

RICK SATO

Principal Consultant Turning operational and communication challenges into working, AI-enabled systems.
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PROFILE

Problem-solver who turns operational and communication challenges into working, AI-enabled systems. A career in design and communications — leading a firm serving major public institutions, nonprofits, and commercial brands, retaining clients through open competitive bidding and internal referral, and building brands that scaled to global companies. Now designing and building AI-enabled systems that solve real operational problems: document-processing pipelines, workflow automation, and human-in-the-loop tools. Works a complex problem down to its core — researching, testing, and cutting away the noise until the real problem is clear — then directs its solution to delivery, reliably and on time.

CORE STRENGTHS

- **Problem diagnosis & solution design** — reading a complex, messy situation and defining what actually needs to be built.
- **AI-enabled systems** — document processing at scale, OCR pipelines, workflow automation, human-in-the-loop verification where automation fails silently.
- **Client trust & delivery** — long-standing relationships; work retained through public procurement and grown through internal referral.
- **Project direction** — scoping, budgets, timelines, and directing specialists (design, development, and now AI) to deliver.
- **Brand, communications & digital** — 500+ brands, including identities that scaled to global companies; web, print, and marketing systems across every sector.

EXPERIENCE

Independent Consultant — Automation & Systems

2019 – present Independent consulting for a small set of ongoing clients — marketing and automation systems from 2019, deepening into AI-enabled systems as the tools matured (2024–present).

- **Marketing, branding, web, and marketing-automation** work for retained clients; advising on where automation genuinely improves operations and where it doesn't. (2019 – present. Client: Tereic Inc. — retained.)
- Designed and built **AI-driven document-processing pipelines** organizing a multi-terabyte, several-hundred-thousand-document archive into structured, searchable, review-ready output — OCR, de-duplication, and delivery formatting structured for professional review. (2025 – present.)
- Built a **human-in-the-loop billing automation system** for a property portfolio — automating proration, invoicing, and delivery while keeping human verification precisely where current AI is unreliable (e.g. reading meters from photographs). (2026.)

Marketing Automation Lead

Tereic Inc., Etobicoke, ON — 2018 – 2019 (→ transitioned to ongoing consulting, above) Liaised with leadership on operational strategy; led social, direct, and nurture-campaign initiatives; implemented tools to improve market positioning and team productivity.

Marketing Director / Consultant

CRM Dynamics Ltd., Mississauga, ON — 2015 – 2018 Strategic marketing planning and hands-on implementation for a Microsoft Dynamics CRM partner.

- Built new website — sessions up **322%** (4,419 vs 1,045); online leads tripled within two years.
- Planned and grew a YouTube channel to **250k+ views / 5k+ subscribers** in year one.
- Direct client consultation on strategy and implementation (First National, Humber College, and others).
- Developed a monthly training-webinar series establishing industry-leader reputation; ran content, nurture, and list-building programs.

Principal

Ricksticks Inc., Toronto, ON — 2001 – 2015 Founded and led a design and communications firm serving major public institutions, nonprofits, and commercial brands. Directed a team of designers and developers; owned client relationships, project management, creative direction, and delivery. Built a reputation as the firm that got it done right, on time, and on budget.

- **500+ brands and 300+ clients** across nonprofit, government, education, healthcare, and commercial sectors over 15 years.
- **Retained major public-sector and institutional clients through open competitive (public) bidding** — including the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and multiple University of Toronto faculties — winning the work repeatedly under open competition rather than incumbency.
- **Pliteq Inc.** — named the company and created its brand identity, logo, initial marketing, and website at founding (c. 2004–05); Pliteq is now a global acoustic-materials manufacturer (200–500 employees, 40+ countries).
- **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario** — sole design and production partner for the office's flagship publications, including 300+ page bilingual (English/French) statutory reports to the Legislative Assembly, produced error-free and on statutory deadline over multiple years, with original illustration and photography.
- **University of Toronto** — decade-long partnership beginning with the International Programs (branded and marketed a struggling program to overseas markets; grew with them from a small department in deficit to an expanded, successful one); internal referrals led to work across additional faculties including Law (Internationally Trained Lawyers program), admissions, and summer programs.
- **Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)** — clear, infographic-led reporting for data-heavy, committee-governed, bilingual government publications.
- Grew the firm through early SEO and web capability alongside print and brand.

Representative clients: University of Toronto · Ryerson University · Sheridan College · Environmental Commissioner of Ontario · Cancer Care Ontario · HEQCO · Toronto Public Health · Public Health Region of Peel · Access Copyright · Human Resources Professionals Association · Ontario Literacy Coalition · Canadian Cancer Society · Toronto Community Housing · World Society for the Protection of Animals · Pliteq · Tornado Medical Systems · FarmTech Energy · Upper Canada Ethanol · McCain Foods · McDonald's Canada · Telus Mobility · Mercedes-Benz · Mazda Canada · TransAmerica Life

RECOGNITION

- Four logo/identity designs featured in *The Secret Life of Logos: Behind the Design of 80 Great Logos* (Leslie Cabarga) — Pliteq, CR3 Media, Ricksticks, and Gabriel Gely Design Group.
- Logo design (CR3 Media) also selected for *LogoLounge Master Library, Vol. 4* — a juried collection of 3,000 logos.
- Design work recognized in international print-craft awards — Silver, International Gallery of Superb Printing / Toronto Club of Printing House Craftsmen (Bosch/Thermador campaign, 2007).
- Award-winning fine artist; entrance and contest scholarships (below).

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES

Design craft: Adobe Creative Cloud (Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign) — brand, identity, publication, and print production.

AI systems: LLM-driven pipelines, OCR, workflow automation · Claude / Claude Code · Cowork.

Web & data: HTML/CSS, CMS, WordPress, static site generators (SiteGround / Netlify / GitHub) · CRM (Microsoft Dynamics) · SEO & digital marketing.

Adopts new CRM, project, and productivity tools as work requires — typically productive in a new platform within days.

EDUCATION

York University — Fine Arts, 1996–1998 · Entrance Scholarship Award **University of Waterloo** — Fine Arts, 1993–1994 · Fine Arts Contest Scholarship

References available on request.