

HCDE Alumni Experience: Early Career Alumni

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Research Goal

Provide feedback and suggestions for the HCDE alumni board regarding early career alumni experience



Research Questions

- What are early career HCDE alumni experiencing in the workforce after they graduate?
- What are the critical challenges early career alumni face in their careers now and how are they handling it?
- How are alumni engaging with the HCDE community after graduation?



Participant Demographics

- Less than 5 years of industry experience
- 9 participants
 - 6 Masters '15, '16, '17 x3, '18
 - 2 Undergraduates '18
 - 1 Certificate '17
- Job positions
 - 2 UX Researchers
 - 2 UX Designers
 - 2 Product Designers
 - 1 Product Manager
 - 1 UX Freelancer
 - 1 Technical Program Manager*

Research Methods

- Qualitative research
- Semi-structured interviews
- 60-minute remote sessions



Top Line Findings

- Underprepared for industry
- Dislike traditional mixers
- Eager to help



Underprepared for Industry

“Becoming a full-time employee was extremely difficult... Pressure was off in internship, but in full-time positions people expect so much more... It took me years to overcome the imposter syndrome.”

—— Master '17

Underprepared for Industry

- Disconnect between academic coursework and real-world industry expectations
- Value of UX often not appreciated in companies

Implication

- Students would appreciate additional courses/seminars that facilitate a smoother transition into industry

Dislike Traditional Mixers

“These events are great for networking, but would be better if they were less awkward... If there was a thing to do, like going to a venue or something, would make these events *much* easier to go to.”

—— Master '17

Dislike Traditional Mixers

- “Business card exchange” mixers and networking events can be socially exhausting and awkward
- Time and geographic constraints

Implication

- Early career alumni would prefer events with more organized activities (workshops, talks, etc.)

Eager to Connect

“I feel like people in the UX field are quite empathetic; I have rarely been turned down when I reach out to someone.”

—— Master '18

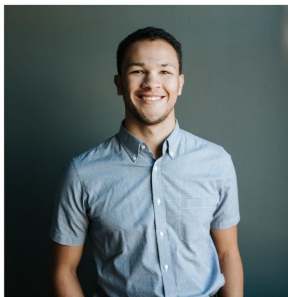
Eager to Connect

- Early career alumni are willing to give back to the community and help young HCDE graduates enter in to industry
- HCDE community is “empathetic” and “supportive”

Implication

- Many early career alumni explicitly mentioned interest in mentorship programs to connect with current students

Newbie Nick



"HCDE connected my passion for design with the soft and hard skills needed to become a designer."

Age 29

Location Seattle, WA

Role UX Designer

Education MS in HCDE

Experience 4 years

Career Journey

- Graphic designer before entering the masters program
- Multiple internships while as full-time student
- Now works at a mid-size company in Seattle

Goals

- Continue to grow in his career
- Learn more about trends in the industry
- Learn more about the business aspects of his company

Pains

- Dislikes traditional mixers, prefers events relating to current industry
- Not sure how to network or reach out to others
- Works in an environment where UX isn't well known

Scenario

Nick is dedicated to his job. Since he started his job as a UX Designer, he comes in early and stays late almost everyday. Nick gets along with his coworkers well, and hopes he can be promoted soon.

Since Nick started working he's noticed that he often needs to explain UX to other people at his company. He wants to move up in the company but doesn't feel like he knows enough about business to do so. Nick tries to go to workshops but it's hard with his tight schedule. When it comes to social mixers, Nick finds it hard to connect with people because he has difficulties navigating these events since they aren't structured.

Desires

- Have alumni events easy to incorporate in his life due to his long work hours and personal life
- Learn from others through mentorship program
- Learn new skills to facilitate career advancement

Tools to Overcome Challenges

- Online discussion boards to find quick solutions
- Talking with other professionals to get real life experience
- Attending workshops to gain specific skills he is interested in

Most Memorable Course from HCDE

"All [of them] were very unique and different but what I personally feel is most memorable is the Physical Prototyping class... It was really fun but I didn't learn how to present prototypes, so I wasn't prepared for that when I got into industry"

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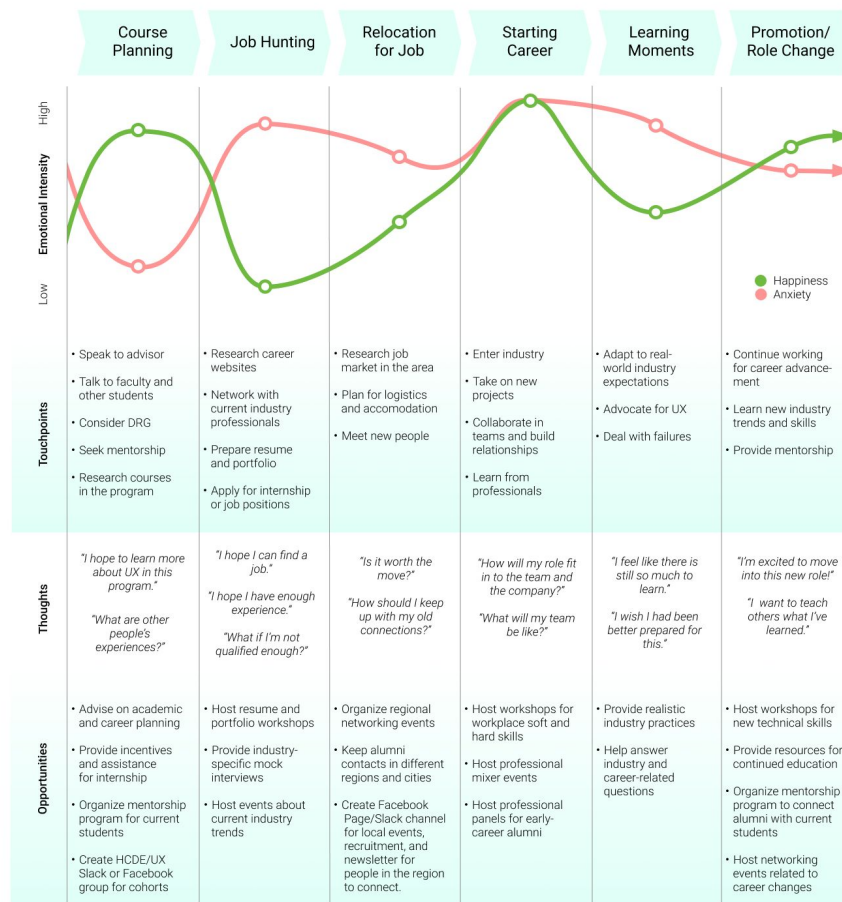
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Early Career HCDE Alumni Journey Map



Starting Career

- Enter industry
- Take on new projects
- Collaborate in teams and build relationships
- Learn from professionals

"How will my role fit in to the team and the company?"

"What will my team be like?"

- Host workshops for workplace soft and hard skills
- Host professional mixer events
- Host professional panels for early-career alumni

Learning Moments

- Adapt to real-world industry expectations
- Advocate for UX
- Deal with failures

"I feel like there is still so much to learn."

"I wish I had been better prepared for this."

- Provide realistic industry practices
- Help answer industry and career-related questions

Recommendations

- Mentorship program
- Industry-specific portfolio reviews and mock interviews
- Skill-specific or industry-specific workshops





Thank you!