

2 August 2025

UK Home Office

Global Talent Visa – Digital Technology Route

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to provide my strongest recommendation for Chris Heimbuch's UK Global Talent Visa application. As VP of Engineering Core AI at Microsoft and former Chief Technology Officer at Everbridge, I have had the privilege of witnessing Chris's exceptional leadership in creating platforms that amplify underrepresented voices in design and technology.

My collaboration with Chris centers around a pivotal moment in 2016 when he approached me through our mutual connection, Kevin Farnham, about participating in an event called *Valuing Diversity in Design & Technology*. What struck me immediately was Chris's urgency and conviction—he wasn't waiting for established tech companies to lead this conversation. Instead, he trusted his instinct that the time had come to address equity and representation publicly and unapologetically. This wasn't just another industry panel; it was a deliberate act of leadership at a moment when many were still hesitant to engage with these critical issues.

Chris's role as Executive Producer demonstrated the kind of comprehensive vision that distinguishes true leaders from event organizers. He curated every aspect of the program with strategic intent, from speaker selection to narrative arc. But perhaps most importantly, he made a decision that would ultimately reshape how the design industry tells its own story.

When InVision arrived to film what would become part of the documentary *Design Disruptors*, Chris insisted that Maurice Woods be included in their interviews. This wasn't symbolic inclusion or an afterthought. Chris recognized that Maurice had earned his place among industry leaders through his work as both an educator and practitioner of equity in design. While Maurice wasn't yet a household name, Chris understood that authentic representation required elevating voices that had been historically marginalized, regardless of their current visibility.

Chris's insistence proved transformative. Maurice's opening sequence in *Design Disruptors* set a tone of authenticity and advocacy that reframed the entire film's narrative around education as foundational to the equity we were trying to achieve. By strategically using his position as Executive Producer to ensure Maurice's voice was heard alongside CEOs from Airbnb, Pinterest, and Meta, Chris created a moment that mattered—not just for emerging talent who could see themselves reflected, but for decision-makers across the industry who needed to hear perspectives they might otherwise never encounter.

This exemplifies Chris's approach to leadership: he creates the conditions where important voices can be heard and where systemic change becomes possible. He doesn't just advocate for inclusion in theory; he uses his influence to make it happen in practice, often taking personal and professional risks to ensure that equity moves from principle to action.

The impact of Chris's work extends far beyond a single event or documentary. Through initiatives like this, he has consistently demonstrated an ability to identify inflection points where cultural change is possible and then marshal the resources, relationships, and strategic thinking necessary to make that change real. This is precisely the kind of leadership that strengthens innovation ecosystems—creating more inclusive pathways for talent while expanding the range of perspectives that inform how we build the future.

I have no doubt that Chris would bring this same commitment and strategic acumen to the UK's creative and technology sectors, fostering the kind of inclusive growth that benefits entire industries while ensuring that the next generation of leaders reflects the full breadth of human talent and experience.

Sincerely,

John Maeda

VP Engineering Core AI, Microsoft

E-mail: johnmaeda@microsoft.com