

<https://www.microsoft.com/design/careers/profile/deborah-harrison/>



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## Designing Cortana's personality

Deborah Harrison

Senior Content Experience Manager



You've likely interacted with Cortana before - either to remind you to leave on time for your dentist appointment, create your grocery list, or even for a quirky joke. But how does Cortana learn how to do all this? How does she know what to say? Deborah Harrison and her team are core contributors to all things Cortana. She's a senior technical writer and manager, and her team writes just about everything Cortana says, in addition to creating her personality. In the world of artificial intelligence, chatbots, and machine learning, the personality of virtual assistants and bots is at the core of a delightful experience. That's where Deborah's team comes in. "We prioritize, above all else, the goal of making that interaction feel positive. We strive for kindness, for empathy, and for whatever we can do to craft a meaningful connection," she says. And these goals are embedded in Cortana's personality.

We write...to make sure that we're getting at the sincere heart of what the interaction should be.



It really ties a pizza together.

Do you like cheese?

"We articulate the principles of her personality so that all of the engineering teams and all markets around the world are working with the same set of guidelines," she says. "And we work closely with design and engineering to craft the very experiences of working with Cortana." Her team actually works on all parts of the process of designing Cortana - from the very beginning strategy for feature releases, down to the words you see in Settings. Deborah's team consists of former playwrights, screenwriters, authors, and more. With their unique blend of backgrounds, they each bring a unique perspective to an assistant that touches millions of Microsoft customers. But what makes Deborah the proudest of her team, she says, is, "the way our whole team brings such thoughtful intention to the development process. We take meticulous care with everything we write to not just make it easy to use or clever, but to make sure that we're getting at the sincere heart of what the interaction could be."

One of the incredible things that Microsoft offers you is the opportunity to build your craft as you go.

Deborah's background isn't actually in design, either. It's in English and liberal arts. But text and design are inextricably linked, she believes. Both hold user experience at their cores, and both are essential to create beautiful experiences.

"I always feel incredibly lucky to write for a living. And I get to do it in this area where people are really going to see it, and it's going to make a difference," she says.

Even though she's been working at Microsoft for over a decade, one of Deborah's favorite parts about working here is that she's constantly learning.



It may be small comfort, but  
I'm here for you.

I'm sad.

"I'm learning so much from what we built here. The way we collaborate brings new things to light. And I have the opportunity to see those things through. I continue to feel to find opportunities not only to have a voice in how we build these things that touch, literally, millions of people, but also to find inspiration with the people around me."

Her advice for anyone pursuing a design career at Microsoft?

"One of the incredible things that Microsoft offers you is the opportunity to build your craft as you go. You'll be working on something that will touch a lot of people. Be ready to work with really smart people who are passionate about their work. Come with an excitement about working with people to make something awesome, to make something beautiful, and make something meaningful."

<https://www.microsoft.com/design/careers/profile/cassie-klingler/>

## Designing accessible education

Cassie Klingler

Principal Design Manager



When she left a design firm she co-founded with a former professor, Cassie Klingler was looking for a new challenge in her design career. When the opportunity arose at Microsoft to combine her love of teaching with her passion for design, she knew it would be a great fit. Cassie works on a small incubation team called Hacking STEM – a team that addresses some of the barriers to access STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education across the globe. They create STEM curriculum that's accessible regardless of the economic or technological limitations a community may have.

As their name suggests, Cassie and her team "hack" solutions to teach valuable lessons in STEM, using everyday household items like paper cups, plates, and metal washers. They combine these with Excel, Paint 3D and other Microsoft software to build out comprehensive lesson plans for students around the world to learn about everything from electric currents to seismology, kinetic energy and geometry.

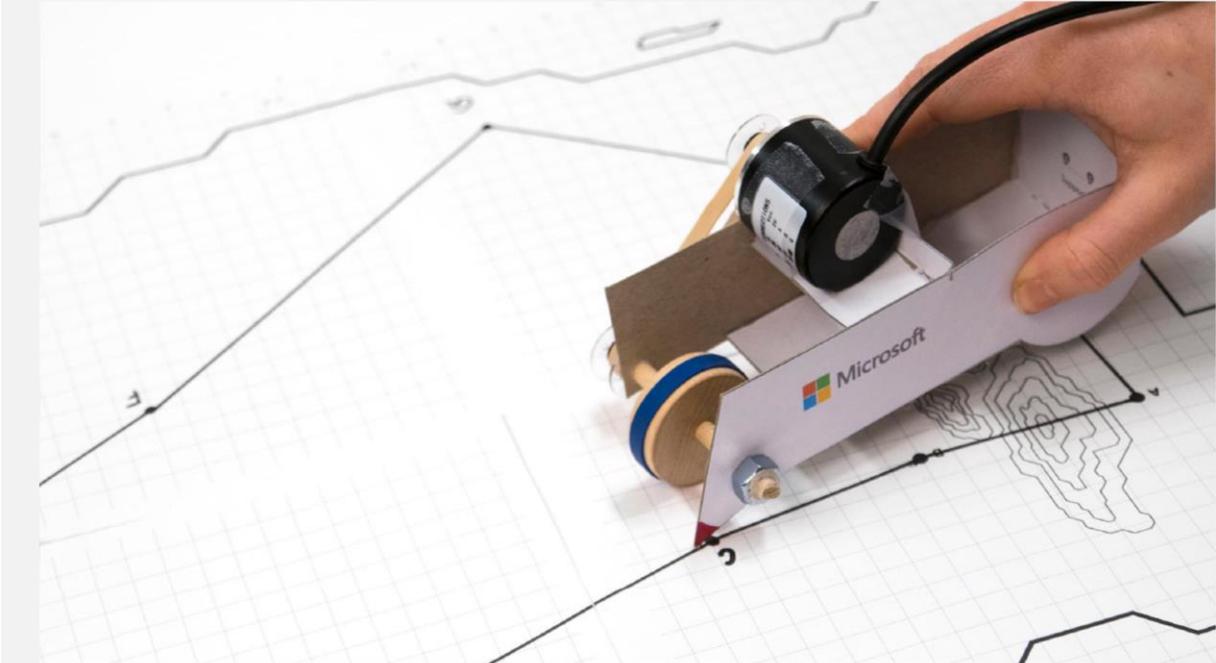
"We always joke that if you want to throw it away, we want to use it," Cassie says. "We're trying to modernize some STEM learnings and make it accessible to all students. We want to enable every one of them to achieve more."

**We're trying to make this accessible to all students. We want to enable every one of them to achieve more.**



Recently, Cassie and her team traveled to Mexico City, to meet some of the teachers and students using their lesson plans to learn about seismology – a unit especially relevant given a devastating earthquake had just struck the region. "I can't tell you how incredible it is to see a student interact with our lesson plans and have their a-ha lightbulb go off," she says. "Being able to connect with the teachers and the students using our lessons and get excited about math and science – that's awesome." To Cassie, designing at Microsoft means solving really hard problems, like finding ways to bring education to communities around the world. "We're solving problems at a scale that probably intimidates most people. The fact that design is looking beyond just the easy solutions is applaudable, intimidating, and inspiring all at the same time," she says. "I think Microsoft Design is one step ahead of the world, whether the world is ready for it or not. We've been leading in innovation and inspiring other companies to do the same."

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At the end of the day, Cassie says her favorite part about her job lies in her ability to help students open up the doors to their future, through education. "Everything about education is about showing possibilities," she says. "The design work I do lets me give resources to a teacher to help them enable their students. It actually helps level the playing field of gaps in education – it's amazing."

<https://www.microsoft.com/design/careers/profile/jesse-francisco/>

## A lifelong passion

Jesse Francisco

Principal Design Manager



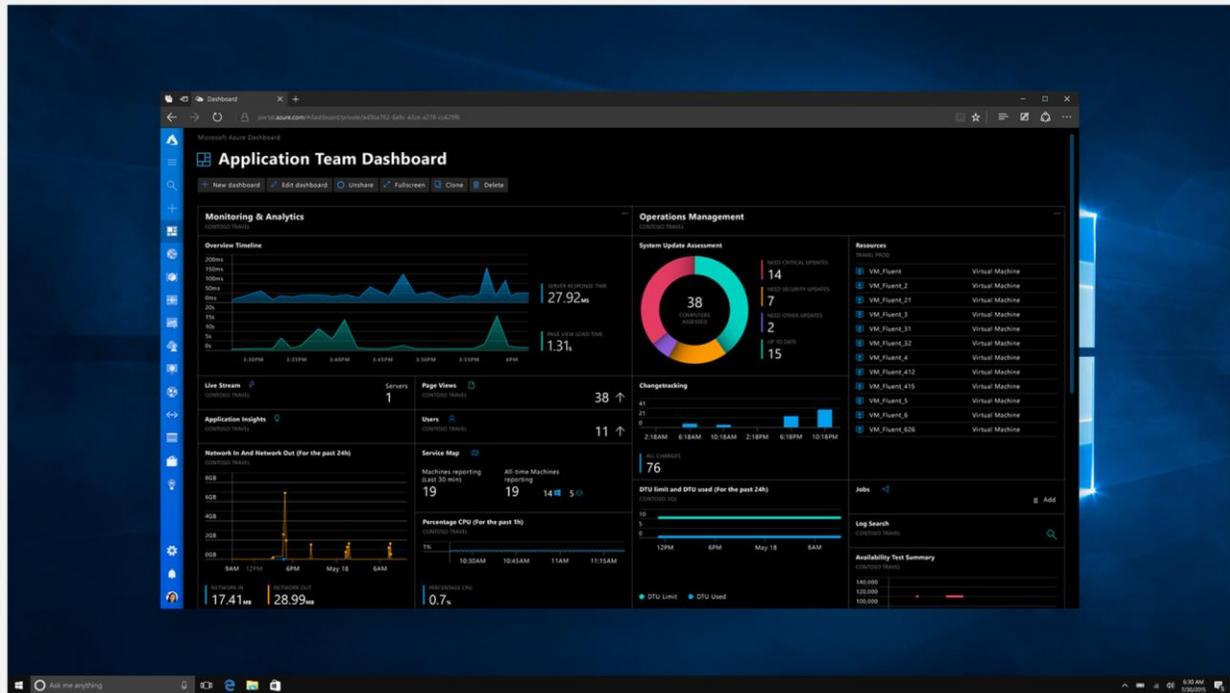
Jesse Francisco always knew he wanted to be a designer. As a kid he loved to draw, and by 7th grade, he was hooked. "By 7th grade I knew I wanted to be a graphic designer," he says. "So joining Microsoft was incredible. I had such a small idea of what UX design was. I went from that kid who just wanted to design websites for his band to designing highly complex business software that people are counting on to be running their businesses, and to be managing their resources."

Today, Jesse is a principal design manager at Microsoft, designing business platforms for enterprise customers. His team shapes user experiences and implements design solutions to help businesses track sales and talent, invoice customers – and just about everything in between.

"These experiences are typically pretty dense and complex user interfaces," he says. "We're designing them in a way that's easier to use and understand, so they resemble many of the consumer experiences they're used to on their devices."

I went from that kid who just wanted to design websites to designing highly complex business software that people are counting on to be running their businesses.





"It's a big company, and there's a lot of smart people – it can be overwhelming," he says. "But what's so incredible about it though is that there are so many people willing to provide strong mentorship and leadership and really help you find your path. They helped me realize my potential and helped me realize ultimately where I wanted to be going in my career."

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That mentorship is something he passes along to his team, now that he's a manager. "The opportunity I've had to be a manager and mentor fellow designers has been really fulfilling and humbling for me. It's really amazing to see new designers coming out of school to work here. It's great to feel like I'm able to learn even at this part of my career."