

Carolyn Harman, RGD

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Profile

I am a bilingual communications and brand professional with experience working for, and supporting government, high tech, defence, and complex organizational environments. With a background in graphic design, and as Creative Director in fast-paced B2B agency environments, I bring a strong foundation in brand development and visual communications, combined with a practical ability to translate business needs into clear, aligned communications and integrated initiatives.

My work focuses on partnering with stakeholders to understand business challenges and guide the development of brand and communications solutions that support organizational objectives. I am experienced in advising executive leadership and cross-functional teams, bringing clarity to complex requirements and ensuring initiatives are purposeful, aligned, and effectively delivered.

Across agency, corporate, and freelance landscapes, I have led projects end-to-end, from defining objectives and developing briefs to coordinating multidisciplinary teams and delivering work across channels. I combine strong project management discipline with a hands-on approach, ensuring work is both strategically grounded and executed to a high standard.

Work Experience

Communications Manager

DEFSEC Technologies | 2024-2026

My role sat at the intersection of communications, client engagement, and operational delivery, supporting how complex defence and public safety solutions are communicated internally and externally. I partnered with stakeholders across the business to ensure messaging and brand were clear, aligned, and support operational and customer needs.

- Led the rebrand of DEFSEC Technologies, including development of the corporate logo and foundational brand system, and continue to guide brand application
- Developed and maintained brand and communications materials throughout the organization, ensuring consistency and alignment across customer-facing and internal content
- Partnered with leadership, engineering teams, and customers to understand business needs and guide communications and messaging approaches
- Translated complex technical concepts into clear, accessible communications for diverse audiences, including executive-level materials and stakeholder presentations
- Supported stakeholder engagement across the customer lifecycle, from initial discussions through onboarding and adoption
- Contributed to communications planning by aligning messaging with operational realities, customer needs, and organizational priorities
- Developed proposals, presentations, and training materials to support business development and customer engagement
- Acted as a liaison across cross-functional teams, ensuring alignment between technical, operational, and customer-facing communications
- Used AI tools to support content development and efficiency, while maintaining a clear, human-centered communications approach

Creative Director

Initiate Marketing | 2022-2024

Managed client relationships, creative direction, and delivery across a multidisciplinary team supporting technology, defence, and public sector organizations.

- Acted as a strategic advisor to clients, guiding brand, messaging, and communications approaches aligned with business objectives
- Led development of integrated brand and communications initiatives across digital, print, and marketing channels
- Ensured brand integrity and consistency across all client deliverables, maintaining alignment across campaigns, platforms, and stakeholder groups
- Partnered with clients to translate business goals into clear project direction, creative briefs, and actionable deliverables
- Managed project scope, timelines, and delivery across multiple concurrent initiatives in a fast-paced environment
- Led and mentored a team of designers while coordinating external partners to deliver integrated communications solutions
- Developed proposals, budgets, and project plans to support client engagement and execution

Clients included BlackBerry QNX, Calian, Entrust, Harmonic Arts, SS&C Technologies, Nokia, Trend Micro, DEFSEC Technologies, Incognito, Destination Canada, Tourism HR Canada and the City of Ottawa.

Creative Strategist & Design Principal

Freelance, Ottawa | 2011-present

Provide communications and creative leadership to B2B organizations, government and non-profits.

- Ensure consistent brand application across all touch points and communications deliverables
- Lead all aspects of creative development: concepting, client presentations, strategic planning, quality assurance, and delivery across all graphic design, web, motion, advertising, marketing, social media, and photography products
- Hire, direct, and evaluate freelance designers, developers, translators, and content providers
- Developed multi-channel brand system and take-to-market strategy for Arc Healthcare Solutions which included product launches, packaging, product naming, analytics and style guide
- Designed launch campaign, messaging and took photography for the award-winning "Escape the Diefenbunker" partnership between the Diefenbunker Museum x Escape Manor
- Rebranded the Gilbert Centre – Simcoe County's largest LGBTQ+/HIV health service organization, and provided end-to-end brand development and launch of Ontario's first LGBTQ+ medical clinic called "InclusiHIV Care Clinic"
- Built and scaled startup cyber brand – Sphyrna Security – across all touch points – from identity and web to sales collateral, tradeshow booths, and ongoing marketing support

Clients included the Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum, the Senate of Canada, Gilbert Centre, City of Ottawa, Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters, Sphyrna Security, and ARC Healthcare Solutions.

Graphic Design & Communications Specialist

City of Ottawa | 2017-2022

- Ensured brand consistency and alignment across campaigns and public-facing communications
- Led the development and execution of a nationally recognized lifeguard recruitment campaign, integrating video, voiceover, and Environics research insights; nominated for the City Manager's Award (2020)
- Directed the end-to-end brand development and launch of Ottawa's LRT "Corridor 45 | 75" gallery at Rideau Station, including naming, identity, and inaugural exhibition design and installation
- Developed and delivered "Dexter the Dinosaur" awareness campaigns, personalized community videos, animated GIFs (280.1M views to date – @OttawaRecCulture – GIPHY) and illustrated colouring books focused on mental health, balancing clarity, sensitivity, and public impact during the pandemic; nominated for the City Manager's Award (2021)

- Created and launched “A City with Heart,” a welcome package for newly posted military families, in partnership with the Military Family Resource Centre; nominated for the City Manager’s Award (2020)
- Led WCAG 2.0/2.1 accessibility implementation across print and digital, including bilingual video content and eLearning environments to support inclusive, standards-compliant communications

Marketing & Communications Specialist

General Dynamics Mission Systems–Canada | 2016-2017

- Developed and implemented a centralized SharePoint photobank to support consistent, scalable use of visual assets across the organization
- Analyzed and presented marketing performance metrics to senior leadership, translating data into clear insights to support decision-making and communications planning
- Developed and executed social media content, ensuring consistent brand presence and alignment with broader campaign objectives across channels

Internet Marketing Manager

Capital Dodge | 2013-2016

- Led the design and development of all digital assets and campaigns to support lead generation and online sales conversion
- Achieved a 3.7% website conversion rate from 10,000+ monthly users through user journey mapping, persona development, and A/B testing
- Designed and launched the dealership’s first Shopify e-commerce platform, achieving a 1% conversion rate within six months through integrated marketing and content strategy
- Managed digital communications across PPC, social media, eNewsletters, and website content, ensuring consistency, compliance (CASL/PIPEDA), and alignment with business objectives
- Ensured brand consistency and alignment across all collateral including joint assets with partners

Marketing & Communications Manager

Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council | 2012-2013

- Developed and executed national campaigns to promote sector certification and membership programs, combining strategic messaging with creative delivery
- Designed communications materials and campaign assets to support outreach and stakeholder engagement across the industry
- Facilitated focus groups with print and advertising professionals to gather insights and inform communications and program development
- Contributed to nationally recognized graphic design policy and print guidelines, supporting consistency and standards across the sector

Graphic Designer & Art Director

General Dynamics Mission Systems–Canada | 2001-2012

- Supported consistent application of brand and communications standards across materials and platforms
- Art directed corporate video content and managed the agency-of-record relationship, ensuring alignment with brand strategy and business objectives
- Developed communications materials supporting proposals, training, and corporate initiatives within a defence environment

- Designed and delivered large-scale communications assets including presentations, video content, and trade show environments
- Collaborated with cross-functional teams to ensure clarity and consistency in messaging across complex technical content
- Translated complex technical and operational content into clear, structured visual communications for proposals and internal initiatives

Junior Graphic Designer

Acart Communications | 2000-2001

Core Skills

- Communications strategy, messaging, and content development
- Stakeholder engagement and cross-functional collaboration
- Digital and multi-channel communications
- Communications planning and coordinated delivery
- Executive presentations and communications materials
- Brand and visual communications
- Information design and content organization
- Project coordination and workload management in fast-paced environments
- Team leadership and collaborative working environments

Technical Proficiencies

- Adobe Creative Cloud (Expert level)
- Analytics and Insights: Google Analytics, Envionics, PRIZM
- Microsoft Office (Advanced Level with design mastery in PowerPoint)
- Video storyboarding, production and editing
- AI Tools: Practical use of AI to support content development and work flow efficiency while maintaining clarity and accuracy in communications
- Use of CRM, CMS and project management tools like ProWorkflow, Adobe Workfront, Salesforce, Wordpress, Weebly, Shopify, and Hubspot

Accreditation and Professional Development

- Certified Graphic Designer (RGD), Association of Registered Graphic Designers – 2018
- WCAG 2.0 / 2.1 Accessibility Training, University of Ottawa (David Berman RGD) – 2019

- Adobe Accessible Documents, Eliquo – 2020
- AODA Certification, City of Ottawa – 2017
- Project Management Levels 1 & 2 – City of Ottawa
- Advanced French Training – City of Ottawa
- National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) – Level 1

Volunteer Experience

- Communications Subcommittee Member – Ottawa Sport Council (Return-to-Play), 2020-2021
- Marketing Director and Executive Board Member – Stittsville Minor Softball Association, 2017-present
- Competitive Softball Coach – Stittsville Minor Softball Association, 2015-2024
- Certification Committee Member – Association of Registered Graphic Designers (RGD), 2020-present
- Portfolio Evaluator – RGD, 2019-present
- Graphic Design Mentor – RGD, 2019-present

Education

- Graphic Design Diploma – Algonquin College, Ottawa (1999)

Security Clearance

- Previously held Secret COMSEC
- Controlled Goods Program Certified

Language

- English: Native
- French: Advanced

Portfolio

- carolynharman.com/my-work