

Turn Your Non-Design Experience Into Design Portfolio Gold

Transitioning into UX and product design from a different career can feel daunting, but it can also be an advantage. We'll help you identify and articulate your transferable skills, experiences, and motivations to demonstrate your value and make you a viable candidate for UX roles.

In this template, you'll reframe your non-design experiences into valuable assets for a career in UX design, so you can present your unique background as a strength rather than a weakness.

How To Use This Template

The first part is a guide to finding valuable design skills in your non-design experiences. Read it, learn and get inspired. The second part is a worksheet were you can collect data and insights gained from the guide. We are sure you can get tons of great content for your portfolio while working through this template.

Let's get your career transition going!













How to Reframe Your Past Experiences

A guide to finding valuable design skills in your non-design experiences. Learn what to capture and get inspired by examples.

1. Acknowledge and Embrace Your Background

Don't hide your past experiences. Embrace them and use them to your advantage. Highlight the strengths and insights you gained from your previous role and how they contribute to your capabilities as a UX designer. Be proud of your journey and show how it adds depth to your skill set.

Example: I transitioned into UX design after a successful career in [Previous Field]. My journey into UX was driven by my passion for [specific aspect of UX, such as user research, interaction design, or creating intuitive interfaces] and my desire to create user-centered solutions. In my previous role as a [Previous Job Title], I developed strong [relevant skill, such as analytical thinking, client empathy, project management], which I now apply to my UX design process. This background allows me to approach design challenges with a unique perspective and a well-rounded set of skills.

2. Highlight Your Motivation and Commitment

Focus on why you chose UX and what motivates you now— it's crucial to communicate your passion and dedication. Employers want to see that you are genuinely interested in UX and that you have taken concrete steps to learn and grow in this field. Demonstrating your motivation and commitment can set you apart from other candidates and show that you are serious about your career change.

Share the story of what drew you to UX design. Was there a specific event, project, or realization that sparked your interest? Explain how this moment inspired you to pursue a career in UX. Then, detail the steps you have taken to build your skills and knowledge, such as taking online courses, completing a bootcamp or working on practical projects. Highlight any challenges you faced and how you overcame them, showcasing your determination and resilience

Example: My interest in UX design was sparked by [specific event or realization, such as a frustrating user experience with a product, a successful project where you focused on user needs, or discovering the impact of good design on people's lives]. Since then, I have











dedicated myself to mastering UX principles through [online courses/bootcamp/selflearning]. My commitment to this field is demonstrated by the intensive learning and practical projects I completed in a short period. Despite balancing these studies with my previous job, I managed to [achievements, such as building a portfolio, completing several design projects, or working on UX research], proving my dedication and passion for UX design

3. Identify and Showcase Transferable Skills

Reframe your past experiences to highlight transferable skills. These transferable skills can be a significant advantage if you know how to identify and present them effectively. Employers value diverse experiences that contribute to a richer, more versatile approach to problem-solving and design. Start by analyzing your previous roles and responsibilities. Think about the skills you developed and how they can apply to UX design. Skills like problem-solving, communication, empathy, project management and analytical thinking are often transferable. Once identified, reframe these skills in the context of UX design and provide specific examples that illustrate their relevance.

Example:

Former Chef: My experience as a chef taught me to work efficiently under pressure and maintain a high standard of quality. These skills are directly applicable to managing design projects with tight deadlines, ensuring that each project is completed on time without compromising quality. Additionally, working in a fast-paced kitchen environment honed my ability to collaborate effectively with a team, an essential skill for crossfunctional UX design teams.

Former Architect: As an architect, I developed a strong sense of systemic thinking and spatial design. This experience translates well into creating intuitive and user-friendly digital interfaces. My attention to detail in architectural projects ensures that every element of a design contributes to a cohesive user experience. Understanding how people interact with physical spaces helps me design digital products that are both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

Former Real Estate Agent: In my real estate career, I honed my ability to empathize with clients and understand their needs. This skill is crucial in conducting user research and developing user personas. My experience in analyzing client needs and communicating effectively enables me to gather valuable user insights and translate













them into design solutions that address real user problems. Additionally, my negotiation skills help in managing stakeholder expectations and facilitating user-centered design discussions.

4. Create Case Studies from Your Past Experiences

Turn your past experiences into compelling case studies to demonstrate your skills and insights. Case studies are a powerful way to showcase your problem-solving abilities and design thinking process. They provide concrete examples of how you apply your skills to real-world challenges. By converting your past experiences into case studies, you can highlight the transferable skills you bring to UX design and illustrate how your background enriches your approach to design.

Reflect on specific projects or tasks from your previous career where you demonstrated key skills relevant to UX design. Document these experiences as case studies, focusing on the problem you addressed, the process you followed, and the outcomes achieved. Use these case studies to illustrate your ability to understand user needs, devise effective solutions, and create positive user experiences.

Example

Real Estate Agent to UX Designer: I created an empathy map based on my experience helping first-time homebuyers. This case study showcases my ability to understand user journeys, identify pain points, and design solutions that improve user satisfaction.

5. Leverage Education and Fast-Track Learning

Emphasize how quickly you have progressed in UX design through dedicated learning. When transitioning into a new field like UX design, it's crucial to highlight your ability to learn quickly and adapt. Completing an intensive learning program, such as online courses or a bootcamp, demonstrates your commitment and capability to acquire new skills efficiently. This shows potential employers that you are proactive, dedicated, and able to manage multiple responsibilities effectively.

Discuss the specific educational paths you have taken to transition into UX design. Mention any bootcamps, online courses, workshops, or self-study efforts you have undertaken. Highlight the key skills you have acquired and how you applied them in practical projects. Emphasize any challenges you faced, such as balancing education with a job, to showcase your strong work ethic and determination.



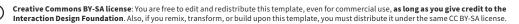












Example: I completed an intensive bootcamp where I learned [specific UX skills] and applied them in [number] practical projects. Balancing this with my previous job dmonstrates my strong work ethic and dedication to continuous learning.

6. Structure Your Portfolio

Your portfolio should be well-organized and clearly demonstrate your skills, experiences, and the journey of your career transition. By structuring your portfolio effectively, you can showcase your abilities and unique background in a compelling way.

- Introduction / about me: Brief overview of your career transition and motivation for UX design.
- Skills and competencies: Highlight key skills, both UX-specific and transferable.
- **Projects/case studies:** Include detailed case studies showcasing your UX design work and how your previous experiences informed your approach.
- Additional experience: Briefly mention relevant roles and achievements from your past career.
- **Education and certifications:** List any relevant courses, bootcamps, and certifications in UX design.

7. Prepare for Behavioral Interviews

Be ready to discuss your past experiences confidently and highlight how they make you a strong candidate for UX roles. UX is a relatively new field in education so there is a high chance your employers have also transitioned from another industry to UX. This might be a great opportunity for an authentic conversation.

Example: In my previous role as a [former job title], I developed strong [relevant skill] which I now apply in UX design by [specific example]. This has enabled me to [specific achievement in UX].













Blueprint for Your Career Transition

Collect and prepare the necessary information to complete this document. With it, you'll be ready to start applying for your dream job.

Personal Introduction
Why I transitioned to UX design: Write a brief narrative about why you decided to switch to UX design. Highlight your motivations and what excites you about the field.
Background summary: Write a summary of your previous career, key roles and responsibilities.













Name of skill: Description: Describe the skill and how you acquired it in your previous career. Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.

Example: Provide a concrete example of when you used this skill in your past job and how it
can be useful in UX design.



















Name of skill: Description: Describe the skill and how you acquired it in your previous career.
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.
Example: Provide a concrete example of when you used this skill in your past job and how it
can be useful in UX design.

















Identify Transferable Skill 3
Name of skill:
Description : Describe the skill and how you acquired it in your previous career.
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.
Example: Provide a concrete example of when you used this skill in your past job and how it can be useful in UX design.

















Draft Your Case Study 1
Title of the case study: Project Name
Introduction: Briefly introduce the project and your role in it.
Problem statement: Describe the problem you were addressing.
Process and methodologies: Outline the steps you took to address the problem, including any research, analysis, and design methodologies you applied.
Transferable skills in action : Highlight which transferable skills you used and how they contributed to the project's success.
Outcome and impact: Describe the results of your work and any measurable impact.
Reflection: Reflect on what you learned from this project and how it prepares you for a role in UX design.















Draft Your Case Study 2
Title of the case study: Project Name
Introduction: Briefly introduce the project and your role in it.
Problem statement: Describe the problem you were addressing.
Process and methodologies: Outline the steps you took to address the problem, including any research, analysis, and design methodologies you applied.
Transferable skills in action : Highlight which transferable skills you used and how they contributed to the project's success.
Outcome and impact: Describe the results of your work and any measurable impact.
Reflection: Reflect on what you learned from this project and how it prepares you for a role in UX design.















Draft Your Case Study 3
Title of the case study: Project Name
Introduction: Briefly introduce the project and your role in it.
Problem statement: Describe the problem you were addressing.
Process and methodologies: Outline the steps you took to address the problem, including any research, analysis, and design methodologies you applied.
Transferable skills in action : Highlight which transferable skills you used and how they contributed to the project's success.
Outcome and impact: Describe the results of your work and any measurable impact.
Reflection: Reflect on what you learned from this project and how it prepares you for a role in UX design.

















Resume / CV Draft
Here are the necessary components for your new and improved resume so that you can start applying for design jobs.
Ocontact information: Ensure your contact details are up-to-date.
Professional summary : A brief summary highlighting your transition to UX design and your key transferable skills.
Work experience : List your past jobs, emphasizing roles and responsibilities that are relevant to UX design.













Skills : Include both your UX skills and transferable skills.
Education and certifications: List your educational background and any UX-related
courses or certifications.
courses or certifications.

















LinkedIn Profile Draft You're expected to have a LinkedIn profile in addition to a resume. Your LinkedIn profile will be very similar to your resume, however, you can choose to expand or summarize certain sections. Just like your resume, ensure it's tailored for UX design jobs. **Headline:** Reflect your new career focus in UX design. **Summary:** A narrative similar to your professional summary on your resume. **Experience:** Update your job descriptions to highlight transferable skills and relevant projects.

Start Learning Today: interaction-design.org

















Skills: Add UX-related skills and endorse them through your network.

Preparation is key to nailing a job interview. Take note of the points below to ensure you're ready when you get invited to one.

Common questions: Prepare answers for common interview questions about your career
transition and transferable skills.
○ Behavioral Interviews : Practice discussing your past experiences in a way that highlights your relevant skills and how they apply to UX design.
O Portfolio Presentation: Develop a presentation of your portfolio, focusing on how your past experience contributes to your UX skills.













Blueprint for Your Career Transition

Collect and prepare the necessary information to complete this document. With it, you'll be ready to start applying for your dream job.

Personal Introduction
Why I transitioned to UX design: Write a brief narrative about why you decided to switch to UX design. Highlight your motivations and what excites you about the field.
Chef example: After several years as a chef, I found myself drawn to the creative and problem-solving aspects of UX design. The desire to create enjoyable and efficient user experiences parallels my passion for crafting memorable dining experiences. This transition allows me to blend my creativity with a new set of skills to solve user problems.
Real estate agent example: As a real estate agent, I developed a keen understanding of client needs and an ability to navigate complex processes. My interest in UX design grew from my desire to enhance user interactions and improve the overall experience of digital products. This career switch enables me to apply my client-focused mindset to creating intuitive and user-friendly designs.
Background summary: Write a summary of your previous career, key roles and responsibilities.
Chef example: Chef with 8 years of experience in high-pressure kitchen environments, responsible for menu design, team coordination, and customer satisfaction.
Real estate agent example: Real estate agent with 5 years of experience in property sales, client relations, and process management.
······································











Identify Transferable Skill 1		
Name of skill: Strong Work Ethic and Coping Under Pressure		
Description : Describe the skill and how you acquired it in your previous career.		
Chef Example: In the kitchen, I consistently managed high-stress situations, ensuring timely	•••••	
delivery of high-quality dishes. This skill translates to UX design, where meeting tight deadlines and maintaining quality are crucial.	S	
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.		
Chef Example: My ability to perform under pressure ensures I can handle the fast-paced environment of UX design projects.		
	•••••	
	•	
	•••••	
	•••••	
Example: Provide a concrete example of when you used this skill in your past job and how it can be useful in UX design.		
Chef Example: In my previous role as a chef, there was a time when our kitchen faced a sudder	n	
surge in orders during a busy weekend. I led the team to reorganize our workflow on the fly, ensuring all dishes were prepared to our high standards and served on time. This experience		
is directly transferable to UX design, where managing multiple tasks under pressure without		
compromising on quality is crucial, such as during the final stages of user testing and iteration before a product launch.		
	, .	
	• • • • • •	













Identify Transferable Skill 2
Name of skill: Systematic Thinking and Organization
Name of Skitt
Description : Describe the skill and how you acquired it in your previous career.
Chef Example: Designing a menu requires a systematic approach to balance flavors, ingredients,
and customer preferences. This skill is directly applicable to creating user flows and wireframes in UX design.
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.
Chef Example: Systematic thinking aids in organizing complex information architecture and
creating intuitive user interfaces.
Example: Provide a concrete example of when you used this skill in your past job and how it can be useful in UX design.
Chef Example: When I redesigned the menu for my previous restaurant, I applied systematic
thinking by analyzing customer feedback and sales data to reorganize the menu. This not only improved customer satisfaction but also increased efficiency in the kitchen. In UX design, I can
apply this same skill to organize user research data, prioritize features, and create well-structured
wireframes that lead to a seamless user experience.













Name of skill: Client Empathy and Needs Analysis	
Name of skill:	•••••
	•••••
Description : Describe the skill and how you acquired it in your previous career.	
Real Estate Agent Example: Understanding and addressing client needs was central to my	
role in real estate. This involved empathizing with clients and tailoring solutions to meet their specific requirements.	
Relevance to UX design: Explain how this skill applies to UX design.	•••••
Real Estate Agent Example: Empathy and needs analysis are essential for user research	•••••
and creating designs that truly resonate with users.	•••••
	•••••
	•••••
	•••••
	•••••
	•••••
	•••••
	•••••
Example: Provide a concrete example of when you used this skill in your past job and how it can be useful in UX design.	
Real Estate Agent Example: In my role as a real estate agent, I once worked with a family wh	 0
had very specific needs due to accessibility concerns. By carefully listening to their requirement and conducting thorough research, I was able to find a property that perfectly suited their need	S
This skill is invaluable in UX design, where understanding and empathizing with users lead to	
designs that are not only functional but also genuinely user-centered, such as designing an appinterface that is accessible to users with disabilities.	
	•••••
	•••••













Γitle o	f the case study: Project Name Redesigning the Kitchen Workflow
	uction: Briefly introduce the project and your role in it. head chef, I noticed inefficiencies in our kitchen workflow that impacted
•••••	e speed and quality. I decided to redesign the kitchen layout.
Proble	em statement: Describe the problem you were addressing.
The e	xisting kitchen layout and process led to delays and miscommunication among staff.
	ss and methodologies: Outline the steps you took to address the problem, including any
esear	ch, analysis, and design methodologies you applied.
• • • • • • • • • •	ducted observations and interviews with kitchen staff, created flowcharts of current sees, and designed a new layout using iterative testing.
	Gerable skills in action : Highlight which transferable skills you used and how they contribute project's success.
• • • • • • • • •	matic thinking and organization were key in analyzing and redesigning the workflow, similar ating user flows in UX design.
Outco	me and impact: Describe the results of your work and any measurable impact.
The n	ew layout reduced preparation time by 20% and improved overall service efficiency.
•••••	
	tion : Reflect on what you learned from this project and how it prepares you for n UX design.
 This b	oroject demonstrated my ability to identify problems, empathize with users (kitchen staff),
• • • • • • • • • •	reate effective solutions.











Title of the case study: Project Name Enhancing the Home Buying	•••••
Introduction: Briefly introduce the project and your role in it.	•••••
As a real estate agent, I wanted to improve the home buying process for first-time buyers.	
Problem statement : Describe the problem you were addressing.	
Clients often felt overwhelmed and confused during the buying process, which impacted my sales numbers	
Process and methodologies : Outline the steps you took to address the problem, including any research, analysis, and design methodologies you applied.	
research, analysis, and design methodologies you applied.	
I created an empathy map to understand client pain points, mapped the entire process, and identified areas for improvement.	
	• • • • • • •
	•••••
Transferable skills in action : Highlight which transferable skills you used and how they contrib	uted
to the project's success.	
Client empathy and needs analysis were critical in understanding user frustrations and address them through better information design	ing
Outcome and impact: Describe the results of your work and any measurable impact.	
The redesigned process included clearer communication and support materials, increasing client	 +
satisfaction and reducing stress. My sales numbers improved by 15%.	
Reflection : Reflect on what you learned from this project and how it prepares you for	
a role in UX design.	
This experience highlighted the importance of empathy and clear communication, key	
components in UX design.	











Resume/CV Draft

Here are the necessary components for your new and improved resume so that you can start applying for design jobs.



Contact information: Ensure your contact details are up-to-date.

Professional summary: A brief summary highlighting your transition to UX design and your key transferable skills.

A dedicated UX designer transitioning from a successful real estate career, where I honed skills in client empathy, systematic thinking, and high-pressure problem-solving. My experience in analyzing client needs and delivering tailored solutions translates into creating intuitive, usercentered designs. I bring a unique perspective to UX, driven by a passion for understanding users and improving their experiences through thoughtful design.

Work experience: List your past jobs, emphasizing roles and responsibilities that are relevant to UX design.

Real Estate Agent, UrbanNest Realty, New York, NY June 2015 – August 2023

- · Client Empathy & Needs Analysis: As a real estate agent at UrbanNest Realty, I consistently demonstrated the ability to deeply understand client needs and preferences, which I now apply to UX design by conducting user interviews and crafting personas that reflect real user needs.
- Project Management: Managed multiple property listings and client relationships simultaneously, ensuring that all transactions progressed smoothly and met deadlines. In UX design, I apply this project management experience to oversee the design process, from initial research to final delivery, ensuring that timelines are met and stakeholders are kept informed.
- Problem-Solving Under Pressure: At UrbanNest Realty, I frequently encountered unexpected challenges, such as property issues or last-minute client concerns. I developed a knack for quick and effective problem-solving, a skill that is invaluable in UX design when responding to user feedback or making iterative changes under tight deadlines.

















Skills : Include both your UX skills and transferable skills.
• Client Empathy & Needs Analysis: Strong ability to understand and prioritize user needs,
ensuring that designs are user-centered
Systematic Thinking & Organization: Adept at organizing complex information and creating
structured, easy-to-navigate designs.
 Project Management: Proven ability to manage projects efficiently, ensuring timely delivery
of high-quality designs.
High-Pressure Problem Solving: Capable of addressing challenges quickly and effectively, maintaining the quality and integrity of the design process.
Effective Communication: Excellent at communicating design concepts and gathering
feedback from stakeholders and users.
Teedback Trom Stakeholders and users.
Education and contifications: List your advectional hastrare and and any LIV valetad
Education and certifications : List your educational background and any UX-related
courses or certifications.
Bachelor of Business Administration, New York University
• Graduated: May 2014
• Major: Marketing
Relevant Coursework: Consumer Behavior, Project Management, Strategic Communication
······································
UX Design Course: "User Experience: The Beginner's Guide, Interaction Design Foundation" • Completed: May 2023
Covered the foundations of UX design including user research, wireframing, and
prototyping techniques.











LinkedIn Profile Draft

You're expected to have a LinkedIn profile in addition to a resume. Your LinkedIn profile will be very similar to your resume, however, you can choose to expand or summarize certain sections. Just like your resume, ensure it's tailored for UX design jobs..

Headline: Reflect your new career focus in UX design.
UX Designer Former Real Estate Agent with Strong Work Ethic and Client Empathy
Summary: A narrative similar to your professional summary on your resume.
A dedicated UX designer transitioning from a successful career in real estate, where I honed my skills in client empathy, systematic thinking, and high-pressure problem-solving. My experience in analyzing client needs and delivering tailored solutions translates seamlessly into creating intuitive, user-centered designs. I bring a unique perspective to UX design, driven by a passion for understanding users and improving their experiences through thoughtful and effective design solutions.
Experience: Update your job descriptions to highlight transferable skills and relevant projects. Real Estate Agent, UrbanNest Realty, New York, NY (June 2015 – August 2023)
In my role at UrbanNest Realty, I excelled in client empathy, project management, and problem-solving under pressure—skills that directly translate to UX design. I consistently understood client needs, which I now apply to UX by conducting user interviews and crafting personas. My project management experience ensures smooth processes and timely delivery in UX projects, such as leading a website redesign. Additionally, my ability to solve problems quickly was crucial in adapting prototypes based on user feedback, improving overall user experience.
Skills: Add UX-related skills and endorse them through your network.

















Prepare for Interviews

Preparation is key to nailing a job interview. Take note of the points below to ensure you're ready when you get invited to one.

Common questions: Prepare answers for common interview questions about your career
transition and transferable skills.
- Why did you decide to transition to UX design?
 How do your past experiences make you a better UX designer? How did you understand client needs in real estate?
- How did you use data to improve real estate processes?
- Describe a complex real estate problem you solved.
- How would you apply design thinking to the home buying process?
- How do you plan to adapt to a UX design role?
Behavioral Interviews : Practice discussing your past experiences in a way that highlights your relevant skills and how they apply to UX design.
✔ Portfolio Presentation: Develop a presentation of your portfolio, focusing on how your past experience contributes to your UX skills.















Do You Want to Learn More?

Learn how to use this template to its full potential in our online course **Build a Standout UX/UI** Portfolio: Land Your Dream Job. Sign up for it today and learn how to create or improve your UX portfolio if you're not already enrolled.



■□□ Beginner Course

In the world of design, your portfolio is more than just a collection of projects—it's your key to exciting new opportunities. Transform your portfolio in this course led by Morgane Peng, Design Director at Societe Generale CIB. With her expertise as both a design expert and a seasoned hiring manager, she'll show you how to craft a standout portfolio that captures attention and leaves a lasting impression.

Master the art of storytelling through compelling case studies, refine your presentation skills, and crack the code to stand out in a competitive market. Whether you're a new designer, an experienced designer who wants to improve your portfolio or someone who wants to make a career change, this course will equip you with the tools and strategies to build a portfolio that reflects your skills and potential. Gain the confidence and expertise to showcase your work effectively, connect with potential employers, and land your dream design job.

Learn more about this course >





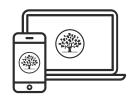








How to Advance Your Career With Our Online Courses



Take Online Courses by Industry Experts

Lessons are self-paced so you'll never be late for class or miss a deadline.



Get a Course Certificate

Your answers are graded by experts, not machines. Get an industry-recognized Course Certificate to prove your skills.



Advance Your Career

Use your new skills in your existing job or to get a new job in UX design. Get help from our community.

See all our courses >

About the Interaction Design Foundation

With over 170,000 alumni, the Interaction Design Foundation is the **biggest design school globally**. Industry leaders such as IBM and Adobe train their teams with our courses, and universities such as MIT and the University of Cambridge include our courses in their curricula. Our online courses are taught by industry experts and cover the entire spectrum of UX design from beginner to advanced. We give you industry-recognized course certificates to advance your career. Since 2002, we've put together the world's biggest and most **authoritative library** of open-source UX Design literature created by such noted authors as Don Norman and Clayton Christensen.













