

Exercise 1.4_Creating a Case Study for Your Portfolio

- 1. Who I am and How I got here**
- 2. Part 1**
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1. Me and How I Got Here

My day job for the last 15 years has been as a video and audio producer, working client side for large corporates and agency side alternating between freelance and permanent contracts. Creating commercial content for large and small productions, either on my own or leading large teams was all I ever wanted to do and I was good at it to! Unfortunately in the summer of 2023, four months after the arrival of my first child, I was sadly made redundant and my entire industry appeared to collapse.

LinkedIn was always my go to when it came time to find new opportunities but the social media site was like a deserted waste land. Rather than a long list of roles, I was presented with posts upon posts from former colleagues looking for work and if a role did become available, the reliable social media site would show that there were usually 400+ applicants.

I didn't know what to do so to keep my brain occupied I decided to enrol in a web development course at the local university. The first few modules around HTML & CSS which are essentially design were great! I felt like I had this in the bag and I was going to enjoy the course but more importantly, find a career that I would be passionate about. Then the JavaScript module hit and I could never keep up. Computer programming was not going to be for me. I muddled through with the help of some wonderful classmates and I was able to act as project manager across the course work modules which was good experience but left me wondering what was I going to do next.

I re-started my job search and after typing "Producer" into LinkedIn, Indeed and Google, I started noticing a new role pop up, one that I had never heard of before, Product Manager. I started clicking on some of the adverts and then searching the role in more general terms through Google searches and thought it sounded like it could be possible to transfer my existing skillset into this newly discovered career. During my research, it seemed that the more traditional route into this new and exiting role was to go through coding route first and then take that experience into Product Management, the only problem with that was I was never going to be able to get a coding job with what I had learned (I took some mock interviews and couldn't even answer the "easy" questions).

I needed to find another route so I started looking at online courses... I researched courses for about 2 months before settling on Career Foundry. It was expensive but they offered the job guarantee, which ultimately swayed me. This course was a dream in comparison to the coding! I was learning a new skill but it all made logical sense based on my previous experience and I felt comfortable in what I was doing, a

feeling I hadn't had in a little over a year. One of the most interesting and challenging achievements was Achievement 3 and more specifically, Task 3.2: Prototyping & Testing. At the very start of the task one of the learning goals outlined was to create our own lo-fi prototype. This sent shivers down my spine as I have never been much of a designer but I read on with trepidation.

My fears were almost immediately alleviated when I got to the section on Types of Prototype. I didn't need to be a competent designer to build something that represented what I was trying to create, in fact, the first example was a drawing of a smartphone with nothing more than squiggles across the screen (see below).



credit: Career Foundry.

I knew that even with my lack of design skills I would be able to create something that resembled a smart phone and a video further down the page delved into more detail on what would be required at this stage of the process.

Before thinking about any of the prototyping though, I needed to think about the users I was going to recruit to test on. This also felt like a daunting task, should I reach out to fellow students of the course or my friends and family... I ultimately decided that the students have enough on their plate, trying to get their own tests done so I decided I would go down the friends and family route.

2. Part 1

Part 1 of the task was to revisit our PRD from earlier in the course and set some goals to measure the success of my prototype. From there I would move on to creating the prototype. I had selected Aperture, the photosharing app.

The directions for this first section were to complete the Problem Statement, Hypothesis & Approach and Product Goals based on a short synopsis of the current state of the Aperture application.

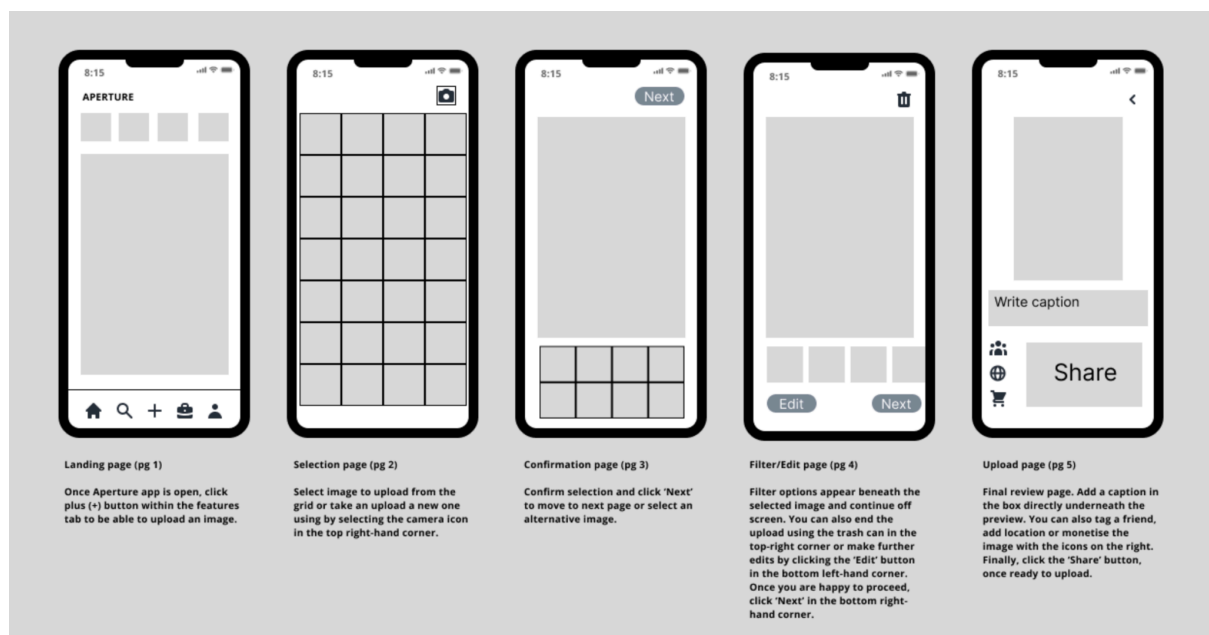
The problem statement was straightforward enough, the app was experiencing a decline in users among the key demographic of 18-24 year olds, with those users unhappy with the app's lack of features. This was pretty much a case of understanding the issue and translating that into language the team would understand.

The Hypothesis & Approach was again translating the current state of the product into a digestible one liner that would be used by the team further down the line. Neither if these were too difficult but a good exercise for what was to come.

Now to the dreaded prototype... Pen & paper was acceptable but using a design tool was preferred and we were given access to Figma as part of the course. I like the idea of using Figma for 2 reasons: firstly, I would learn how to use a tool that is at the fore front of the design world. I first heard about it when it was bought by Adobe but now it was everywhere and was appearing on a lot of job descriptions. I had also heard from people I know that it was user friendly as opposed to some of the other Adobe apps, naming no names.

Secondly, design tools are there to make out lives easier. Rather than drawing 3-5 smartphone outlines, I could create one, copy & paste and iterate further on the copy. I was also able to find editable templates online of a smartphone and icons, so all I needed to do was upload the template into Figma and add my elements on top.

Referencing my own knowledge of photosharing apps including instagram I was able to come up with the following prototype which addressed the issues our users were having.



I tried to keep everything as simple as possible as even in this day and age when apps are ubiquitous, overly complicated design still puts users off.

3. Part 2

The second part of this task was to test my prototype on some users (friends and family), logging their experience and then analysing the data to come up with an action plan of next steps.

First, I had to create a testing plan with specific information about the features I intended to test using a minimum of 3 tasks. I went with 4 as I needed to run the test with 5 users and I didn't want to take up too much of their time but also not get bogged down in too much data. The 4 tasks were as follows:

Tasks	Upload a photo to Aperture	Make edits to photo	Apply a filter	Add photo location
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Next, I had to run the test with my users. I enjoyed this much more than expected and really felt like I was part of an important project. My users were also super engaged with the process, giving up a good proportion of their time and being very supportive with what I was trying to do. The data gathered is highlighted below using green, amber and red to clearly show positive and less positive results:

Tasks	Upload a photo to Aperture	Make edits to photo	Apply a filter	Add photo location
User 1: 34, Female, Copywriter	Found pg 3 confusing but managed to upload	Made edit successfully	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option
User 2: 37, Male, Engineer	Uploaded a photo successfully	Made edit successfully	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option
User 3: 35, Male, Consultant	Uploaded a photo successfully	Found button with help	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option
User 4: Female, 33, Head of product	Found pg 3 confusing but managed to upload	Made edit successfully	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option
User 5: Male, 34, Teacher	Uploaded a photo successfully	Unsure of request but found button with help	Added a filter easily	Added location easily

After completing each round of testing, I added some additional suggestions and once all the testing was complete I was able to add a summary to each task, as the image below indicates:

Tasks	Upload a photo to Aperture	Make edits to photo	Apply a filter	Add photo location	Suggestions
User 1: 34, Female, Copywriter	Found pg 3 confusing but managed to upload	Made edit successfully	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option	Pg 3 maybe unnecessary, change location button image
User 2: 37, Male, Engineer	Uploaded a photo successfully	Made edit successfully	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option	Location button needs a clearer image
User 3: 35, Male, Consultant	Uploaded a photo successfully	Found button with help	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option	Create a new page for photo edits
User 4: Female, 33, Head of product	Found pg 3 confusing but managed to upload	Made edit successfully	Added a filter easily	Couldn't find location button option	Remove pg 3 and change location button image
User 5: Male, 34, Teacher	Uploaded a photo successfully	Unsure of request but found button with help	Added a filter easily	Added location easily	Create a new page for photo edits
Summary	Pg 3 appears unnecessary, remove	Create a separate page for editing	No issues, filter options are simple	Replace the location button with an alternative	

Finally, after analysing the data I was able to easily identify problems with the prototype and create a plan to modify and ultimately find solutions all through the process of creating a prototype and testing it with users and those results are below:

Problem	Solution
Editing page unclear	Create a separate page for editing images
Location button unclear	Replace the location button with a new image

4. Conclusion

In summary, I really enjoyed this entire project. It was the first time I was working with what felt like my own product and it all felt a lot less theoretical. The previous projects in the course felt like I was shadowing someone but now I was the product manager and the feedback and responses from my users was also really positive. For the first time, in a long time, I felt the sense of belonging that I was looking for. I felt confident moving onto the next stage of the achievement and I was looking forward to the possibilities in this next stage of my career development.