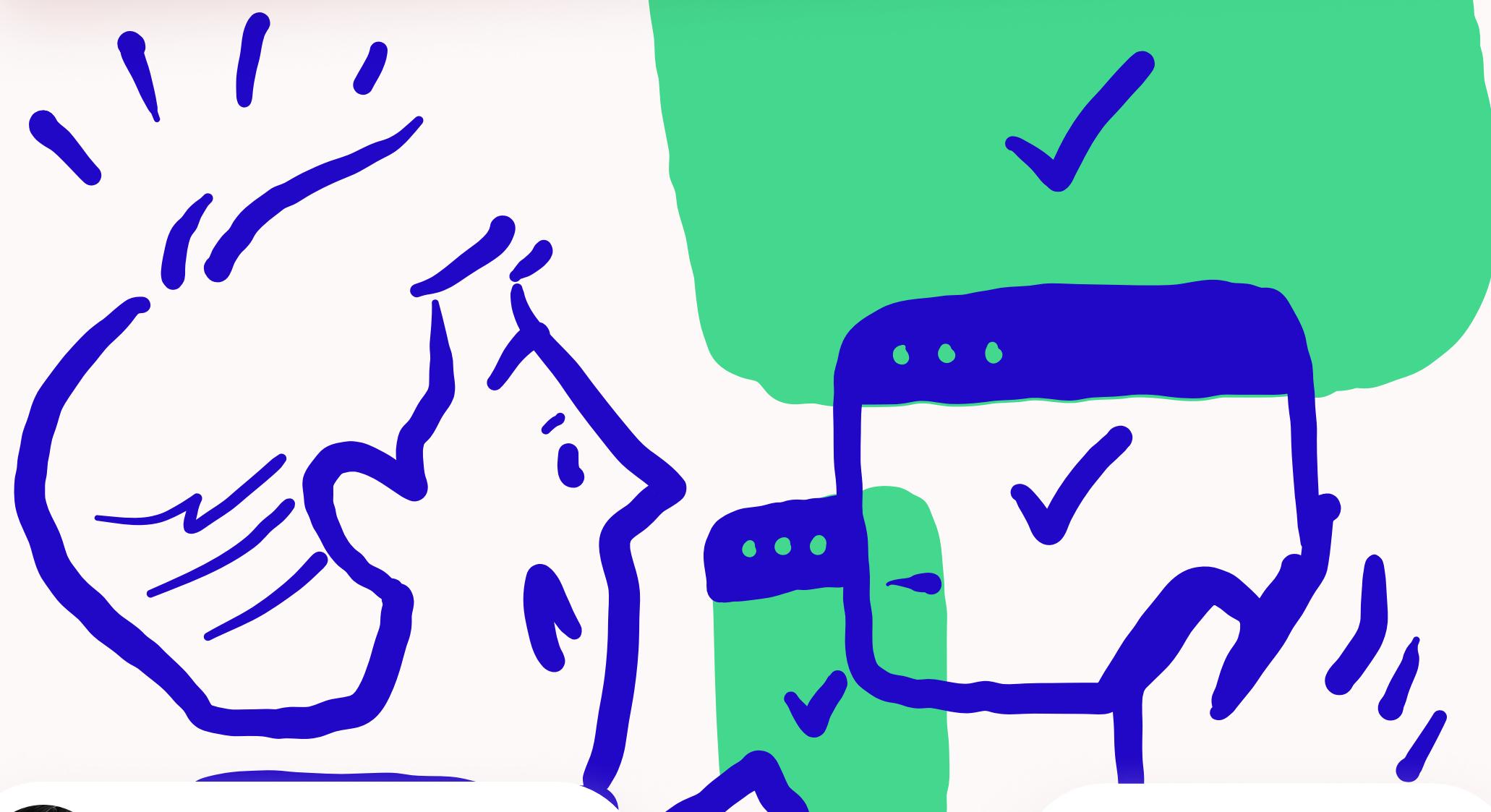


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# Portfolio playbook

Build a portfolio that works!



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**What separates a good design portfolio from one that genuinely secures the interview?**

**Often, it's the subtle strategies that reveal deeper thinking.**

**If you're ready for advice beyond the obvious, check out these 10 clever tips to make your portfolio resonate powerfully with hiring teams.**

#1

# The "TL;DR" hook

At the very top of each case study, before diving deep, include a concise 2-3 sentence summary.

State the core problem, your key contribution/role, and the primary outcome or impact.

Busy reviewers scan first.

This immediate summary respects their time, allows for quick relevance assessment, and proves you can synthesize complex information clearly – a critical skill for communication within a team.

#2

Spotlight  
your  
constraints

Don't shy away from discussing the real-world limitations you faced.

Tight deadlines, technical debt, limited budget, shifting requirements...

Explicitly outlining constraints and explaining how you navigated them demonstrates pragmatism, adaptability, and creative problem-solving under pressure, which are invaluable (and realistic) skills.

It signals you can handle the inevitable challenges of actual product development, reducing their hiring risk.

#3

Quantify the  
"Why,"  
not just  
the "What"

Go beyond just listing UX metrics (like task completion).

Connect your design decisions and outcomes to tangible business goals or user value propositions.

Did your redesign decrease support tickets by X%? Did it contribute to a Y% lift in conversion? Did it improve user sentiment scores related to a key business objective?

Demonstrating impact shows business acumen and proves you focus on delivering measurable value, aligning your work with company objectives.

#4

Showcase  
your  
decision  
rationale

Instead of just showing the final design, highlight critical decision points in your process.

Briefly explain why you chose path A over path B, referencing user research, data, technical feasibility, or strategic alignment.

Hiring managers need to see how you think and ensure your decisions are thoughtful and defensible, not just based on personal preference.

It builds confidence in your judgment.

#5

# Map Your Collaboration Constellation

Product design is rarely a solo act.

Briefly but clearly describe who you collaborated with (PMs, engineers, researchers, marketing, etc.) and how you worked together at different stages.

What workshops did you facilitate?

How did you incorporate engineering feedback early?

This demonstrates vital teamwork and communication skills, assuring recruiters you can integrate effectively into their cross-functional team structure and contribute positively to the group dynamic.

#6

Include "Next  
Steps" &  
unanswered  
questions

End your case studies by briefly mentioning potential future iterations, improvements you'd explore next, or open questions that arose from your research.

This signals a forward-thinking, strategic mindset.

It shows you understand products evolve, you're proactive, and you possess the intellectual curiosity to keep pushing the product forward beyond the immediate task.

#7

Weave in  
your "Aha!"  
moments

Sprinkle in personal reflections or key learnings within your case studies.

- What surprised you during research?
- What assumption was challenged?
- What new skill did you develop?

This demonstrates self-awareness, humility, and a growth mindset – qualities essential for learning and adapting within a role.

It shows you're not just executing tasks but actively learning and improving from your experiences.

#8

Design your  
portfolio like  
a product

Apply your UX skills to the portfolio itself.

Is it easy to navigate? Is the information architecture clear? Does it load quickly? Is it accessible?

Your portfolio is a direct demonstration of your UX skills in action.

A confusing, slow, or poorly structured portfolio raises immediate red flags about your attention to detail and ability to create good user experiences.

It's your first usability test.

#9

# The "Honest Pivot" corner

Briefly touch upon ideas or directions that didn't work out during a project.

Explain why they were abandoned (user testing showed confusion, technical infeasibility, strategic shift) and what was learned from that pivot.

This shows maturity, resilience, and objectivity.

It proves you can detach from initial ideas, learn from failures, and prioritize the right solution over your solution – crucial traits for navigating complex product development.

#10

Hint at your  
special sauce

**Subtly highlight what makes you unique.**

Is it your background in psychology that informs your research? Your knack for rapid prototyping? Your passion for accessibility? Your systems thinking approach?

Hiring managers aren't just filling a skills gap.

They're building a diverse team.

Highlighting your unique angle helps you stand out from candidates with similar core skills and shows them the distinct value you specifically bring to the table.

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