

JASON KEHRER

Senior Leader of Innovation + Strategy
Strategic Advisor, Facilitator + Coach

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Zeeland, MI USA



SUMMARY

- Builds strong teams and cultures, helps organizations envision and explore the new, and brings discernment to help teams decide their best next steps. Has done this as a senior leader at Newell Brands, a Fortune 500 company, serving on the design, innovation, and consumer insights leadership teams; as managing director of the nonprofit NewNorth Center for Design in Business; and through First Domino, an independent strategy and innovation practice.
- Rooted in mission-driven and faith-based work, from cofounding a 501(c)3 in sub-Saharan Africa to senior missions leadership and teaching innovation inside a church network. Works as a facilitator and human-centered designer, creating alignment, helping people see what's possible, and shaping cultures where good ideas keep surfacing and moving.

CORE

- Married to Molly
- Father of five, ranging from ages 2 to 15
- Curious reader, outdoor lover and LEGO builder, active in our local church

Tools: *Creative process, synthesis and ideation*
Character: *Faith, Family, Fun, Curiosity*
Output: *Teams, Culture, Growth and Ideas*
CliftonStrengths: *Strategic, Ideation, Adaptability, Connectedness, Futuristic*

RESOURCES

Current practice: <https://firstdomino.co/>
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jasonkehrer/>
References and portfolio available upon request.

STRENGTHS

Leadership Developer + Capability Builder

Teaches and coaches leaders, designs learning programs and curricula, and embeds innovation capability that outlasts any single engagement. Builds methods teams can run themselves, accessible to people at every level of experience. Equally at home in classrooms, boardrooms, and retreats.

Facilitator + Trainer

Neutral facilitator who guides cross-functional groups to clarity and decision, from a workshop with a frontline team to a strategy session with senior leadership. Designs and runs design sprints, listening sessions, and training cohorts that make innovation methods usable for people of any fluency.

Connector + Champion-Builder

Builds trust quickly across functions, generations, and traditions, and recruits and equips advocates throughout an organization so innovation becomes everyone's work rather than a siloed function. Coaches leaders toward a culture of curiosity, humility, and shared ownership. At Newell, served as a cross-functional bridge for the Design organization, embedding its methods and mindset across brands and functions company-wide.

Disciplined Prioritizer

Helps teams choose, not just generate. Runs innovation as a portfolio, frames opportunities, tests in rapid cycles, and makes evidence-based calls to scale, iterate, or stop. Willing to say no to good ideas to protect the few worth building.

Human-Centered + Methods-Fluent

Grounded in human-centered design, service design, and lean and agile prototyping. Translates audience research and insight into product, program, and strategic decisions, bridging research, design, and the teams who carry the work.

Resourceful Builder + Foresight

Spots emerging trends and opportunities and turns them into practical direction. Builds programs from limited resources by leveraging partners, contractors, and champions, and stays steady amid ambiguity and shifting priorities.

EDUCATION

Hope College, 1999-2003
B.A., Psychology / Religion
Phelps Scholars Program, Short-Term Missions Leader, Campus Ministries

YWAM Perth, 2003-2004
Discipleship Training School

CERTIFICATIONS + ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Leading by DESIGN 2025-2026
LEAD24/7 Leadership Training

Roger Martin School of Business (Disco / Playing to Win), 2022-2023
Winning Strategy Certification

NewNorth Center for Design in Business, 2012-2013
Innovation Methods Certification

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JOURNEY

First Domino 2018-present

Founder & Principal / West Michigan

Founder of an independent strategy and innovation practice that helps organizations build the internal capability to listen deeply, prototype rapidly, and decide with discipline. Clients range from Fortune 500 manufacturers to mid-cap, family-owned, and mission-driven organizations. The unifying principle: most teams do not lack ideas, they lack the discernment and structure to know which ones are worth building. Everything is built upon a set of human-centered design principles and experiences.

- Builds durable innovation capability inside organizations, not just one-off deliverables: training cohorts, shared methods and vocabulary, reusable toolkits, and internal champions who carry the work after the engagement ends.
- Designs and personally facilitates design sprints, ideation sessions, foresight workshops, and listening sessions grounded in human-centered design, lean and agile prototyping, and validated-learning practices.
- Runs innovation as a managed portfolio: frames opportunities, tests in rapid cycles, and makes evidence-based calls to scale, iterate, or stop, so limited resources concentrate on the few ideas worth pursuing.
- Scouts emerging methods, technologies, and partners, and builds the external channels (advisors, academic partners, contractors) that extend a small team's reach well beyond its headcount.
- Integrates audience and consumer research into innovation priorities and product decisions, continuing the enterprise insights leadership held at Newell Brands.
- Built Wayfinder™, a strategic discernment platform for churches, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations, while running the entire practice on a bootstrap model that leans on partners and contractors rather than fixed overhead.

Grand Valley State University, Seidman College of Business 2016-2025

Adjunct Instructor, Executive MBA Program (Contract / Concurrent) / Grand Rapids, MI

- Co-designed and team-taught the Design Thinking curriculum in GVSU's Executive MBA program, bringing practical innovation methods to senior business leaders for nearly a decade.
- Guided executive cohorts through human-centered design principles, problem-framing, creativity, and applied strategic thinking, team-teaching alongside fellow practitioner-facilitators.
- Partnered with academic leadership to shape the program's innovation learning journey and keep it relevant to real-world business challenges.

Newell Brands 2016-2024

Global Director, Innovation [Consumer & Shopper Insights / Design & Ideation] / Kalamazoo, MI - Atlanta, GA

Led enterprise-wide front-end innovation for a multi-billion-dollar consumer products portfolio (Sharpie, Graco, Rubbermaid, Yankee Candle, and others), serving on three leadership teams: Consumer & Shopper Insights, Global Design, and Enterprise Innovation.

- Directly led the corporate Innovation Group, with 5 direct reports and a multidisciplinary team of 15 across multiple locations, coaching both individual contributors and senior leaders.
- Designed and personally facilitated hundreds of ideation, design, foresight, and strategy sessions worldwide with senior executives, cross-functional teams, and key retail and supplier partners (Walmart, Amazon, Target, Kroger, Meijer).
- Built and led the Newell Design Institute, a corporate-wide training function teaching executives and teams human-centered design, innovation methods, and leadership for creative teams, embedding a shared innovation vocabulary and capability across the enterprise.
- Established consumer and shopper listening practices and integrated those insights directly into product, brand, and experience decisions across dozens of brands.
- Coached hundreds of new product and platform innovations to market across Graco, Sharpie, Rubbermaid, Yankee Candle, Oster, Contigo, and Elmer's, representing roughly \$500M in incremental revenue.
- Co-led a full redesign of the enterprise Innovation Operating Model and built multi-year category "game boards," creating the structure to frame opportunities and decide what to fund, advance, or stop.
- Scanned emerging trends and technologies to shape future product roadmaps, and partnered with Corporate Strategy on an enterprise capability assessment and go-forward strategy endorsed by the CEO, Board, and investors.

NewNorth Center for Design in Business 2014-2016

Managing Director / Design Strategist & Facilitator

Led a nonprofit educational and consulting institution dedicated to building innovation and design capability in leaders and organizations across the region.

- Led and taught the 30-week Innovation Management Certification, guiding cohorts of C-suite leaders, founders, and community leaders through human-centered design and innovation methods they applied directly to live projects in their own organizations.
- Designed and refined the curriculum and facilitation approach into a repeatable program that made innovation methods accessible to leaders at every level of experience.
- Consulted and facilitated for organizations across healthcare, manufacturing, and professional services (Corewell Health, Trinity Health, Haworth, MillerKnoll, Stryker, Amway, University of Michigan), delivering training, innovation roadmapping, and product ideation.
- Ran the nonprofit on lean resources, managing external contractors, foundation relationships, and the Board of Directors.
- Built the program and team to the point that Newell Brands partnered with and acquired components of NewNorth in 2016.
- Frequent regional speaker on design, leadership, innovation, and creativity.

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The Image Group 2009-2014

General Manager / Holland, MI

- Led a 20-person creative communications agency (print, digital, video) serving a clientele weighted toward faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and higher education.
- Held full operational leadership as General Manager and COO, directing a team of 20 across creative, account, and production functions.
- Grew annual revenue from \$500K to \$3.5M in two years through new business development and client growth.
- Directed brand strategy and award-winning campaigns for clients including Bethany Christian Services, That The World May Know, International Aid, Western Michigan University, South Dakota State University, and University of Michigan/Metro Health.
- Agency was acquired by Next Creative Co. in 2018.

Vox United 2006-2009

Cofounder + Director, Project Development [US + Southern Africa]

Co-founded a faith-based 501(c)3 serving communities in sub-Saharan Africa, building it from launch through early operations.

- Co-founded the 501(c)3 and designed its shared governance structure across a local church, a missions organization, and a board of directors.
- Developed donor and funding relationships to support the organization's launch and early programs.
- Built partnerships with local pastors and nonprofit leaders across South Africa and Eswatini, scoping and formalizing projects with local churches and organizations on the ground.
- Led 15+ vision and short-term teams through South Africa, Eswatini, Mozambique, and Zambia; lived in Johannesburg as part of the launch team.
- Hosted and led 15+ vision and STM teams through South Africa, Eswatini, Mozambique and Zambia; lived in Johannesburg as part of launch team

Central Church, formerly Central Wesleyan Church 2003-2007 and 2015-2016

Holland, MI

Missions Director (2015-2016)

- Shared full-time leadership of the missions function with the Missions Pastor across operations, a \$1M+ budget, stakeholder management, and program evaluation.
- Supervised two direct reports and led monthly councils that set funding priorities and evaluated program investments worldwide.
- Taught leadership and innovation to staff and lay leaders through a monthly "Lead:Lab" series.
- Helped drive the foundational development of the Water's Edge Network, a decentralized church network model now spanning multiple sites internationally.

Director of Neighborhood Influence (2003-2007)

- Created and led "Half Mile," a new local missions program and framework, living in an at-risk community while recruiting and developing a 250-person volunteer team across youth, children's, and food-security programs.
- Built partnerships with local government, agencies, and area churches.

High School Missional Pastor (2003-2007)

- Designed curriculum and equipped lay and paid leaders across eight missional communities, directly pastoring a community of 50+ students and 10+ volunteer leaders.