

# What Should a UX Case Study Look Like?

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(90%)



Hiring managers know that better UX design means **better business**. And as a UX designer, that makes you a potentially valuable asset. The trick is showing your value. 😎

Enter the UX case study, one of the best ways to show recruiters your thinking and your professional process in one fell swoop.

But a lackluster case study is worse than none at all. If you use a UX case study to tell your story, your portfolio can catch a recruiter's attention before they know your name. Here's how to write a great one.



## Structure

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The best place to start is the structure of the case study. It seems pretty basic, but it's actually instrumental to your success.

After all, every story has a structure: a beginning, middle, and end. And your goal with your case study is to tell a story that captivates your recruiter.

## Beginning

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The UX case study follows one of the most well-known story structures in literature: a story that unfolds based on an idea. Basically, the story begins with a question, a what if? What if wizards were real and lived in a secret society in London? What if an alien civilization made contact with us?

Wizards and aliens aside, UX case studies work the same way. You're posing a question, a situation that challenged you to flex your skills and the process behind the discoveries and decisions you made to rise to the challenge.

As such, the beginning section of your case study should be an overview of the project's scope. It helps to split this section into three distinct parts:

1. The problem statement
2. An outline of your approach to the problem at hand

### 3. The role you played in the project or challenge

However, you shouldn't write a novel of a first section. In fact, the beginning should be rather short—no more than a paragraph. Remember, you're laying the groundwork for the recruiter before you dive into the details.

## Middle

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Diving into the nitty-gritty details comes in the middle or “process” section of the case study.

Much like most pieces of literature, a case study unfolds in a linear progression through time, a series of events and tasks that led you to the completion of the project. The difference between your case study and a piece of literature is that you're going to want an equal balance of text and visuals.

Essentially, the process section is the recruiter's roadmap to the process you took to resolve the question posed in the beginning section.

A good place to start is research that frames the problem you faced. From there, take the recruiter through your ideation process and how you dealt with challenges and choices that arose as you progressed through the project. Showing them how you work in teams and how you resolve conflict is essential.

## End

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You've walked the recruiter through the whole process. What comes next?

Well, it's a story. Obviously, it has to have an ending.

Remember, the ending is just as important as the beginning. After all, last impressions are just as important as first impressions. This is because of the serial position effect, a psychological phenomenon that leads us to remember the first and last elements of something and forget the middle.

### **Recommended read:**

So, what goes into your conclusion?

If the beginning poses a question and the middle presents a narrative, then the ending is the moral, so to speak. It's your chance to show your recruiter what you've learned, that you improved as a designer and employee by working your way through this project.

It's also a good idea to show the recruiter the impact your project had. Use analytics to show the results or testimonials from customers or team members to show that your work brought about some positive change when it was finished.

## Creating a Stronger UX Case Study

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Now you know the structure. Let's make it even better. Keep these tips in mind to add meat to the bones of your UX case study.

## Consider Your Goals and Audience

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Stories are what make us human. But some people relate to some stories more than others.

Because of this, it's important to structure your case study storytelling based on who will read it. Are you trying to get hired for a temporary contract or a permanent position? Are you writing for a hiring manager, a UX professional, or an executive?

Managers and executives love metrics to measure success, while hiring managers for temp or contract positions are more interested in seeing your skills at work.

### **Recommended read: [SEO Trends: 5 Important SEO Metrics For 2019](#)**

This will help you orient your case study toward the audience and set you up for success down the line. If you need to, write two copies of a case study—one for management or permanent positions and one for contract work.

## Use Design Thinking

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Another approach to use throughout your case study is design thinking, which is a human-oriented design methodology to solve problems. It has three pillar concerns:

1. Empathy (knowing the needs of your customer)
2. Ideation (designing ideas for that customer)
3. Experimentation (testing those ideas)

It's also a great way to structure your process section, as design thinking can be broken into a process with five parts:

1. Empathize
2. Define
3. Ideate
4. Prototype
5. Test

This gives you a framework, but you can loop to various steps in the process as needed to reflect how the project progressed.

It also allows you to show how you orient your design and problem-solving towards the customer you serve—always a bonus in the eyes of your potential future boss.

## Look for I and We—and Give Credit Where It's Due

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Despite the fact that you're applying as an individual, much of UX design happens in teams. Managers know this.

So, make sure that your UX case study shows how you work in teams, how you strike a

balance of “I” vs. “we”. If it’s all about you, your recruiter will think you don’t work well with others, but if it’s too focused on the group, the recruiter might think you’re along for the ride.

The trick here is to give credit where credit is due. If you had a great idea, talk about it, but don’t be afraid to talk about how well other people did or the work they contributed to the process. It’s a stamp of good character that recruiters will remember.

## Conquering Your UX Case Study

Your UX case study is a way to show a recruiter who you are as a designer. Tell a great story and you’ll show a recruiter a designer that they want to hire.

Remember, above all, that your case study isn’t some dry book report from your school days. It’s a demonstration of your design skills, your character, your thought processes, and what you can contribute to a project. It’s a story about you—make sure it’s one worth repeating.

