

HUGH NORTH

Principal Mixed-Methods Researcher | Product, Design & Brand Insights

Seattle, US, or International · In Person, Hybrid, or Remote | [linkedin.com/in/hugh-north-44b636](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hugh-north-44b636)

SUMMARY

Mixed-methods researcher with nearly 30 years of learning why people do what they do, across advertising and brand, cloud, growth, privacy, and AI products. When dashboards and users disagree, the people are almost always right: I pair what people say with what the data shows, define what good looks like from the user's side, and turn it into decisions designers and engineers act on. First user researcher on Microsoft's early work bringing large language models into productivity; led research teams on Cortana and Copilot.

SKILLS

Research: UX research, product research, market and brand research, advertising and campaign research, mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative), survey design and analysis, concept testing, customer journey and funnel analysis, opportunity sizing, jobs-to-be-done, heuristic review

Insight to impact: Turning insight into product, design, and business decisions; executive storytelling; global research team leadership and hiring; cross-functional partnership | Tools: Qualtrics, UserTesting, dScout, Figma, Mural

AI research & building: Research on conversational AI and answer quality from the user's side; build AI research tools in GitHub repos with GitHub Copilot and Anthropic, OpenAI, and Microsoft models

EXPERIENCE

MICROSOFT - Redmond, WA (remote)

Feb 2006 - Present

Principal UX & Design Researcher, AI Ecosystem & Innovations

Jun 2026 - Present

- Lead concept testing, opportunity sizing, and user feedback research that shows innovation teams which new ideas meet real needs across the Microsoft 365 ecosystem.
- Built AI agent-based desk research tools that speed up discovery; delivered dozens of reports to innovation designers.

Principal UX Research Manager, AI & Copilot Experiences

Sep 2024 - Jun 2026

- Listened when people said Copilot answers felt incomplete even though internal measures said they were fine. Traced it to what users actually needed (far more items than the system returned) and documented the use cases, leading to a re-engineering of core Copilot systems that affects hundreds of millions of prompts per week.
- Led a globally distributed research team (US, UK, Mexico) whose mixed-methods findings fed directly into product roadmaps and feature crews across Windows and Office.
- Defined what a good answer looks like from the user's side in a quality framework that 95 researchers across Microsoft 365 adopted, informing dozens of shipped Copilot features.

Principal UX Researcher, Microsoft 365 Copilot

Sep 2022 - Sep 2024

- Studied how people expect a conversational assistant to help with everyday work, using qualitative, quantitative, and desk research and heuristic reviews; shaped multi-turn Copilot design and the design toolkit for cross-app and in-app experiences.
- Paired what users said about answer quality with what the system data showed, pinpointing where answers fell short and driving design and engineering fixes to output quality and feedback experiences.
- Partnered with design and engineering leaders on customer incidents, turning user insight into decisions that raised quality scores.
- Turned enterprise user scenarios into 100+ test sets used in Copilot quality testing and executive reviews, which helped resolve dozens of high-priority customer escalations.

Principal UX Research Manager, AI Assistant, Search & Intelligence**Aug 2020 – Sep 2022**

- Compared real customer sign-up journeys with the intended design in a “ground truth” study, exposing where people dropped off and driving fixes to major acquisition and onboarding leaks for Microsoft 365 subscriptions.
- Wrote research and white papers on how people want help with communications, calendaring, and meetings, reshaping assistant strategy and Microsoft’s approach to AI in productivity software.
- Built and led a seven-person global research team (hiring in Mexico and the UK during the pandemic) covering the assistant (Cortana), search, feed, people, voice, and Workplace Search.

Principal UX Researcher, Office 365 Privacy & Consent**Sep 2019 – Aug 2020**

- Tested privacy permission language with people worldwide and found the gaps between what users believed, what regulators required, and what Microsoft wanted to offer; the resulting opt-in language went to every Microsoft 365 user, commercial and consumer, meeting GDPR and user needs.

Senior Product Researcher, Microsoft 365 Growth & Telemetry**Apr 2017 – Sep 2019**

- Explained the “why” behind usage data by pairing telemetry funnels with qualitative and quantitative research, guiding adoption and retention decisions and semi-annual engineering planning.
- Built new views of the subscription business with data science that drove growth- and lifetime-value-focused engineering.

Senior Research Manager, Commercial Cloud Advertising & Brand**Feb 2012 – Apr 2017**

- Led concept and messaging research for Microsoft’s first cloud campaign.
- Built a deep understanding of business and IT decision-makers that guided strategy, creative, messaging, and media for \$300M+ per year in B2B commercial cloud advertising.
- Led a global team of staff and vendors delivering CMO-facing campaign insight and accountability; CMO’s Marketing Impact Award (2014).

Senior Marketing Research Manager, Global Brand & Campaign Insights**Oct 2008 – Feb 2012**

- Global positioning and messaging pre-tests showed a \$100M campaign wouldn’t land, and leadership cancelled the launch.
- Measured how people noticed and responded to \$1B+ in media across 40 countries, with continuous brand and campaign tracking that steered optimization.

Earlier experience: Marketing process roles, Microsoft (2006 – 2008; designed a global B2B lead process supporting 5M+ leads per year; Six Sigma Green Belt and Black Belt training) • Strategist, McCann-Erickson (2004 – 2006) • Marketing Manager, Cummins West (1999 – 2004) • Marketing Assistant, Insitec (1996 – 1999)

EDUCATION

MBA, Marketing (Honors), Saint Mary’s College of California

BA, Communication, University of California, Santa Barbara

AWARDS & VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

Microsoft: Central Marketing Research Business Impact Award (2016), CMO’s Marketing Impact Award (2014), Lab One Program (2015), Key Talent (2012, 2013)

Squadron Commander, Civil Air Patrol, Overlake Composite Squadron (cadet programs, emergency services, disaster relief)