

Product Designer

Marco Lee



Marco Polo

2024+

Outcome Launched a 0 to 1 mobile product for Gen Z audiences, generating key behavioral insights. Contributed research and product concepts that later informed Marco Polo Pro. Led the development of AI-assisted design-to-code workflows now used daily across the company.

Context I joined Marco Polo in early 2024 on the Incubation team, following my work at Patio. The company had strong traction with millennials but had not cracked Gen Z. The mandate was open-ended: move fast, test aggressively, and find a real entry point.

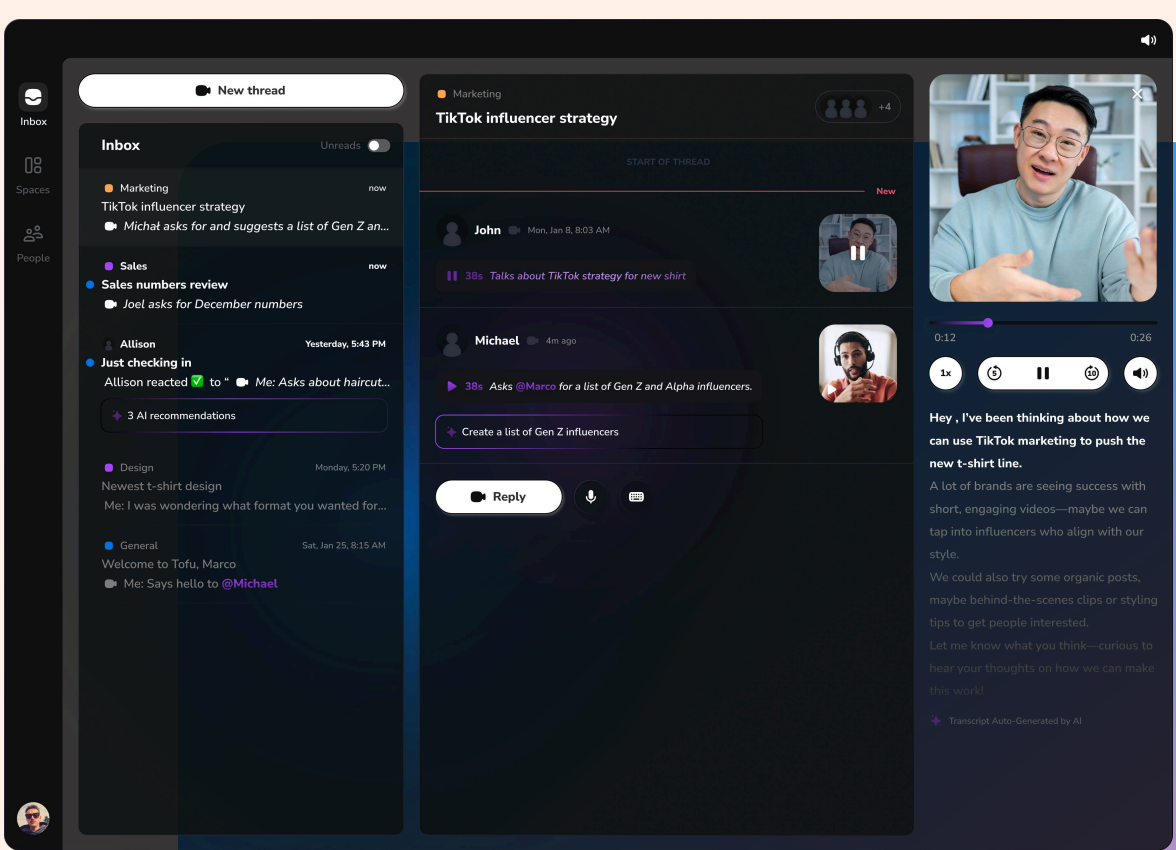
Incubation We launched and iterated weekly across college campuses nationwide. Nearly every assumption was risky. We were exploring new interaction models, profile systems, and social mechanics with limited precedent inside the company.

While not everything shipped long-term, the work sharpened my instincts around feed-based social design, identity, and engagement patterns at speed.

AI in Design Design-to-code was a persistent pain point. Off-the-shelf AI tools produced generic results and failed when introduced to real design systems and production constraints. Pixel-perfect designs did not translate cleanly to usable code.

My team and I built custom tooling using a combination of MCPs and AI vision to interpret Figma data, identify structural errors, and iteratively self-correct output. The result was production-ready front-end code that actually respected our design system.

This workflow is now used daily and has meaningfully changed how designers and engineers collaborate at Marco Polo.



Patio

2020-2023

Outcome Grew Patio to 1M+ downloads and 100K+ daily active users across college communities. Became the primary chat platform on 100+ campuses nationwide and was later acquired by Yik Yak.

Problem When I joined Patio, we were positioning the product as a private group chat app for college students. The space was already crowded and noisy, with incumbents like GroupMe setting expectations around chaotic, high-volume messaging.

Early engagement was inconsistent, and it was unclear how Patio would meaningfully differentiate.

Decisions We made a fundamental pivot from a chat-first product to a feed-based experience centered on real campus identity.

This was a risky identity shift. It meant walking away from a familiar mental model and redefining what "social" meant inside the app. Instead of chatting about interests, we leaned into what was actually bringing students together: shared, real-world experiences happening on campus.

Changes We reframed Patio around campus feeds tied to real identity, simplified interaction models to reduce noise and increase relevance, and evolved the design language from dated and ornamental to simple, modern, and fast.

At the same time, I led a full visual and brand refresh while operating in a very small team. My role extended beyond product design into growth marketing, social strategy, product direction, and day-to-day coordination with engineering.

Results The feed model aligned with how students already understood their social world. It reduced friction, clarified purpose, and made the product feel immediately useful without needing social buy-in.



About me

I am a product designer and thinker with exceptional background in consumer social. I specialize in early-stage, high-ambiguity environments where creativity, speed, and clear product direction matter more than perfect process.

I've led design for products used by millions, scaled a college social app to acquisition, and partnered closely with engineering and product to ship fast across iOS, Android, and web. My work spans hands-on product design, creative direction, growth experimentation, and highly technical collaboration, including building AI-assisted design-to-code workflows now used daily across my company.

People tend to describe my work as creative and fun, but grounded in strong product instincts and execution. I care deeply about simple, opinionated design and I'm comfortable making hard calls when direction is unclear.

Based in Seattle. Background in California. Long-distance runner. Big design nerd.



Three Lotuses

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Beef-Lamb June 2025

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