

MICHAEL BENFORD

CREATIVE STRATEGIST | BRAND DESIGNER | INFLUENTIAL LEADER

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

BUILDING AND ENHANCING SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT BRANDS FOR 20+ YEARS – Consistent success building large-scale creative strategies and orchestrating multiple design teams and partners to build and enhance value for brands and influencers – from building massive fanbases for "startup" brands like a wildly popular Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise, to connecting celebrated brands in the National Football League (NFL) to their next generation of followers. Harmonized partnerships with major league teams and brands, including the NFL, MLB, NHL, and MLS, and Fortune 500 companies like AT&T, Mercedes-Benz, Coca-Cola, and American Family Insurance. Teams consistently synchronize key business objectives through shared passion, and pride, including a recent NFL uniform and brand identity refresh driving \$1.6M+ in new revenue in just six days. Designed holistic campaigns across digital and traditional platforms, developed groundbreaking experiences spanning grassroots activations to an immersive sports and entertainment stadium, building ravenous fanbases before there was even a product to sell.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Drove \$1.6M in sales in six days through a comprehensive NFL uniform redesign and evolved brand identity.
- Crafted the design system and visual identity for a \$1.6B sports and entertainment venue – Mercedes-Benz Stadium.
- Designed full-funnel season ticket and PSL campaign driving \$275M+ in sales
- Launched and branded new Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise, Atlanta United FC.

CORE STRENGTHS + COMPETENCIES

Creative Strategy	Digital & Traditional Campaigns	Integrated Marketing Content	Art Direction
Brand Strategy & Transformation	Leadership & Team Building	Concept Development	Strategic Thinking
Social Media Marketing	Video Productions	Full-Scale Creative Operations	Communication Skills

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

AMB Sports + Entertainment, Atlanta, GA 2016-2020

Evolved the creative services team and function into a powerhouse, agency-like, in-house team supporting Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the Atlanta Falcons, and Atlanta United FC. Built and provided strategic direction to a group of 15 full-time staff and 30+ freelancers with a \$1.2M annual budget. Developed and implemented processes, workflows, creative systems, and logistics programs to guide creative team functions.

- Defined the visual identity, branding, and design for the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium, leading all customer facing creative across our in-house team and multiple specialized external partners and vendors to develop the building's full design system.
 - Including branding, sponsorship integration, way-finding, interior design, environmental graphics, and retail.
 - Stadium earned Sports Facility of the Year 2019 with fan experiences designed and hosted around the Super Bowl LIII, MLS All-Star Game, NCAA College Football Playoffs and National Championship.
- Spearheaded a new uniform design in partnership with Nike and the NFL and developed a new brand positioning – delivered \$1.6M in sales over the first six days and 1B media impressions, breaking all team retail records.
- Led the visual design of fan lifestyle apparel and campaigns – contributing to the MLS Retail Team of the Year award 2019.
- Orchestrated the design systems for multiple brick and mortar retail stores for the Atlanta Falcons and Atlanta United FC.
- Increased social media response times for live events 200% through real-time image distribution.
- Launched and branded a new professional sports team, Atlanta United FC – rapidly forming a rabid multi-cultural fan base and earning the club multiple awards for its marketing/branding, retail, and digital executions including 2019 Sports Team of the Year.
- Negotiated and secured \$100K+ in cost savings for AMBSE via sponsorship with Nikon.

MANAGER, CREATIVE (2007-2016) | COORDINATOR, CREATIVE (2003-2007) | NEW MEDIA DESIGNER (2002-2003)

Atlanta Falcons Football Club, Atlanta, GA2002-2016

Built and led a team of talented in-house designers with ownership of the full creative function, including brand management and strategic vision. Led across marketing content development, website design, and digital marketing, including brochures, advertisements, tickets, outdoor advertising, vehicle wraps, media guides, and various branded materials.

- Hired, mentored, and built a department of internal designers, project managers, photographers, motion designers, and art directors and an external network of freelancers and agency partners.
- Served as a strategic partner to the digital media team – leading from ideation to execution against forward strategies to evolve the overall social media channels.
- Collaboration in the planning and launch of a professional soccer team under the Atlanta Falcons umbrella and created several new businesses and philanthropic foundations on behalf of the organization including a chain of Atlanta Falcons Physical Therapy Centers, West Creek Ranch and the Georgia Force Arena Football team.
- Organized, inspired, and directed 50+ professionals across multiple international photography shoots.
- Successfully managed increasing duties and responsibilities per promotions achieved throughout career with Falcons.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR & SENIOR CONSULTANT

Benford Creative, Atlanta, GA1999-2011

Founded a design agency centered around digital design for clientele in the sports and entertainment industry. Created original digital and traditional media strategies for Delta Airlines, Usher's New Look Foundation, Chris Draft Family Foundation, Allen Rossum's Healthy Kids Club, Piedmont Hospital, DeAngelo Hall's All-Stars, and the Professional Athlete's Council.

WEB DESIGNER

Ignite Sports Media, Chicago, IL..... 2000-2001

Drove the full scope of website design and development for 13 NFL teams/organizations, the Professional Football Hall of Fame, and several Major League Baseball & National Hockey League websites. Partnered with internal and external stakeholders to develop mock-ups and microsites for key clients – gaining exposure to sponsorship integration and motion design.

- Delivered projects for globally known brands, including the Wall Street Journal, Budweiser, Charles Schwab, and H&R Block.

EDUCATION

ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN DIGITAL MEDIA | Full Sail Center for the Media Arts – Winter Park, FL

- Hall of Fame inductee for work in the creative community May 23, 2019.

AWARDS

- American In-House Design Award: Atlanta Falcons Gameday Magazine (2016)
- American In-House Design Award: Atlanta Falcons MARTA Station Domination (2016)
- American In-House Design Award: Atlanta Falcons London Promotional Book (2015)
- American In-House Design Award: Atlanta Falcons Force Media Guide (2008)
- American In-House Design Award: Atlanta Falcons Force Ticket Sales Promotion (2008)

TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

Adobe Creative Suite	Photoshop	Illustrator	InDesign	Motion Graphics	Lightroom	Keynote
Color Grading	Typography	Color Theory	Compositing	Copywriting	Video Production	UI/UX