideation workshop with Mizkan's cross-functional teams to validate 16 product and marketing plans.
- Presented a robust 5-year business strategy with an actionable roadmap to C-suite stakeholders, with two concepts underway.

### Strategy Consultant

LBMC, PC, Nashville, TN

06/2022 - 08/2022

- Re-imagined B2B customer experiences for a leading agricultural cooperative in the food industry, aligning with growth strategy.
- Validated six concepts through competitive analysis and in-depth business case studies, demonstrating market viability.
- Conducted research with 10 corporate users across American and European regions to gather insights and prototype solutions.
- Led an in-person design thinking workshop for 22 participants, expanding LBMC's design consulting service.
- Collaborated in crafting the business model for LBMC's new design consulting service, ensuring successful launch and positioning.

### Vice President

Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC), Tokyo, Japan

04/2014 - 12/2023

- Fostered relationships with top Asian financial institutions through client engagement and cross-organizational collaboration.
- Achieved USD 48 million in annual gross profit through strategic financial and industry trend analysis, exceeding year-over-year targets by 10%.
- Managed the accounts of more than 100 corporate loan clients across various industries, supporting their business growth initiatives.

## EDUCATION

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**Master of Design**, IIT INSTITUTE OF DESIGN - Chicago, IL

12/2023

Area of Study: Innovation Strategies, Futures Design, Human-Centered Design, Systems Design, Data Analysis, Design Research

**Bachelor of Arts in Policy Science**, RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY - Kyoto, Japan

03/2014

Area of Study: Urban Design, Environmental Study

## AWARD & SCHOLARSHIPS

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**Fast Company's 2023 Innovation by Design Award Honoree**

10/2023

**Merit Scholarship Recipient, IIT Institute of Design**

08/2021

## PROJECT

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### **Strategic Designer, Futurist**

01/2023 - 05/2023

OMERS

- Conducted extensive secondary research including sustainability, circular economy, and deep-tech lenses to gain insights related to EV charging and related infrastructure.
- Created multiple future-based, sustainable product and service concepts for investable EV charging infrastructure through rapid prototyping and the utilization of systems design frameworks.

### **Project Manager, Experience Designer, Client Engagement**

01/2023 - 05/2023

Design Museum of Chicago (DMoC)

- Led a multidisciplinary team in creating a groundbreaking user experience for DMoC, enhancing museum visitor engagement.
- Crafted an interactive kiosk game, strategically incorporating both physical and digital components to maximize public engagement in a playful and informative manner.
- Oversaw three rounds of prototyping with varying fidelity levels to ideate, validate, and optimize the engaging experience.
- Formulated comprehensive design principles to guide future interactive exhibitions.
- Presented the interactive kiosk, service blueprint, and journey map experientially to DMoC's Founder and Executive Director.

### **Strategic Designer, Project Manager, Client Engagement**

08/2022 - 12/2022

United Airlines

- Supported United Airlines' inaugural innovation lab facilitating accelerated innovation activities across the organization.
- Delivered visionary solutions for baggage operations to enhance competitiveness and drive growth.
- Facilitated expert meetings and on-site visits to O'Hare Airport, leading to the development of a comprehensive system map, valuable insights, and identified opportunities for improvement.
- Showcased the final concepts through the Living Lab, an immersive prototyping studio, engaging United Airlines stakeholders and the Chief Innovation Officer at the United Airlines Innovation Lab.

## ADDITIONAL

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**Leadership:** Project Management, Stakeholder Management, Facilitation, Business Strategy, Cross-Cultural Communication

**Design:** Problem-Solving, Service Design, Experience Design, User Research, Product Design, Organization Design, Behavioral Design, Prototyping, Qualitative and Quantitative Research, Systems Thinking, Analytical Skills, Research Planning

**Foresight:** Backcasting, Scenario Planning, Storytelling, Strategic Foresight, Presentation

**Software:** Adobe Creative Suite, Figma, MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Miro, Mural, RPA, AI (Chat GPT, Midjourney, Adobe Firefly)

**Language:** Japanese (Native), English (Fluent), French (Intermediate)

**Global Exposure:** Australia (Jan 2008 - Dec 2008), France (Sept 2013 - Feb 2014), Japan (2010 - 2021), USA (2021 - Present)