

# Christopher Ferrell

Staff UX Researcher | Applied Anthropologist | Financial Systems, Fintech & AI Readiness

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## SUMMARY

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Mixed-methods UX researcher and applied anthropologist with a decade of practice across financial services, commercial real estate, logistics, and higher education, most often in environments where regulatory reality and operational practice have quietly diverged in ways that only become visible from the outside.

My work begins where standard research often stops: at the system level. I look for what users have internalized and normalized, what organizations have stopped noticing, and what the data reveals when interrogated, then make that visible to the people with authority to act on it. That instinct has surfaced engineered churn in trucking, four years of unaddressed trust failures at a major fintech, and friction so embedded in leasing workflows that site teams had stopped experiencing it as anything other than their lived reality.

At Fiserv, I'm embedded in a core banking modernization initiative, proposing and validating information architecture designed to scale across an entire product ecosystem at a \$34B fintech and conducting strategic research that connects current product decisions to long-term organizational patterns. That same instinct—surfacing what is tacit and making it explicit—is the foundational work that responsible AI implementation requires before automation can be trusted in regulated environments.

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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### Staff UX Researcher (Contract)

Aug 2025 – Present

*Fiserv • Plano, TX*

Embedded in Fiserv's core banking modernization initiative as the UX research lead for a legacy teller and core platform serving financial institutions from community banks to regional and national fintechs.

- Proposed and validated an original Information Architecture and unified navigation framework designed to scale across the full core modernization product ecosystem. Built from first principles by analyzing both the current financial regulatory environment and a 30-year-old 13-tab legacy interface. Tested across three rounds with screened banking professionals: v1 achieved 67% task success (strong for first-iteration testing with international participants on an abstract interface); a refined v2 reached 85% overall success with 6 of 10 participants scoring 90% or above and 4 scoring 100%; a third moderated round with active Fiserv clients in operational and IT/SysAdmin roles—the most discriminating participant pool to date—is concluding with a 98% average task success rate and zero corrections to the underlying domain model across all sessions. This work is AI readiness in practice: validated domain clarity is the prerequisite for trustworthy agentic systems in regulated environments, where agents must execute with specificity and without ambiguity inherited from unvalidated internal assumptions.
- Conducted longitudinal synthesis pairing Q4 2025 internal consultant workshop feedback with 2021 client survey data, revealing no measurable progress on core client trust themes across four years, delivered as a strategic diagnostic to product leadership.
- Designed and fielded a banking AI adoption survey targeting C-suite and VP-level stakeholders across community banks and regional institutions to identify where AI confidence and skepticism actually live within financial institutions, informing product roadmap and go-to-market framing.
- Advocating validation-first research integration ahead of delivery cycles, establishing shared navigational language across product, design, and engineering to reduce semantic drift and accelerate cross-functional alignment on a team under high delivery pressure.
- Applied domain expertise acquired through structured independent study of the regulatory environment, SVB failure analysis, and core banking architecture, developed prior to fielding a single participant session, to situate UX findings within the business and compliance conditions that shape them.

### Senior UX Researcher

May 2020 – Aug 2025

*RealPage • Richardson, TX*

- Led mixed-methods UX research across a range of B2B products in multifamily commercial real estate (CRE). Translated ambiguous stakeholder needs into scoped, actionable research plans aligned to business

outcomes. Projects range from AI-guided automation tools to online help systems, analytics dashboards, and leasing workflows.

- Reframed ambiguous or misdirected product initiatives through discovery research, redirecting resources before teams committed to solutions that hadn't cleared feasibility or need validation.
- Connected tactical research findings to operational and financial outcomes, translating user behavior into language that landed with SVPs and product leadership.
- Navigated research in domains with limited internal expertise, building credibility with stakeholders through domain investment before engaging participants.
- Built research operations infrastructure including archive systems, incentive strategy, and an onboarding guide for new product efforts.
- Designed and facilitated cross-functional workshops to expand research literacy and increase upstream engagement with the research process.

### **Senior Research Analyst**

Jun 2017 – May 2020

*University of North Texas • Denton, TX*

Designed and led a scalable operational system to manage over 100 externally funded engineering research projects from award to final closeout. Applied principles from UX and applied anthropology to create structure, reduce friction, and improve audit readiness across technical teams and administrative stakeholders.

- Created a dynamic tracking system to monitor reconciliation status, forecast deadlines, and flag risk across all active projects.
- Developed a 6-part operational framework for research project management, considered the most accurate and trusted system during tenure.
- Replaced reliance on enterprise reporting tools with a more transparent, user-friendly process trusted by OGCA and principal investigators.
- Delivered university-wide training sessions to improve adoption of file hygiene, reconciliation standards, and research financial workflows.

### **Strategic Analyst**

Jun 2014 – Oct 2015

*Transplace • Frisco, TX*

Direct-report to the CEO, producing recurring market intelligence reports from premium proprietary sources typically accessible only to institutional investors. Synthesized macro freight dynamics, fuel pricing, regulatory shifts, and labor trends into executive-ready analysis supporting strategic messaging and thought leadership.

- Worked with full autonomy under tight turnaround, translating complex transportation economics into clear, actionable summaries for executive decision-making.
- Research and industry access gained here directly informed graduate thesis connecting macro freight economics to driver-level turnover behavior, a linkage no prior research had made.

### **Researcher & Data Analyst**

2014 – 2016

*USA Truck, Inc.*

Research Project: High Driver Turnover Among Long-Haul Motor Carriers

Led an applied ethnographic study on long-haul driver turnover as part of a graduate research partnership. Recruited and interviewed drivers across terminals, analyzed identity and autonomy-related themes, and cross-referenced findings with economic data analyzed during concurrent employment with Transplace to surface structural contributors to sustained turnover.

- Conducted 16 long-form interviews with long-haul drivers across multiple terminals in a high-barrier research environment.
- Used MaxQDA and grounded theory methods to analyze themes around identity, surveillance, resignation, and communication breakdowns.
- Positioned driver attrition not as a behavioral failure but as a rational response to structural conditions — a finding informed by firsthand industry experience and advisory access to logistics executives.

## **EDUCATION**

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### **Master of Science, Applied Anthropology**

2016

*University of North Texas, Denton, TX*

## **METHODS & TOOLS**

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**Methods:** Qualitative Interviews • Contextual Inquiry • Workflow Mapping • Tree Testing • Survey Design • Longitudinal Synthesis • Ethnographic Research • Mixed-Methods Research • Research Ops • Stakeholder Facilitation

**Tools:** Figma • Figjam • Miro • Optimal Workshop • UserTesting • Qualtrics • MaxQDA • PlaybookUX • InVision • Teams / Zoom