As an IXD student, my career aspirations are currently focused on opportunities within the product design field. After browsing a number of job postings, I found a <u>Product Design Lead position at Apple</u> that closely resembles the type of role I am interested in pursuing post-graduation. According to <u>Career Foundry</u>, a product designer's role can be compared to that of a "full-stack" designer, with the ethos of a steward charged with caring for the product under their purview, and more importantly, the product's users.

The job description for the Product Design Lead at Apple describes the "full-stack" designer role directly, stating that in this particular job, one is responsible for research, design, and solution implementation, as well as working with a diverse set of stakeholders to bring the product and brand's mission to life for the end user. This role stood out to me because I have a history of working with both iOS apps and ecommerce businesses, so I have some context for the iOS and app environments.

From a technical perspective, there are a number of skills and experiences that are required for this position. This includes designing mockups and wireframes, prototyping with HTML/CSS/JavaScript, and producing visual assets in Sketch, Photoshop, or Illustrator to name a few. Having fluency in these various tools and their applications allow the designer to effectively understand the product through research, design solutions to address challenges and goals for the product, and bring those solutions to life through implementation within an iOS context.

To investigate what using these tools from end-to-end looks like in practice, I have outlined a workflow a designer in this role would likely experience, starting with research. While no research tools were specifically mentioned, I would expect this role would require the designer to use tools such as <u>Lookback</u> or <u>Optimal Workshop</u> for engaging with users and evaluating quantitative and qualitative data to understand the problems the designer is looking to solve. The designer then could develop a wireframe by hand or digitally to outline a solution to the problem identified in their research. Next, the designer could translate the wireframe into a prototype or mock-up of the iOS app using languages such as HTML, CSS and JavaScript. The designer would next enhance the prototype they developed by using tools like Sketch, Photoshop, or Illustrator to design the visual elements of the app to improve functionality and user experience. After a prototype is completed, the designer could begin to test and implement the solution. In order to effectively test or implement the prototype, the designer would likely need to employ the help of developers. Clear communication and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of developers is critical for the designer to bring their product solution to life. Oftentimes, developers have limited capacity, and the designer may be required to negotiate what is possible under the given constraints (time and budget to name a few) and then prioritize the features or projects with the highest impact for the user. If this collaboration with the developer is successful, the product solution will be implemented, but likely after numerous iterations.

As of today, I do not think I would be a particularly good fit for this role. Having a background primarily in project management, I am proficient in understanding users and their needs,

aligning those needs to organizational goals, creating solutions to address those goals, and ultimately implementing those solutions. In order to bridge the gap between my current experience and this role, I will need to develop my technical skills. I am excited to learn how to build prototypes with HTML/CSS/JavaScript, as well as learn research methodologies and design tools like Sketch in order to translate my ideas into real designs. Learning these skills will help me develop a portfolio showcasing my design and research prowess.

Tags:

HTML/CSS/JavaScript, Lookback, Optimal Workshop, Sketch, Photoshop, Illustrator, iOS, Communication, Collaboration, Iterative Design