

**Building an Effective Portfolio
for Portfolio Defense
at Lebanon Valley College:
A Recommendation Report**

Prepared for: Dr. Jeff Ritchie

Prepared by: Luke Dougherty

November 14, 2016

Date: November 14, 2016

To: Jeff Ritchie

Professor of Digital Communications

From: Luke Dougherty

Subject: Letter of Transmittal

Dear Dr. Ritchie,

I have completed the requirements for the Recommendation Report Assignment and have attached all relevant items to this document.

My primary audience for the Recommendation Report is you (my professor), with the secondary audience being the design team. For the purposes of the assignment, I am to be my own client when referred to in the report. This makes the client a third-year Digital Communications major who is potentially concentrating in user experience design in need of a portfolio.

The landscape analysis was done on paper, by hand, and will thus be attached as an appendix. The research of the job ads from the first assignment will be attached as an appendix, as well.

Yours Sincerely,

Luke Dougherty

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Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Enclosure: Recommendation Report

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Executive Summary

To create an effective portfolio for portfolio defense, I was tasked with being my own client in writing a recommendation report for the most effective information architecture and content strategy. This report will be used to create a more effective portfolio in the spring.

Research had already been partially conducted for this recommendation report as part of the first project (creation of a resume tailor-made for a job ad). However, additional research had to be done in the form of a landscape analysis on user experience design portfolios (as this is my most likely design concentration).

Results of the research determined that portfolios tended to have information architecture with common vernacular used within the field, as well as under seven categories. These categories were always at the top of the page. Also common were the use of the labels “Contact”, “About”, and “Resume”. Every website placed an emphasis on the work experience, which is reflective of the researched job ads: typically, a minimum work experience of five years is required for a job in the user experience design field.

Based on the research, I recommend that the client use either of the following information architecture and content strategies:

IA: Findability, Accessibility, Professional

CS: Clarity, Uniqueness, Likelihood to Hire

Or:

IA: Findability, Predictability, Professional

CS: Clarity, Uniqueness, Diverse/Specialized

Both options are similar to each other, with only slightly varying content strategy. Either one should be effective based off the research conducted.

Introduction

A portfolio is required for every Digital Communications student for their portfolio defense. This portfolio is digital, to be hosted online as an interactive website with categories detailing all their work. The main purpose of this portfolio creation is to find an internship (and potentially get hired with a permanent job position).

The client (myself) is a potentially pursuing a user experience design concentration. The portfolio made should reflect the needs of that this field.

There are various ways to categorize the content. The information architecture and content strategy will vary for each student (and especially for each desired job field). The main tasks to complete are:

- Determine the most effective information architecture
- Determine the most effective content strategy

A portfolio cannot be made without first deciding on the IA and CS. This will require research of both current internships/job ads and portfolios of current employees in the client's desired field.

Research Methods

Task 1. Conduct research on desired qualities of employees.

Because the purpose of creating the portfolio is getting hired (or at least securing an interview with an employer), I looked first at the qualifications needed and desired in a potential hire. To research this, I looked at internships and a few job ads. I divided the qualifications into two categories:

1. Must-have qualifications

2. Desired qualifications

The “must-have” category encompasses ads that demand certain qualities in any employee considered for the position. “Desired” is anything noted specifically by the ad that would be a nice bonus to set the hire apart.

Task 2. Conduct research on portfolios within a similar field.

Before continuing with any assumptions about how to create the portfolio, I acquired a basic understanding of the portfolios belonging to employees with a similarly desired profession as the client. To find these, I searched online for well received portfolios of successful workers within the User Experience field. The portfolios were compared with each other in a landscape analysis to find the most common qualities of a user experience portfolio.

Task 3. Analyze research data to create effective Information Architecture and Content Strategy in a Recommendation Report.

By combining both the research from job ads and successful portfolios, promising IA and CS were created.

Results

These are the results of the research.

Task 1. Conduct research on desired qualities of employees.

Many employees in the user experience field desire seeing actual work experience: drafts, wireframes, and schoolwork is not enough. However, most companies desire a minimum work experience of about five years. This presents some challenges in creating the portfolio to be solved.

Experience with communication and working in a team is also high priority. Many user experience designers either work in a team with other designers or closely with all other development teams for the project.

Task 2. Conduct research on portfolios within a similar field.

A landscape analysis was conducted using the following four websites:

- ericafirment.com
- edmundyu.com
- jedmund.com
- simonpan.com

Two of the portfolios was being hosted on just one webpage. Some used the selection of different categories to quickly scroll down to the corresponding category. The other two had different columns for each category that scroll left and right when switching the category.

All the websites make great use of white space. Content and captions are given room to breathe so that the user can focus on what is presented to them.

Two of the portfolios were organized by work, and anything else of importance was either left out or given a small amount of attention on the website. The other two had more typical categories, such as “About”, “UX”, and “Contact”.

One unique category found in edmundyu.com was the “Process” category, which explains the process of how he completes each project (with wireframes, mockups, and thought process diagrams).

Conclusions

Here, I present my conclusions based on the research, based on the main tasks to complete.

Information Architecture

There is certain vernacular standard throughout all the portfolios and job ads viewed: all required qualifications for the job ads and categories for the portfolios are professional and use terminology commonly used by those within a user experience design field. Some examples are: “Wireframes”, “Prototyping”, “Projects”, and “UX”.

All portfolios researched have six or less categories, with the most common ones being “Contact”, “About”, and “Resume”. The categories are always at the top of the page.

Content Strategy

The portfolios generally place an emphasis on the work experience, with completed projects taking up most of the space. This is consistent with research of the job ads, which desire multiple years of real work experience on completed projects.

Each website contains small sections dedicated to giving contact information and the creator's resume.

Two of the portfolios have listed where the creator has been mentioned (both in the press and in testimonials from satisfied clients). Testimonials can potentially prove to employers that they can successfully work in a team.

Recommendation

Here, I recommend present two possible strategies to making the portfolio (in terms of information architecture and content strategy).

Option 1:

IA: Findability, Accessibility, Professional**CS: Clarity, Uniqueness, Likelihood to Hire**

Findability is incredibly important for employers. There are many user experience portfolios on the internet, so being able to limit the number of categories to under six will help limit the cognitive load of potential employers. Accessibility is a related factor: while each of the portfolios use common terminology within the field, none of the categories are anything that someone outside of the field would not be able to understand. The labels must be easy to understand. All the wording should be professional, as well. No slang or unprofessional language is used.

Every site researched has lots of white space, offering clarity to what is important. No more than one thing is given focus at a time, giving space to show off the projects that the employers wish to see. No two websites looked alike, had similar information architecture, nor had similar content strategy – thus, uniqueness is an important factor in creating the portfolio. With so many portfolios on the internet, any bit of creativity is important (especially for a design field). When creating the portfolio, it is essential to consider how likely the client is to be hired because of the website. The client needs to have a portfolio tailored to whatever job/internship ads and work field they desire. If it is not specialized to what they want, then employers might pass it by.

Option 2:**IA: Findability, Predictability, Professional**

CS: Clarity, Uniqueness, Diverse/Specialized

Findability is incredibly important for employers. There are many user experience portfolios on the internet, so being able to limit the number of categories to under six will help limit the cognitive load of potential employers. Predictability is how easy it is for the audience to predict what the information architecture describes. Sometimes this may come at the sacrifice of creativity, which is an important consideration. All the wording should be professional, as well. No slang or unprofessional language is used.

Every site researched has lots of white space, offering clarity to what is important. No more than one thing is given focus at a time, giving space to show off the projects that the employers wish to see. No two websites looked alike, had similar information architecture, nor had similar content strategy – thus, uniqueness is an important factor in creating the portfolio. With so many portfolios on the internet, any bit of creativity is important (especially for a design field). It is very important to also keep in mind whether the employer wants an employee that is very diverse or an employee that is very specialized in a certain field. As a Digital Communications major, the client could have a website that fits either description. The portfolio should be built accordingly to whatever internship ad is selected. Sometimes being too diverse is a bad thing for employers, but oftentimes being too specialized is worse. Many of the researched sites only showed their user experience prowess, but that is mainly because of how much experience they have already had

working in the field – the current client of the portfolio will not be able to focus entirely on the user experience design field.

References

- Edmund, Justin. (2007-2012). the works of justin edmund. Retrieved November 13, 2016, from <http://jedmund.com/>
- Firment, Erica. (2015). Erica Firment. Retrieved November 13, 2016, from <http://ericafirment.com/>
- Pan, Simon. (2016). User Experience Design Portfolio of Justin Pan. Retrieved November 13, 2016, from <http://simonpan.com/>
- Yu, E. (n.d.). Edmund Yu. Retrieved November 13, 2016, from <http://www.edmundyu.com/>

Appendices

Appendix A

Landscape Analysis

	ericafirmest.com	edmandy.u.com	jedmund.com	simanpan.com
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all 1 page • about before portfolio • lots of logos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all 1 pg. • horizontal scrolling categories • heavy use of pics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimalist • horror vacui • purely HTML • 1 pg. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large logos • multiple pages • large words • lots of space • projects retical pg.
Contact and Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About • UX • Press • Design • Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • UX Portfolio • Process • Mentions • Resume • Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about • blog • works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 products • focus on work, not skills • portfolio/writing/about
Technical Details/Usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • categories to jump down • re-maps desktop location • scrolling down highlights categories • body scrolls over header 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clickable scroll buttons • horizontal scrolling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none
Community Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social media links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social media links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social media links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social media @ bottom w/ cards • no symbols
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clean, spacious • good use of logos/symbols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interesting hor. • many large pics of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no pic of work, just work/pics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on 3 projects/work • no talk of skills

Appendix B

Internship Ads



Welcome. You are not signed in. | My Account Options

My Job Cart | Sign In

Career Search My Career Page

Basic Search |



Job Description

Audio Implementer Intern (Job Number: 07455)

Primary Location: United States-California-Los Angeles Area - Santa Monica

Description

"Greatness Awaits You" this spring as a PlayStation Intern!

What do you want to do this spring? Be mentored by entertainment industry leaders? Build long-lasting relationships? Help define the future of the Gaming Industry? Gain valuable work experience at the "best place to work and play"? If yes ... then apply to be on our team! We are PlayStation University!

Internship Term: Spring 2017

Application deadline: October 15th

All applicants must submit a resume and cover letter

The Role:

As an Audio Implementer Intern, you will collaborate with a wide range of development team members outside of your direct discipline. Team up with Sound Designers, Level Designers, Level Artists and other Leads to creatively solve global problems within the worlds. Come and help us to create AAA performances for the PS4™ from the team that brought you God of War®.

Work within the set standard for all sound asset implementation (environmental, character and music) within the production path, as it relates to design and art.

Collaborate creatively on sound implementation to enhance the gameplay experience.

Work with the Lead Sound Designer and Implementation Lead to create and maintain entries in task tracking software (i.e. TestTrack).

Implement final sounds once art and animation are at a sufficient level of completion on levels and characters.

gaming experiences. Additionally, SIEA participates in a variety of higher education and high school based programs to help nurture young talent to fulfill their dream of working in the gaming industry.

SIEA provides equal employment opportunity for all applicants and employees. SIEA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, marital status, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other category protected by applicable federal and state law. SIEA also makes reasonable accommodations for disabled applicants and employees.

About Deemed Export

Deemed Export: The U.S. Government controls foreign access to sensitive equipment, software, and technology as a means to promote national security and foreign policy objectives. The position you are applying for may require you to have access and/or use technology and/or software which may be subject to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Export Administration Regulations ("EAR"). In some circumstances, SIEA may need to obtain authorization from the appropriate governmental agency of the United States to allow individuals who are not a U.S. Citizen, Permanent Resident, or protected individual under 8 U.S.C. 1324b(a)(3) to access controlled technology. If such authorization is not available under a license exception and/or authorization is denied by the U.S. Department of Commerce an adverse action to the internship may be required.

Apply Now | SHARE

Overview:

We are committed to provide our Employees a stable work environment with equal opportunity for learning and personal growth. Creativity and innovation are encouraged for improving the effectiveness of Southwest Airlines. Above all, Employees will be provided the same concern, respect, and caring attitude within the organization that they are expected to share externally with every Southwest Customer.

Responsibilities:**DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Intern will be exposed to concept ideation, development, launch, and ongoing maintenance of our mobile and online Customer experiences.

Assist with competitive analysis and digital trend research for best UX practices.

Assist in the development of assets and artifacts (comps, redlines, and prototypes) for existing and upcoming projects.

Assist with online & mobile usability testing.

Attend cross-functional meetings.

Work closely with other departments within Southwest Airlines.

Some travel possible (if time allows).

Coordinate communication efforts and some supporting administrative needs as necessary.

Qualifications:**BASIC QUALIFICATIONS:**

High School Diploma, GED or equivalent education required.

Must be at least 18 years of age.

Must have authorization to work in the United States as defined by the Immigration Reform Act of 1986.

EDUCATION:

Progress towards degree in **User Experience Design, HCI, Digital Design or related field.**

Minimum junior level.

To be eligible must be currently enrolled as a full-time student (minimum 12 credit hours).

Maintained 3.0 or above cumulative GPA.

EXPERIENCE:

Proficient in Adobe Photoshop or Sketch.

Proficient in prototyping tools (Marvel, InVision, Flint.io, Axure, Balsalmiq) preferred.

Knowledge of HTML and CSS preferred.

EXPERIENCE:

Proficient in Adobe Photoshop or Sketch.

Proficient in prototyping tools (Marvel, InVision, Flint.io, Axure, Balsalmiq) preferred.

Knowledge of HTML and CSS preferred.

Some Online Marketing Development experiences a plus such as web or app design.

Previous part-time work experience or previous internship preferred.

Previous experience with WCAG compliant design practices preferred.

Must be able to maintain confidential information.

Must be willing to contribute during brainstorming sessions, and actively participate from concept to execution.

SKILLS/ABILITIES/KNOWLEDGE/WORK STYLE:

Must have passion for usability best practices.

Strong written and verbal communication skills.

Ability to work independently and the willingness to function as a part of a team.

Ability to coordinate multiple tasks and complete assignments with tight deadlines.

Ability to work in a fast paced environment and be a self starter.

Must be detailed oriented.

PLEASE BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION (IF REQUESTED):

Resume.

Portfolio.

Unofficial transcript.

“Why Southwest Airlines” essay (Length determined by author.)

Letters of Recommendation.

TIME COMMITMENT:

Full-time 40 hours per week.

PAY:

\$12.00 per hour + flight privileges

This position is located in Dallas, Texas at the Southwest Airlines Headquarters building.

All students must apply online at www.southwest.com/careers

Southwest Airlines is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

UI/UX Design Intern

Momentum Design Lab - San Mateo, CA 94402

Internship

About Momentum Design Lab:

Based in San Francisco/Silicon Valley for the last 12 years, Momentum Design Lab is a premier user experience (UX) software design and development agency focused on creating enterprise and consumer software products. Momentum designs and builds rich, engaging software products across any combination of devices and technology platforms (i.e., web, mobile, automobile, TV, consumer electronics and other "Internet of Things" devices) to meaningfully connect users to systems.

Momentum is comprised of deeply experienced product strategists, UI/UX designers and software developers passionate about solving complex problems using cutting edge design and technology. Over the last 12 years, Momentum has worked on more than 400 software projects in the following sectors: financial, ad tech, marketing automation, healthcare, human capital, analytics/big data/business intelligence, Software as a Service (SaaS), Backend as a Service (BaaS), collaboration, entertainment, supply chain, travel, gaming, electronic learning, and butt network, storage and virtualization software.

Summary:

Momentum is seeking a design intern to join our team. An ideal candidate would be a student or a recent graduate, a quick learner and a hustler, and a team player who wants to get their hands dirty and collaborate with the entire team.

At Momentum you get your chance to put your ideas into action with maximum impact. Intern responsibilities will focus on the creation of UX wireframes, but can span to include the following (based on skills and interest):

- Create attractive, high quality UI/UX designs, of both low and high fidelity. Ability to execute visual design is a plus.
- Involvement in end user research to explore, uncover and analyze end user requirements during field studies, user interviews etc
- Collaboration with staff members on interaction design

Qualifications/Skills:

- Must be proficient in Adobe CC, Balsamiq or other wire-framing/prototyping/web technologies, HTML5/CSS3 is a plus.
- Background or knowledge in Usability testing and User Centered Design is a plus.
- Examples of work via a portfolio is required for qualification.

Perks:

- Flexible work hours
- Paid internship; minimum 3 months commitment
- Ability to work on a variety of projects for various industries and technologies
- Ability to learn more about the industry and gain agency experience
- Casual and fun work environment
- Downtown San Mateo office location (easy and accessible via public transportation)