

Portfolio Usability Testing

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1. Defining User Goals

The world has changed quite a bit in the last 3 months. From a seller's market to a buyer's market, with many less briefs than candidates and indeed the many recruiters are in their own peril. Recruiters with roles to fill can be inundated with applications, some applying for roles with more experience than the brief requires or the salary commands.

The User can be defined as;

- Have an active job brief to be fulfilled (either directly or indirectly) or makes it their job to review portfolios on a semi-regular basis for potential future briefs.
- Have experience with the process and filtering candidates via portfolio reviews.

The User Goals should be;

- Form an immediate impression of the candidate based on above the fold home page and beyond
- Contact the candidate through their preferred communication method
- Download a pdf of the candidate's resume
- Review the candidate's lead case study

2. User Testing Guidelines

1. Recruitment strategy

Given the synthetic nature of this task, and the sensitivity of recruiting in a sector in which I'd like to be taken seriously as a candidate in the near future, I have lent on my network that includes a recruiter from my previous career in sports marketing who is more 'analogue' by nature, as well as one UX agency colleague who has previously hired freelance and a UX recruiter who is currently furloughed. This has been done through direct messaging / LinkedIn

1st Level Connection messaging with no canvassing or social media recruiting.

2. Protocols

2.1. Confirmation of session

Email with attached consent form for recording

Dear xyz,

Thank you so much for agreeing to connect with me at xx.xxpm on xx/xx/xxxx for around 20 minutes on a training project I'm working on.

As we can't meet in person, we'll be using a software called lookback.io which means I'll be able to see you and also your computer screen at the same time and you'll be able to see me.

You won't need to download anything. It's a bit like joining a meeting on zoom. I invite and at the allotted time, you accept and off we go!

I'll be sending you a website link immediately as we start the session, please don't prepare in any way as your spontaneous reaction is part of the test. I'll be asking you to try and perform some tasks after you open the link but be assured this is a test of the website you'll open and not of you.

I'm sending you a consent form as I'd like to record the session for my own debrief purposes, as much so I don't need to take copious notes as we're talking and not waste any more of your time than necessary. As per the consent form, the recording is purely for my use and will not be shared and any comments or suggestions will be anonymised in the debrief report. The recording will be deleted as soon as the debrief has been approved.

I'd be grateful if you could ensure a strong internet connection, a working webcam and a quiet surrounding that'd help me enormously in landing the best feedback.

Kind regards and thanks again,

2.2. Interview guide

2.2.1. If session starts by phone before laptop connection, greetings, this is how we need to do this ...

2.2.2. Tech walkthrough and check lookback is working, and I can see both them and their screen. Check sound and picture.

2.2.3. Describe next 20minutes;

- 2.2.3.1. This is a postgrad project module requiring me to ask professionals for input on a website I've coded. The website's subject matter is ... me! It's not complete yet but I've got to a stage that it'd be really good to check if it works and I'm too close to it, hence this testing session.
- 2.2.3.2. I would like to record this session as per the consent form you've already signed, is it ok for me to start now?
- 2.2.3.3. Reminder that anything you say will be strictly for this project and will not be used for any other purpose, and all recordings deleted upon completion.
- 2.2.3.4. I'm going to start by confirming some information about you that I can use anonymised for my report.
- 2.2.3.5. Even though the site is built by me and about me, this is not testing your opinions of me (which I also welcome), but whether the site works properly for a professional who knows about these types of sites. You cannot be wrong, only the design of the site can be wrong.
- 2.2.3.6. When I ask you to try and do or find something on the site, can I ask you to talk aloud as you do it? I'm not expecting anything theatrical, just your thoughts as you go. If you're happy to, at the end, I'd be happy to capture any considered feedback.
- 2.2.3.7. You can stop at any time and for any reason. Ready?
- 2.2.3.8. Can I ask you to confirm who you are, where you are, what you do and what type of device your using to do this test?
- 2.2.3.9. I'm sending you a link now, as soon as you've got it, please let me know and I'll ask you the first specific question before you open the link ... I'm also going to ask you to do something a bit weird and for you to not scroll down as soon as it's open.
- 2.2.3.10. What is your immediate impression as soon as you open the link?
- 2.2.3.11. Now you can scroll the home page, anything to add to that first impression?
- 2.2.3.12. If you were to want to contact me, can you do that?
- 2.2.3.13. If you wanted to download my resume, can you do that?

2.2.3.14. If you wanted to see a case study, can you do that?

2.2.3.15. Well, that went as well as it could do. Now is there anything else, good or bad, that you can tell me about now you've been on the site for a few minutes?

4. Participants

1. Tuesday 21th 11.00am

Dom / 50 / Sports Marketing Head-hunter with 25 years' experience in industry. Tends to work phone and email alongside LinkedIn to compile candidates for roles. Works on solo commissions from clients, mostly in sport but also in associated areas (eg motorsports crossovers).

'I know everyone, and everyone knows me in this industry. My clients have tasked me over the years to find 'diamonds' who are hard to get hold of, off-market people in good jobs already.'

2. Tuesday 21th July 4.00pm

Mike / 35 / UX Creative Partner in an UX Agency. Had role at previous employer that included reviewing and shortlisting candidates. Has seen hundreds of portfolios and spends time on his own (currently offline, obviously).

'We were looking at supplementing our projects with freelancers but now we need to be careful about our clients' budgets as well as our own bottom-line. We were lucky to land a good piece of UX work just a week before the lockdown and they've followed through.'

3. Wednesday 22nd July 3.00pm

Louise / 32 / Recruitment Consultant for 'leading' digital recruiter in London West End. Currently furloughed and hoping when job retention scheme fades out, she can get back to work ('but who knows, eh?'). Seen and sometimes mentored 'hundreds' on candidates in UX/UI/Full Stack etc etc etc.

'This has all come as a bit of a shock, early March and things were ticking along, late March and I was sitting in my garden unable to do anything. I'm used to it now but at the start it was so weird. I've seen some great portfolios and some total shockers. It helps no one to let a candidate flail about with something that's totally wrong for our clients so I try and help, but some of the candidates just can't get out of their own heads. I guess that makes them bad UXers so it's a bit Darwinian in that respect.'

5. Test

Using Jakob Nielsen's/NNgroup Severity Ratings for Usability;

- 0 = I don't agree that this is a usability problem at all
- 1 = Cosmetic problem only, need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project
- 2 = Minor usability problem, fixing this should be given low priority
- 3 = Major usability problem, important to fix, so should be given high priority
- 4 = Usability catastrophe, imperative to fix this before product can be released

	Home Page	Find Contact	Find CV	Find Case Study
Wrong Assumptions	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4
Needed help	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4
Murmurings of Discontent	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4
How many Tries?	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4	0 to 4
How long?	N/A	Approx. seconds	Approx. seconds	Approx. seconds

Then post-task debriefs and open discussion/suggestions.

Dom / MacBook Pro

	Home Page	Find Contact	Find CV	Find Case Study
Wrong Assumptions	1*	0	0	1***
Needed help	0	0	0	0
Murmurings of Discontent	0	0	1**	0
How many Tries?	1	1	1	1
How long?	N/A	< 5 seconds	< 10 seconds	< 10seconds

* didn't know what CSS Animation meant

** from contact to CV required scrolling back to top navigation

*** there was no navigation on top for 'work' but then realised whole of home page was case studies.

'I like the word play on 'good question asker'. It works well with the photo of you. Not sure I'd like to see you right across a big screen, though, ha ha ...'

'The little animation is cute but not sure why it's there. No context. Did you make it from scratch?'

'The case study is a little thin as its coursework as I understand it. You need to make the cycling gig the main story as it's real.'

'If you're really pushing your CV, stick it in the main menu as well?'

'I'm not in this space, but actually it'd be easier if my candidates did portfolios. Some are so full of BS about what they did over the years and a portfolio would flush them out.'

Mike / Mac Desktop

	Home Page	Find Contact	Find CV	Find Case Study
Wrong Assumptions	0	0	0	0
Needed help	0	0	0	0
Murmurings of Discontent	0	0	0	0
How many Tries?	1	1	1	1
How long?	N/A	< 5 seconds	< 5 seconds	< 5 seconds

Dave is extremely tech friendly and bounced effortlessly around the site without any impediments.

‘This is very much what I’d expect for a portfolio from a grad UXer who has hustled a side project or two. Clean, clear, kind of obvious.’

‘I’d already seen your published portfolio so know you’ve missed stuff out like ethics and process. I’d do some kind of MVT testing but think this is too thin.’

‘I’m not Frontend but respect UXers who try and get a little bit of experience. Especially if you’re a UXR which is even further away from the design/MVP heavy lifting part of the process. Make more of that when you can.’

‘Love the funky buttons.’

‘The whole site works with what I know of you. Brave to be career switching but reassuring about your previous careers.’

‘The contact buttons don’t go anywhere at present but easy to find and where they should be.’

‘Unless you tweet a lot on stuff that’s interesting in this space, consider ditching that.’

‘Cycling case history should lead. It’s ok to not have a full story, just tell yours well!’

‘Have you done an ATS test on your CV? It looks good but worried it might confuse a machine.’

Louise / HP Laptop

	Home Page	Find Contact	Find CV	Find Case Study
Wrong Assumptions	0	0	0	0
Needed help	0	0	0	0
Murmurings of Discontent	0	0	1*	2**
How many Tries?	1	1	1	1
How long?	N/A	< 10 seconds	< 15 seconds	< 10 seconds

*Suggest having a CV link on every page for recruiter convenience

**Would want a pdf of the case study as well for her filing system

‘Cool and clean, does it have the wow factor? I guess you’re pitching as a researcher so shouldn’t expect ground-breaking UI, but other than the buttons it’s nothing special.’

‘We have our own way of filleting out the important information so we can work off-line, so make sure we can get everything you want us to keep in pdf format as well.’

‘I think your pictures are kind of quirky which is good. You’re more mature than most and a little grey hair is no bad thing in the research space.’

‘You’ve got to lead with the cycling case, the tattoo case is just training-wheels.’

‘People are fine with messy projects but get what you did clear and more process if you can’t show results.’

‘Make a proper story about the Front End. Having basic coding skills can make all the difference and push you up the consideration set.’

‘Your skills are just lists, need to jazz it up a bit. Some really cool UX copy would go a long way to storify what you’ve gained over the years.’

‘Suggest you bounce around some UI ideas if you can find someone to help you. Your audience are recruiters than have seen sooo many portfolios that they are snow-blind, and you need to cut through with a thing that makes it memorable. We all have to be professional, but superstars find ways to get into our heads.’

6. Report Findings

- No participants had any real degree of difficulty in completing the tasks within a reasonable timeframe (as yet). The website consists of three pages with one page (about) accessible from the navigation bar on the home page, one (work) by scrolling down the home page. Contact link in header leads to footer of each page.
- In the open question section, the participants provided richer insight which now forms a body of work to be processed against the following grid with blue shade = priority before shipping;

1. Easy / Cosmetic	2. Moderate / Cosmetic	3. Complex / Cosmetic
4. Easy / Incremental	5. Moderate / Incremental	6. Complex / Incremental
7. Easy / Important	8. Moderate / Important	9. Complex / Important

1. Add CV link to home page
1. UX Copy for About Skills section
4. Add Ethical Code Page
4. Add About Me page detail from SquareSpace version
4. Add My Process page from SquareSpace version
5. PDFs of Case Histories
7. Associate contact buttons with actions (phone mobile?)
7. Test formatting of CV
8. Build CSS Animation into a case history (Front End based story connected to UXR learning)
8. Add Velon Case History
9. Add new 3rd Case History