UX RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

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I am a **UX Design Researcher and Computer Scientist** specializing in equitable design, fully remote research methods, and building excellent online work experiences for creators.

I was trained in Technology and Social Behavior at **Northwestern University** and have led UX research projects for **Adobe Research**, **Facebook**, the **University of Tokyo** (Japan), and **Piktochart** (Malaysia).

ABOUT ME

MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH

As a mixed-methods researcher, I choose research methods based on research questions, goals, as well as time and budget constraints. Here are some of the methods I've used:

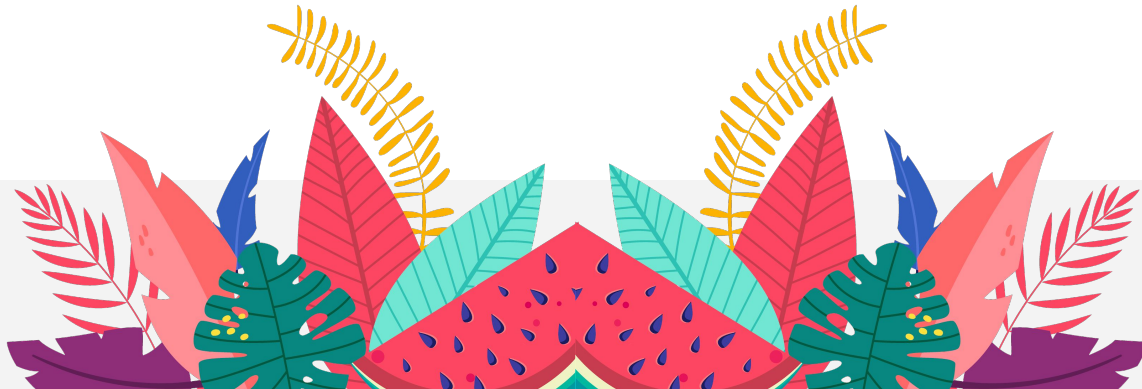| EXPERIMENT DESIGN	PROTOTYPE TESTING	INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS	PARTICIPATORY DESIGN	COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS
BIG DATA ANALYSIS	SURVEYS	CARD-SORTING	DESIGN SPRINTS	USER PERSONAS

CASE STUDY 1

How might we design tools to support <u>gender pay equity</u> in online freelancing marketplaces?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Offline, **women have historically earned less than men** due to childcare responsibilities and needs for flexible work. Flexible online freelancing marketplaces, like Upwork, have the opportunity to change that by letting millions of people find work whenever and wherever they want to.

I conducted **mixed-methods research** to understand:

1) *What is the extent of **gender rate gaps** in the online labor market?*
2) *How might **pricing strategies** account for gender rate gaps online?*
3) *How might we **design tools to support gender equity in pay and negotiation** for the flexible, online freelancing market?*

RESEARCH SETUP

1: BIG DATA ANALYSIS

- Analyzed and cleaned data from **55k Upwork users to understand differences in bill rates**
- Causal inference analysis showed **women ask for $6.28 lower bill rates than men**, controlling for education, job category, and time on platform
- But women worked enough hours to surpass men in revenue, suggesting differences in pricing strategies

2: SURVEYS

- Conducted pilot survey and larger survey with **399 freelancers on Upwork to understand strategies for choosing a bill rate**
- Men and women reported similar concerns with pricing (e.g., platform costs, online work experience), **but factors like more women freelancing part-time could explain gaps**

3: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

- Led 7 researchers to design and run **remote participatory design workshops** with 19 part-time and full-time female freelancers across the globe in less than 10 weeks **to understand challenges with negotiation and rate-setting**
- Analyzed social media posts related to negotiation and conducted a competitive analysis to understand high-level challenges and design empowering workshops (see next page for process)

HOW I RUN EMPOWERING REMOTE DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Introductions and Experience Banking (10 mins)

Learn about background and one pleasant and unpleasant experience to position users as experts

(1)

(2)

Understanding Challenges (5 mins)

Define 1-3 challenges around rate-setting or negotiation for later design activity
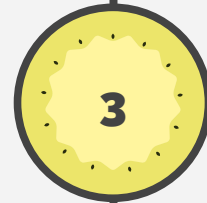
Reflecting on Negotiation Best Practices (20 mins)

Present video clips from a freelancing negotiation expert about negotiation tactics and provide personalized reflection opportunities

(3)

HOW I RUN EMPOWERING REMOTE DESIGN WORKSHOPS

4

"How Might We" Statement (5 mins)

Help the participant choose and re-frame one of their challenges about negotiation as a "How might we..." statement (e.g., "*How might we prevent freelancers from accepting lowball offers from clients?*")

"Crazy 6s" and Tarot Cards of Tech (20 mins)

5

Sketch 6 solution ideas in 4 minutes to answer the "How Might We" statement and use "tarot card" prompts to discuss top ideas

Results

Participants leave feeling gaining something for themselves beyond pay

E.g., "*It was a pleasure being able to participate in the study and it inspired me.*" - Female data collection freelancer in Sri Lanka; current rate $7/hour

KEY INSIGHTS AND DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

Women are ==reluctant to try negotiation strategies because of the competition== they have to build trust with online clients, and risks in sending more job proposals

→ Design Opportunities:
- Avoid telling users to lower their rates
- Come up with alternatives to programs that create risk for applying to new jobs (e.g., Connects on Upwork)
- Remind users they can go outside a client's budget and that they have value regardless of location
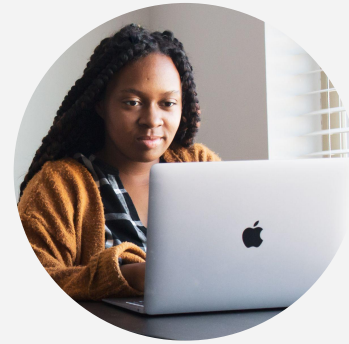
*"The competition on the market intimidates me…**I don't want to sound too pushy and scare clients away.**"*
-Freelance writer on Upwork from South Africa with more than 10 paid jobs

CASE STUDY 2

How might we design tools to support online freelance creators in regularly improving their professional portfolios?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

One of the challenges of working for yourself as a freelancer is getting access to a stable support network for career development, like constantly improving your professional portfolio. Crowdsourcing tools could provide rapid feedback on portfolios, but it is unclear how they could do this for multiple projects.

I conducted **mixed-methods research** to understand: *How might we design crowdsourced feedback tools to provide helpful, rapid feedback on creators online portfolios?*

I focused on **graphic design portfolios** in this study because of their popularity in creative communities and the ease of sharing these portfolios online (e.g., on Behance.com).

RESEARCH SETUP

1: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

- **I developed empathy for users by sitting in and observing three 80-minute engineering portfolio design courses,** conducting interviews with the course instructor and faculty mentor, and reviewing course materials and popular resources on creating graphic design portfolios
- Reflection and holistic feedback on unique skills and aesthetic style are helpful in creating portfolios

2: PROTOTYPING AND THINK-ALOUDS

- I designed low-fi prototypes of portfolio reflection tools on paper and Google Slides and tested them with 8 freelancers (remote and local) **to quickly understand specific needs with reflecting on and creating portfolios**

3: EXPERIMENT

- I conducted an online experiment with 30 visual design freelancers with online portfolios, where freelancers reviewed feedback collected from online crowdworkers who could either view 1) only one project at a time, or 2) all projects at once to **understand the feasibility of different methods for crowdsourcing feedback on portfolios**

LOW-FI PROTOTYPES EMPHASIZED NEED FOR SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Prototype 1. Interactive reflection tool to organize projects for their portfolio based on best practices

Insights. Participants needed a way to understand which projects captured the most attention, beyond their self-reflections.

Prototype 2. Dashboard with crowdsourced feedback on skills, versatility and style, and visual attractiveness of projects in a portfolio.

Insights. Users wanted feedback on the visual attractiveness of different projects, portrayed styles, and perceived target audience of a portfolio (e.g., skills, industry)

KEY INSIGHTS:
CROWDFOLIO FEEDBACK TOOL

Experiment. I manipulated whether the freelancers would get feedback from people who saw 1 project at a time ("decomposed") or all projects at once ("holistic"), as this could affect the backend of the tool

Design Insights. Both holistic and decomposed approaches can be helpful for collecting portfolio feedback, but holistic feedback can help users better find commonalities in project style themes.

CASE STUDY 3

How might we setup a supportive UX research culture at a software company that empowers non-designers?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2014, I joined Piktochart, a global B2C/B2B software company based in Malaysia, as the **first Lead UX Researcher**. I was responsible for cultivating the software company's UX culture to focus on **delightful user experiences for non-designers** creating online infographics.

In less than 10 months, I:
- created a company tradition of weekly "User Update" presentations **to familiarize all teams with core user personas**
- shipped a feature to enable easy creation of data visualizations through a **collaborative, cross-functional design sprint**
- supported the design of 4 crucial features (template selector, color schemes, sharing, paper size) through **creative remote research methods**, like **fully remote** paper prototype testing and card-sorting using Evernote
- implemented a long-term **UX research intern program**

UX CULTURE = CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

I developed Piktochart's first user personas based on more than 20 user interviews and communicated these personas through "User Update" infographics at weekly meetings, which helped unify communication about users across stakeholders

Below: 3 core paying users: Entrepreneurs, educators/program coordinators, and marketing professionals

BUILDING A BRAND
"Attracting attention and empowering others"

Age: 48
Occupation: Founder or co-founder
e.g. Founder of business strategy consultancy, SaaS, health service
Education: MBA
Status: Married with 2 children
Location: Suburbs in the USA

Steven is married and has two daughters. He has over 20 years of experience in business consulting and quit his corporate job to start a new business with his wife, Susan. They have little design experience, but they are willing to take up the challenge because they know it is important to attract new clients and get greater brand awareness. They are looking for a design solution they can easily use to make eye-catching graphics to accompany their content.

Startup

NEEDS TO	Increase brand awareness
SO THAT	Online engagement / Sales and new customers
PROBLEMS	Finding content people will read / Staying on budget / Not professionally trained in design
CREATES	Infographics for website / Website pages / Graphics for social media posts
ASKS	Can we afford this? / Will I be able to pick this up easily? / Will I be able to use a variety of graphics and designs? / Are there graphics for my industry?
USES	For social media - Buffer, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn / For graphics - paint.net, Adobe Fireworks, Adobe Photoshop, Keynote, PowerPoint
READS	Econsultancy, Copyblogger
LOVES	Learning more about how to improve my business / Be outdoors / See my ideas become a reality

TRAINING UNDERSTANDING
"How can we get people to understand a topic better?"

Age: 35
Occupation: Program coordinator
(others: Communication specialist, teacher)

Status: Married
Location: Suburbs in the USA

Ian works in healthcare. He leads a program at work and must be able to train both the public and his own staff on topics related to that program. The topics he covers are complex - does anyone know what concussive 11 is? - and that's part of the challenge. His real goal is to get everyone on the same page, so they can take that knowledge and apply it to their jobs and lives.

Mentor Matt

NEEDS TO	Bring important information to groups of people
SO THAT	Online and in-person engagement / Information creates change in jobs and lives
PROBLEMS	Creating something concise and coherent / Portraying accurate information / Keep people engaged (not bored) / Keeping some projects private
CREATES	Presentations for crowds/classes / Infographics for newsletters / Brochures for workshops / Physical and digital banners to attract people
ASKS	Is this easy and enjoyable to use? / Can I keep people engaged during the presentation? / Can I present information concisely and coherently? / Will this increase understanding?
USES	PowerPoint, Keynote
READS	Industry-specific publications (possibly research articles) / Tech blogs
LOVES	Catching up with the latest news

RECOMMENDING CHANGE
"How do we present a persuasive point of view?"

Age: 42
Occupation: Marketing Manager
e.g. at a multinational company, at a PR agency

Education: B.A. in Communications
Status: Married
Location: Big city in the USA

Marissa has about 15 years of experience in marketing communications and sales. She also has a background in public relations. She heard about us from another team that used Piktochart that achieved greater sales, so she's willing to buy us for her team as well. Marissa won't be using Piktochart, her team will so she needs a tool that her staff can pick up quickly to make "visual-heavy" sales materials.

Marketing Marissa

NEEDS TO	Convince people to adopt a new product/strategy
SO THAT	Increase sales / Help client increase sales
PROBLEMS	Staying on budget / Following company guidelines / Needs the whole team to be able to use it
CREATES	Sales materials / Report templates for clients and stakeholders
ASKS	Is this very expensive? / Have other people found success with it? / Is the site reputable and professional? / Can I use it to make a template I can reuse?
USES	In-house software, like integrated publishing systems and data warehouses
READS	Hubspot; publications about advertising/sales
LOVES	Being with her family / Improving herself, while being able to help others / Connecting others with volunteer opportunities

CASE STUDY 3: UX CULTURE

UX BUY-IN = COLLABORATIVE DESIGN SPRINTS

To develop a new feature around generating easy data visualizations, I engaged developers, designers, marketing specialists, and business analysts in a 5-day design sprint

LEARN

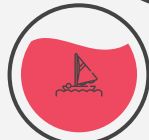Multiple stakeholders shared insights (e.g., survey about how users visualize survey data

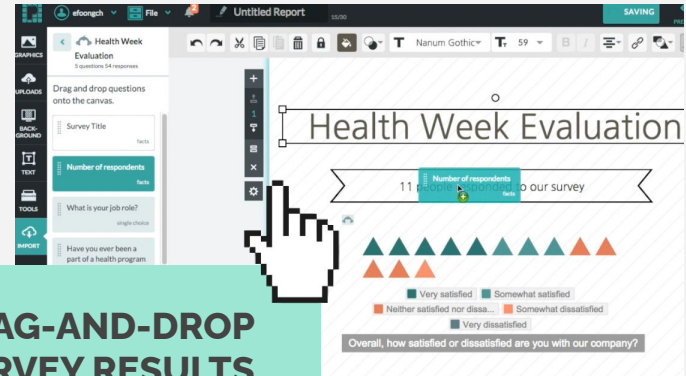## IDEATE

Generate sketches based on insights

DECIDE

Vote on top design concepts

PROTOTYPE AND TEST

Create rapid paper prototypes and test them with users at the end of the week

DRAG-AND-DROP SURVEY RESULTS

Based on this process and usability tests, we developed an easy "drag-and-drop" feature to instantly generate new data visualizations from survey questions

THANK YOU!

Do you have any questions?
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