



HELP !



**I NEED TO HIRE A
USER EXPERIENCE
DESIGNER !**

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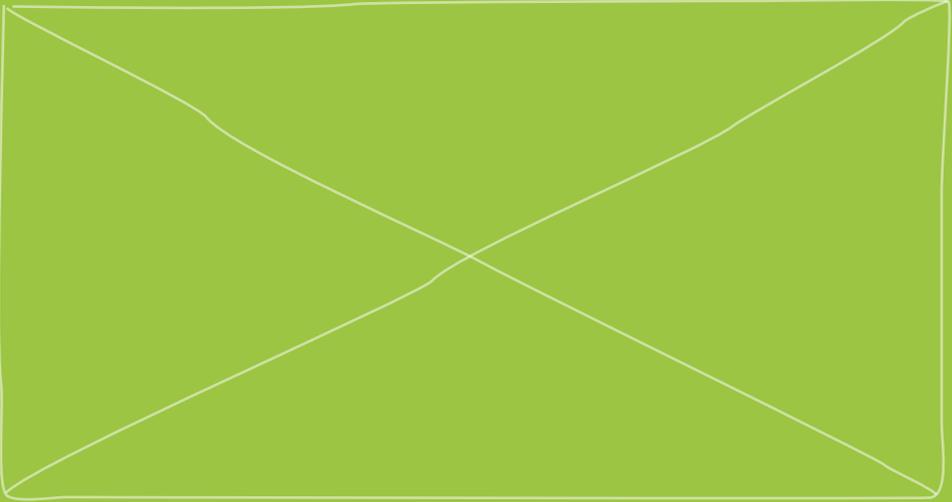


INTRODUCTION.

The purpose of this guide is to explain the areas of expertise that are under the umbrella of UX (user experience) design, how to figure out what type of UX professional you might need to add to your team, and how to evaluate the skills and experience of UX candidates.

If, by the end, you realize you might need help... we're here to help!

— Your friends at Vitamin T



pic of team



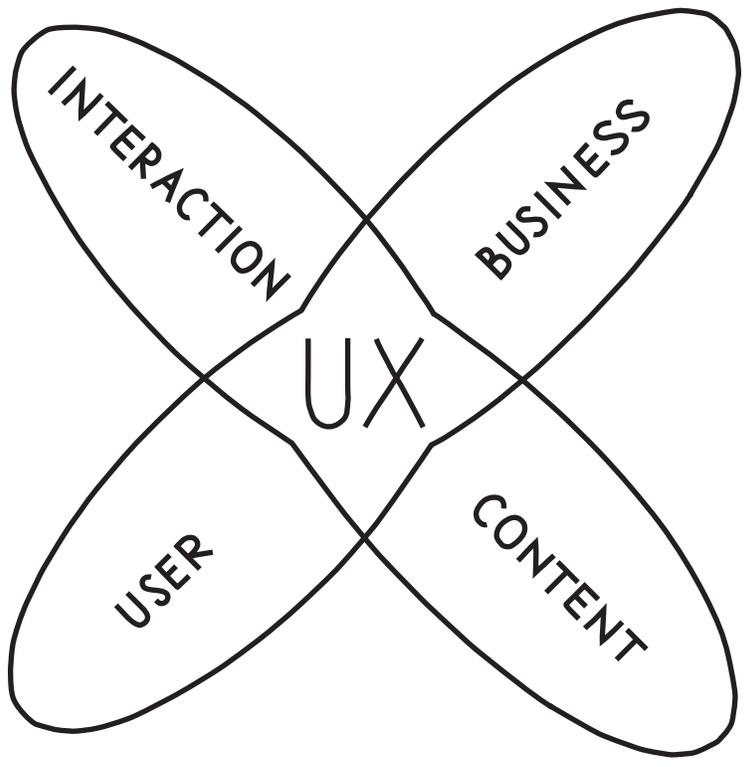
ONE.

I KNOW UX MATTERS. BUT WHAT IS UX AGAIN?

User experience (UX) has graduated from hot trend to business staple, with companies—large and small—calling on UX professionals to create more intuitive and engaging experiences for the users of their products and services.

As a result, most of us have heard of UX; what's more, we all know we need UX capabilities in our organizations. But what capabilities does the term "UX" encompass? And how do you hire the right UX people with the right UX skills for your business?

To answer that second question, you need to be able to answer the first. And, unfortunately, the answer to THAT question depends on whom you ask.

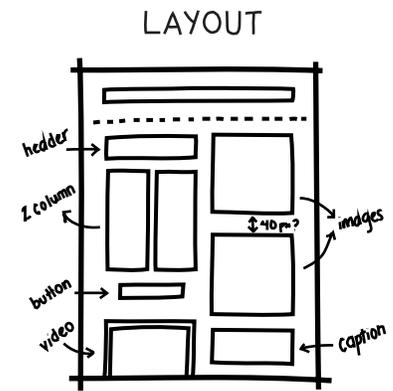


The User Experience Professional's Association broadly defines user experience as:

Every aspect of the user's interaction with a product, service, or company that make up the user's perceptions of the whole. User experience design as a discipline is concerned with all the elements that together make up that interface, including layout, visual design, text, brand, sound, and interaction. UX works to coordinate these elements to allow for the best possible interaction by users.

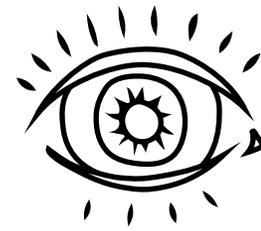
Such coordination relies on the following skills and expertise:

- Understanding user sets (user research and usability testing)
- Planning the layout of information and the flow of a service (information architecture)
- Designing the way that users progress from one step to another (interaction design)
- Planning and writing copy and media content (content strategy & development)
- Designing the interface or overall visual system (visual design)
- The ability to pull all of these elements together with a cohesive vision (strategist)



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VISUAL DESIGN

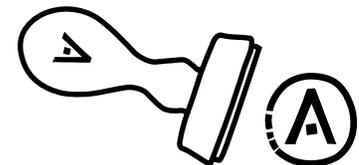


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TEXT

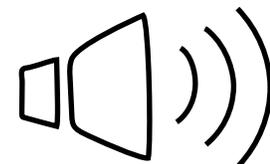
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BRAND



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SOUND

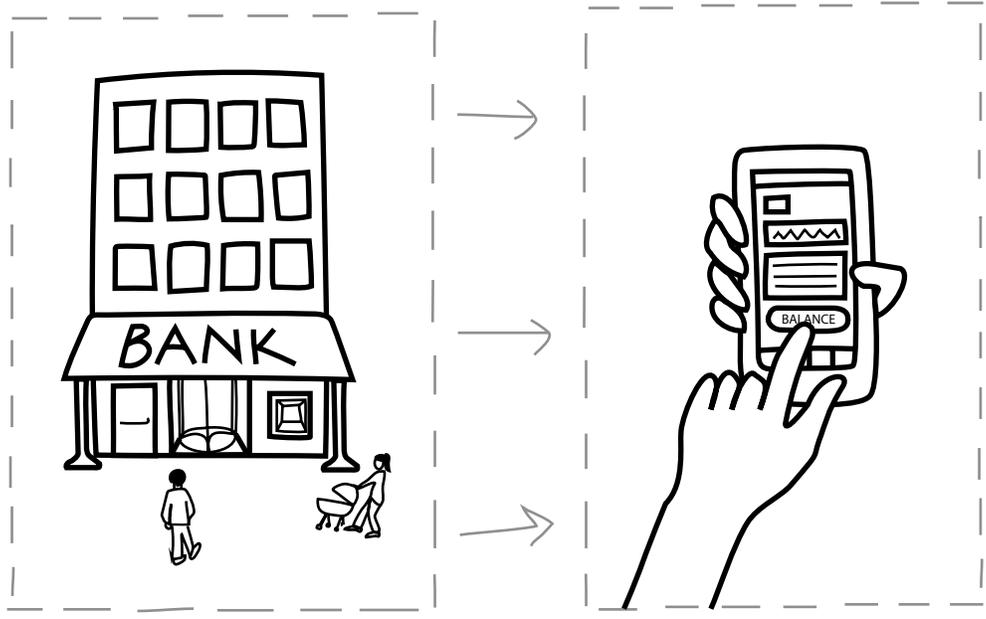


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INTERACTION



People tend to associate UX with a company's digital experiences, such as websites or mobile applications, but UX covers a much broader spectrum than what is online. Consider a bank.



Banks offer traditional “customer experiences” such as how customers interact with tellers at a branch or the process of finding out a balance over the phone. They also have websites where customers can log in to view balances or transfer funds, mobile apps where customers can deposit checks, and ATMs where customers can get cash.

It is the responsibility of the UX team to make sure that the website is easy to navigate, the mobile app and ATM are easy to use, and that all the components look cohesive and provide comprehensive services.

In this paper, we will be concerned primarily with user experience and user experience design within this digital context.



TWO.

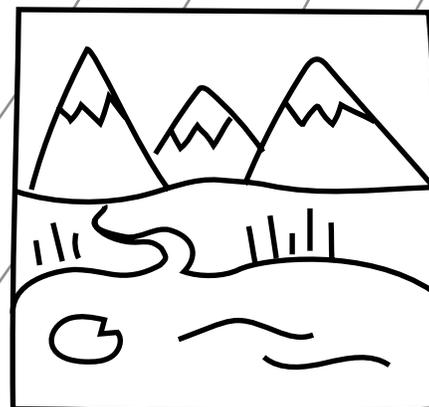
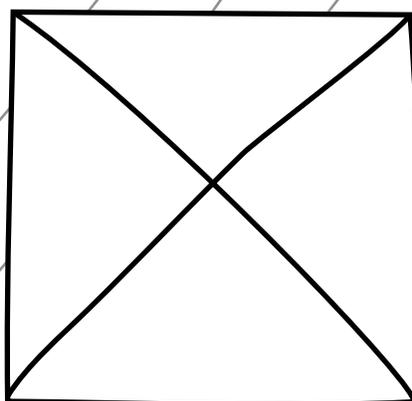
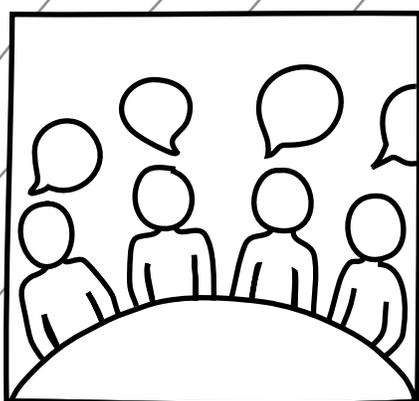
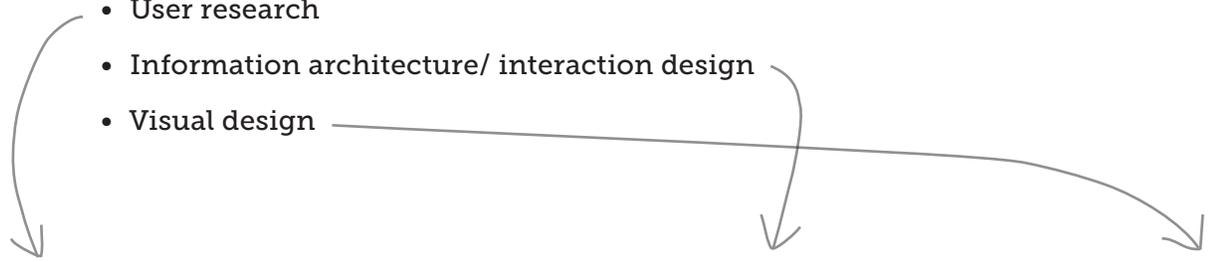
WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON UX ROLES?

66 ["Great," you're probably saying to yourself, "so can I hire one person to do all of that stuff?"
Unfortunately, the answer is probably "No."] 99

The range of UX skills and specialties can be viewed as a spectrum, with one end being "softer" skills, such as the ability to empathize with users, and the other end being more technical, such as being able to create functional prototypes in HTML and CSS.

Most UX professionals are going to have several areas of expertise, but their skills will tend to fall into one of three high-level skill set categories:

- User research
- Information architecture/ interaction design
- Visual design



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

USER RESEARCHERS	INFORMATION ARCHITECTS/ INTERACTION DESIGNERS	VISUAL DESIGNERS
<p>COMMON TITLES</p> <p>UX Strategist, UX Researcher, Usability Tester, Usability Engineer</p>	<p>COMMON TITLES</p> <p>UX Designer, UX Architect, Information Designer</p>	<p>COMMON TITLES</p> <p>UX Designer, UI Designer, Interface Designer</p>
<p>COMMON DELIVERABLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usability tests and findings • Analytics reports • Personas • Scenarios • Journey maps • Task analyses • Survey creation and analyses • Focus group findings • Competitive audits 	<p>COMMON DELIVERABLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workflows • Wireframes • Site maps • Content audits and inventories • Storyboards • Journey maps • Low-fidelity prototypes • Sketches • Card sorts • Taxonomies 	<p>COMMON DELIVERABLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comps • High-fidelity wireframes • Prototypes • Pattern libraries (for items like navigation elements, links, calendars, etc.) • Font selection
<p>IN SHORT THEY...</p> <p>Help understand who customers are and what to build to serve their needs</p>	<p>IN SHORT THEY...</p> <p>Define the structure and flow of the user experience</p>	<p>IN SHORT THEY...</p> <p>Design the look and feel</p>



AN EVOLVING FIELD.

The terms used above are by no means universally accepted. And rarely will the experience or expertise of a UX professional be limited exclusively to one niche or another.

For example, an “interaction designer” at a small company might be responsible for wireframing, prototyping, content development, and usability testing. At a large corporation, an interaction designer might have a more specialized role and focus solely on creating wireframes and prototypes.

It’s also becoming more and more common for folks to brand themselves as UX generalists, regardless of their specific responsibilities, and call themselves simply “UX Designers” or “UX Architects.”

There is also a growing trend for companies to look for an elusive creature known as the

“UX Unicorn”

– a single person who is expertly skilled in each of the many areas that make up UX.



It certainly can make sense to seek out individuals with broad experience (and there are in fact many individual UX practitioners who have it). Still, it’s very unlikely that you’ll be able to find a single person who truly excels at and is passionate about all the disciplines that make up the field of UX.

Instead, you are probably going to need to hire a team of generalists with complementary strengths.

THREE.

HOW DO I FIGURE OUT WHAT KIND OF UX PROFESSIONALS I NEED AND HOW DO I FIND THEM?

As mentioned, you're going to need a team with strengths and expertise across the UX spectrum. So, when you're ready to start hiring, where do you start?



- ① First, take into consideration what your current needs are. What challenges are you facing right now? What problems are you trying to solve? What are you building, and where are you in the process? What sort of tangible outcomes or deliverables will help you achieve your goals?
- ② Are you starting a brand new product and need to understand the competitive landscape and verify that your new product will serve people's goals and needs? Then, what you need is someone who can help you do research and build a meaningful portrait of your users, probably someone with a strong user research and usability background.
- ③ Do you need help defining what your new application should look like and how its various features and functions should be organized? If so, you probably need someone with a background in information architecture and interaction design.
- ④ Are you an established brand that needs to present a modern digital presence to your evolving client base? In that case, you probably need a team of talented visual designers who are aware of the latest trends and best practices.



But what if you don't know what you need? Or you're working on multiple projects and can't determine which one person would be the best to get started?

In that case, you may want to hire a senior UX professional with experience building teams and developing project strategy. A UX strategist like this can help identify the right problems to address and clearly define the processes, deliverables, and talent necessary to get you where you want to go.

COVER YOUR BASES !

In general, a solid UX team has expertise that covers all the various elements of UX: user research and testing, information architecture, interaction design, visual design, content strategy, and most importantly, the ability of the individuals to tie everything together with a cohesive strategy.

It's rare to find a single person who has true expertise across all these elements. For this reason, when you're starting out, you'll want to look first for well-rounded candidates who have at least one area of deep expertise.

Aside from covering all the bases, the reason you'll want to hire a team, rather than a single remarkable individual, is that UXers are social creatures and work best with at least one partner in crime. No matter how skilled or experienced, every UX practitioner benefits from having someone around with whom they can collaborate, brainstorm, and learn.

Also, keep in mind that regardless of the nature of the product, whether a new idea being developed, or an existing service being re-imagined, UX professionals are most effective when involved throughout the entire process, rather than being called on only once you've encountered a problem.

Thoroughly understanding the user base can help set product definitions and company goals. Flow and layout iterations up front save tons of time and money before you go into development. The look and feel of a product will be more consistent and powerful when built into the original concept, rather than coming as an afterthought. And, the constant collection and integration of feedback can ensure that you're on the right track, help you manage resources and control costs, and uncover numerous opportunities for continued improvements.



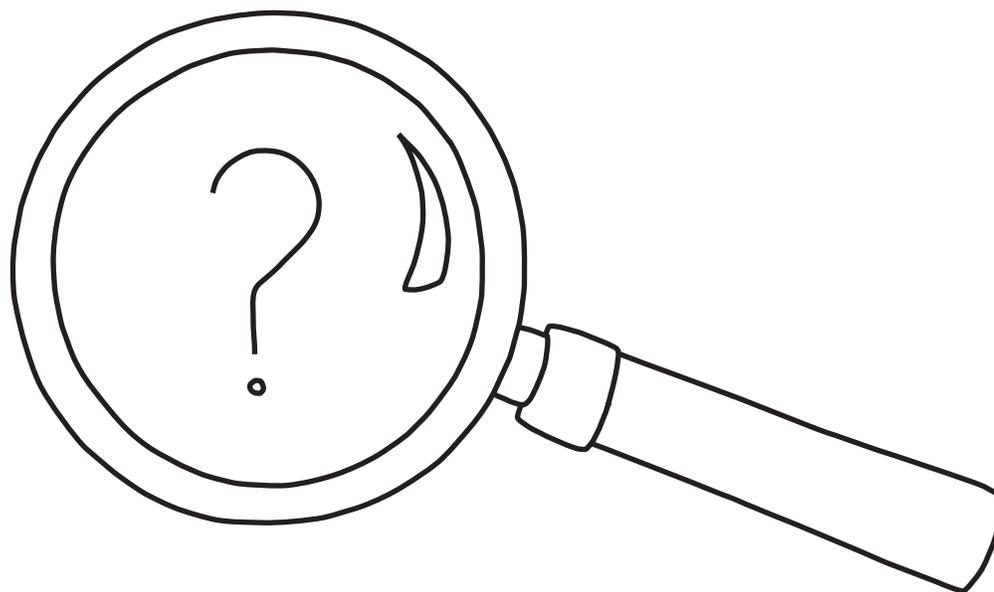
FOUR.

HOW DO I EVALUATE UX CANDIDATES?

As if determining what type of UX support you need weren't challenging enough, it can be equally frustrating to find and evaluate UX candidates.

For example, UX is a buzzword right now and everyone from front end developers to technical writers are slapping the phrase on their resume to attract recruiters desperate to find qualified UX candidates.

Because UX professionals don't have one set career path and often transition into UX from other fields, it can be tricky to determine who has actually built up the expertise to be effective and who has read just enough on Twitter to fool you.



To provide you with some practical guidance, here are four basic rules to follow when looking for good UX candidates:

1

IGNORE JOB TITLES.

There are no universally accepted titles in the UX field that describe the different skill sets. And roles can vary greatly from company to company, or even project to project. Instead of looking at the title, take a close look at an individual's work samples: What deliverables were created? What processes were followed? How did the candidate work with the other members of the team?

2

MAKE SURE THE CANDIDATE GRASPS UX FUNDAMENTALS.

Every last "user experience" practitioner should be familiar with the basics of user research, information architecture, interaction design, and visual design, and know how all of these work together. Candidates don't have to be able to do every task on their own, but they do have to understand why each is important and how the pieces work together.

3

ASK FOR CONTEXT.

Once you've determined that a candidate does, in fact, know a thing or two about the core tenets of UX, ask how and where they applied these tenets. How complex was the project? What was the budget? What exactly did this candidate do? What were the results? Alternately, describe the business challenges you are facing and ask how the candidate would apply UX principles and methods to address them. Knowing when to employ what from a bag of UX tricks is a critical skill. Make sure the candidates you're considering have it.

4

DON'T FORGET ABOUT SOFT SKILLS!

UX professionals must serve as champions for the user, which often means developing practical solutions that marry user needs with goals of the business. They then need to present these solutions so that any member of the business team can understand and support them. In fact, UXers are usually the glue that connects users, developers, and business owners. Ask your candidates about a time when they had to "sell" an idea or a solution to skeptical stakeholders. Don't forget to consider how effectively they present themselves and their experience to you during the interview itself!



CONCLUSION.

Providing a killer user experience is becoming absolutely critical in nearly every business setting.

But a beautiful interface or website is no longer enough to please customers; users now expect digital experiences to be intuitive, anticipatory, and attractive across all devices. And they are rewarding companies that meet and exceed these expectations with their money and loyalty.

Hiring a great UX team is the first step to capturing some of that loyalty. Finding UX candidates with the appropriate skills and experience, however, can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack, especially when starting from scratch.

It can be helpful to have a partner capable of identifying and evaluating the best candidates, especially a partner familiar with the nuances of user experience design.

Vitamin T has served as just such a partner to leading companies in a broad range of industries across the world. We not only have dedicated UX recruiters with deep industry knowledge, but we also rely on our network of subject matter experts to interview and assess candidates and provide support on client engagements.

As a result, we've done everything from helping clients identify pressing UX needs and providing them with specific niche expertise to building out entire UX teams.



CONTACT.



If you would like to learn more
about how we can help you
call 1-855-848-8568 or visit vitamintalent.com

