

# Article of the Week

## Reviewing UX Portfolios: 4 High-Risk Hiring Mistakes

8 min read by Jared M. Spool

*Read the article published on [Articles.UIE.com](#).*

A UX portfolio seems like a no-brainer. You ask the candidate to give it to you. You review it. Then, if you like what you see, you interview them further and maybe you'll offer them the opportunity to join your team.

However, there's more to reviewing a portfolio than that. And many teams make serious mistakes in the process.

Hiring team members is hard enough. Let's not make it harder.

It's risky to push a candidate away who, had we hired them, would've done a great job for us. Losing a viable candidate means we'll need to spend more time finding and interviewing other candidates to fill the job.

When we take too long to review their portfolio and give them feedback, they may decline to continue in our hiring process or refuse our job offer. This makes the hiring process more difficult.

It's even worse if we hire someone who we thought looked great on paper and interviewed well, but can't do the work we need them to do. We then find ourselves with a messy management and morale problem. It's hard to work with a team member who is ill-equipped for the position, no matter how otherwise awesome they are.

Hiring mistakes put our team's growth at risk. They can be avoided. Here are four hiring mistakes that teams make when reviewing UX portfolios, and how to avoid them.

### Mistake #1: Not defining the position's objectives upfront

Yogi Berra once said, "if you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there." So many hiring managers and team members open up a portfolio without knowing what they need to learn from it.

Treating a UX portfolio like a coffee-table picture book turns out to be a sure way to get a wrong understanding of the candidate. We can't just flip through the portfolio and smile at the pretty pictures.

We must have specific objectives and assessment criteria for assessing each candidate's portfolio. Otherwise, we'll risk making judgement calls that are more about the aesthetics of the work and less about the capability of each candidate.

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### The hunt for comparable evidence

When we're reviewing a portfolio, we're on a hunt for direct evidence of the candidate's comparable experience. Comparable experience is any work they've done in their previous jobs (or in school, when we're considering an early-career candidate who is low on work experience) that matches the work we'll need them to accomplish. We use the entire interview process to collect all the evidence we can uncover that the candidate has similar work before. If they've done a great job in the past, there's a good chance they'll do a good job again, this time for us.

The goal of reviewing a candidate's portfolio is simple: Can we tell if there's enough evidence here to suggest this candidate should be prioritized higher in our hiring process than other candidates? If we find lots of comparable experience evidence in the portfolio, we want to quickly bring this person in for interviews. If we don't see any evidence, we might hold up and talk to other candidates first.

### What will our new hire accomplish in their first year?

To know what evidence to look for, we need to know what the new hire's work will be. Will they be creating wireframes for a new design? Conducting research to identify user needs? Guiding a team to deliver a finely-designed mobile app? Rolling out a large design system to dozens of products?

No two designers will do the same job. Even if they work on the same project, they'll likely divide up the work based on their strengths and experience. Having a clear picture of what we hope our new hire will accomplish in, say, their first year, will let us focus our review of every candidate's portfolio.

When working with teams, we start them with a simple exercise of [writing a thank you note](#) to their future new hire. This is an easy way to start the conversation about what the new position will entail.

To know what to look for in candidate portfolios, the thank you note won't be enough. For that, we create a much more detailed [performance profile](#). The profile describes the objectives we want our new hire to achieve in their first year. By listing out the objectives, we can create a wishlist of what we want to see in every candidate's UX portfolio.

*Read the article published on [Articles.UIE.com](#).*

### Hiring our team strategically

At our 2-day [Creating a UX Strategy Playbook workshop](#), we look at every aspect of a solid UX strategy, including how we'll build our team to be highly effective. You'll balance hiring new members against training up the team you have, all to achieve the major objectives to grow your organization's design capability.

Bring your team to our next workshops in Sydney, Australia (Nov 21-22 - **4 seats left!**) and in Chattanooga, TN (Dec 4-5 - **9 seats left!**). You'll leave with an action plan that will drive your organization to deliver better-designed products and services immediately. [Register today.](#)

### Join Jared at an upcoming event:

**Portland, OR Nov 6-8 ITX UX 2019 Beyond the Pixels**

Full-day Workshop: Designing UX Metrics

Keynote: Is Design Metrically Opposed?

**Melbourne, Australia Nov 19 ProductTank Melbourne**

Presentation: Building a Winning UX Strategy Using the Kano Model

**Sydney, Australia Nov 20 Sydney Design Thinking Meetup**

Presentation: The Evolution of a New UX Design Resolution

**Seattle, WA Mar 3-5 Convey UX Conference**

Keynote: Beyond the UX Tipping Point



Jared M. Spool is a co-founder of Center Centre and the founder of UIE. In 2016, with Dr. Leslie Jensen-Imani, he opened Center Centre, a new design school in Chattanooga, TN to create the next generation of industry-ready UX Designers. They created a revolutionary approach to vocational training, infusing Jared's decades of UX experience with Leslie's mastery of experience-based learning methodologies.

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Watch, listen, & learn from the world's best UX experts

## Seminar of the Day: Creating Research Ambassadors & Co-creators

*This is a 34-minute seminar recording*



Steve Mulder

Your research is complete. Now what? Steve Portigal is the expert we turn to next steps for the research analysis stage in our design process. He shows us how to make sure we're not leaving any important information behind. Steve directs us on how to truly harness the power of insights to bring about strategic changes in designs, processes, products, and more.

In this seminar, you will see how to use analysis and synthesis to go from data to insights. You'll learn how to take these insights and determine real opportunities for growth. You'll discover how to get to the point where real innovation occurs.

### What You'll Learn:

- ✓ How to incorporate cards and tailored workshops into your research delivery
- ✓ How to make what you've learned memorable
- ✓ How to get started with your new, larger research team

### All You Can Learn

*This is a 34-minute seminar recording—one of 366—from [UIE's All You Can Learn Library](#). Subscriptions start at just \$29/month to access all of the recordings, with discounts for quantity of seats and duration of subscription.*

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## Grow the understanding of your users' experience with these 3 UX tools

Your UX team must always fight the insulation that builds up between folks who are making critical design decisions and the experience of your users. They need to be always surfacing a **deep awareness** of what it's like to use your product or service.

Our go-to strategy for busting through the insulation and building deep awareness involves combining 3 straightforward UX tactics. We start with a solid discovery process, to generate the research that will form the basis of everyone's awareness of the users. We then use journey maps to capture and understand what that research tells us. And finally, we show why this information is important, by generating a vision of what an improved user experience could be. By combining these together, we see a powerful and long-lasting change in how the organization makes important decisions.

Combining these tactics doesn't come easily for even seasoned UX project leaders. Almost always, they're suffering from a lack of expertise (and sometimes the confidence) to effectively frame the problems and lead their teams through the process.

That's why we asked three UX experts, Dan Brown, Jim Kalbach, and Christine Perfetti, to walk us through exactly how to get the most out of each of these tactics. We've captured their advice in three online seminars, which you can easily share with your team.

### Here's what your team needs to know:

First, everyone needs to work together to understand the problem you're trying to solve.



Dan Brown

Your team leaders have plenty of tools to choose from that articulate the challenges they're facing. In [Discovery: The First Step of the Design Process](#), Dan Brown takes your folks beyond the tools, explaining that the conversations between your team and influential stakeholders are far more important. They'll talk through the work ahead and come up with that essential understanding of the problem.

Next, you'll share what you've learned and infuse your organization's culture with the user's experience.



Jim Kalbach

Jim Kalbach picks up where Dan leaves off, by using the creation of a journey map to catalyze the team's understanding of your users. In [Building Consensus by Mapping Experiences](#), you'll see that there's a magic that happens when you get the right people in the room, turning the discovery research into a narrative user journey. Suddenly, everyone is on the same page about what makes using your products or services frustrating, and what makes users delighted.

Then you'll want to align cross-functional teams and stakeholders to a singular vision for your product.



Christine Perfetti

The journey map tells us what it's like to use the product today. But what could it look like tomorrow? Christine Perfetti walks through the steps to achieving team alignment on where to drive the future products and services in [A User-centered Approach to Product Planning and Visioning](#). Your UX leaders will transform the design's existing user experience into a compelling (and competitive) long-term vision.

Your team gets immediate access to Dan Brown, Jim Kalbach, and Christine Perfetti's expertise when you subscribe to [UIE's All You Can Learn Library](#). For just \$29 per month, you can start sharing these seminars (and the 363 others in the library) right away. (It's easy to sign up, you can cancel without penalty, and it's 100% guaranteed, so there's no risk.)

Bust through the insulation. Develop a deep understanding of your users. Build a vision for well-designed products and services.

What are you waiting for? Start today. [Subscribe to All You Can Learn](#).

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A UX strategy workshop  
led by Jared Spool  
USA, Europe, & Australia

## Drive Innovative Designs Using Experience Visions

3 minute read by Jared Spool

In 1991, Apple launched their Powerbook 100, one of the first general-use laptop computers. It was hailed as a marvel of engineering—a full-featured computer the size of a notebook.

The Powerbook 100 was inspired by an internal project put together four years earlier: [The Knowledge Navigator](#). The Knowledge Navigator wasn't a real machine. Apple would never build or deliver one. It was just a concept showing what a team inside Apple thought computing technology might look like 23 years in the future.

Even though it wasn't real, the Knowledge Navigator captured the imagination of the Powerbook 100 team. When the team faced a hard decision, they thought back to the Knowledge Navigator concept work. Given their choices, they asked themselves which choice would get them closer to building something like the Knowledge Navigator.

### The future experience captured in a story.

The Knowledge Navigator concept is an example of what we call an [experience vision](#). An experience vision is a story that demonstrates what a user's experience would be like years in the future.

An experience vision doesn't describe a new product or service. Instead, it shows how a user's life would change because of the ideas embodied in the vision's story.

### Guiding the hard decisions.

When a team faces a hard design decision, there are questions around criteria they can ask to help them make their decision:

- Which choice would be faster to develop?
- Which choice would be cheaper to manufacture or deliver?
- Which choice would be easier to get into the market?

These are all great criteria to use. However, the Powerbook 100 team's decision-making criteria came from a different question:

- Which choice would get the team closer to building something like a Knowledge Navigator?

The Powerbook team chose this question to guide their decision-making process. It focused their answers to benefit Apple and their customers, in the long run.

This question put Apple's customers squarely in the center of the team's decision-making process. The experience became a way to step beyond incremental-short term thinking.

Apple didn't have the technical capability or knowhow to build a Knowledge Navigator in 1991. However, their teams could use it as a way to choose which technology to develop. They could [take a baby step](#) with every decision they made.

### The experience vision gives direction across multiple products and releases.

After the Powerbook 100 came out, we saw Apple's teams continue to take baby steps towards the experience vision with every new product. The Apple Newton, the MacBook product line, the iPod, and the iPhone all took steps in the direction of the Knowledge Navigator experience.

2010—the year the original Knowledge Navigator story took place—was the year Apple released the first iPad. The iPad was quite close to the ideas in the Knowledge Navigator.

Starting with the Powerbook 100, and heading all the way up to the release of the iPad, Apple continued to deliver the most innovative products. Looking back, it's clear that every innovation was influenced by the Knowledge Navigator.

An experience vision gives a team direction. It puts the user's experience in the center of every important decision. And it drives an organization to deliver better innovative products and services every step of the way.

[Read the article published on Playbook.UIE.com.](#)

### UX Strategy with Jared Spool

This article was originally published in our new *UX Strategy with Jared Spool* newsletter. If you're passionate about driving your organization to deliver better-designed products and services, you'll want to subscribe.  
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## UX Strategy with Jared Spool

A Center Centre - UIE newsletter focused on bringing UX to a strategic level inside your organization.

### Drive Innovative Designs Using Experience Visions

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Keynote: Beyond the UX Tipping Point

[Portland, OR, Nov 6-8, ITX UX 2019 Beyond the Pixels](#)

Full-day Workshop: Designing UX Metrics Keynote: Is Design Metrically Opposed?

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