The UX Careers Handbook

Cory Lebson

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The UX Careers Handbook offers an insider's look at how to be a successful User Experience (UX) professional from comprehensive career pathways to learning, personal branding, networking skills, building of resumes and portfolios, and actually landing a UX job.

This book goes in-depth to explain what it takes to get into and succeed in a UX career, be it as a designer, information architect, strategist, user researcher, or in a variety of other UX career specialities. It presents a wealth of resources designed to help you develop and take control of your UX career success including perspectives and advice from experts in the field.

- **Features insights and personal stories** from a range of industry-leading UX professionals to show you how they broke into the industry, and evolved their own careers over time.
- **Accompanied by a companion website** that provides you with featured resources to provide new and updated information that will help you stay on top of this fast-paced industry.
- **Provides activities** to help you make decisions and build your own career.

Not only for job seekers! *The UX Careers Handbook* is also a must-have resource for:

- **Employers and recruiters** who want to better understand how to hire and retain UX staff.
- **Undergraduate and graduate students** who are thinking about their future careers.
- **Those in other related (or even unrelated) professions** who are thinking of starting to do UX work.

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About the Author

Cory Lebson has been a user experience (UX) consultant for nearly 20 years. He is the principal and owner of Lebsontech LLC (www.lebsontech.com), a successful small UX consulting firm he established in 1997. Through Lebsontech, Cory focuses on user research and evaluation, UX strategy, UX training, and mentoring. He also helps companies better understand the nuances of hiring UX professionals and building effective UX teams.

Cory enjoys teaching, and he regularly gives talks and workshops on a variety of topics related to UX practice, as well as UX careers. He has been featured on the radio and has published a number of articles in a variety of professional publications.

Cory has an MBA in marketing and technology management, as well as an MA in sociology and a BS in psychology. Cory is a past president of the User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA) International and is also a past president of the UXPA DC Chapter. He lives just outside of Washington DC, in Silver Spring Maryland, with his wife, Aviva and three daughters, Eliana, Talya, and Nava.

Connect with Cory on LinkedIn: Cory accepts LinkedIn invitations from all UX professionals and aspiring UX professionals. Connect at linkedin.com/lebson.

Follow Cory on Twitter @corylebson.

How to Use this Book

Welcome to your user experience (UX) career journey. You may be just embarking on it, or you may already be deep in the middle of it. Regardless, thank you for letting me be part of it. My hope is to guide you along your path to career success in the UX world.

This book is easy to read from cover to cover; and if you have the time, I highly recommend doing so. However, it's also a handbook. You may want to thumb through to chapters that are most applicable to you now, and then look at other chapters later as your career progresses and they become more relevant. Reading this book non-linearly is certainly fine, and wherever possible, I cross-reference associated information between chapters.

Beyond the Book

The book will periodically refer to a companion website, **UXCareersHandbook.com**, for additional helpful materials and resources. Come back to the site often. I plan to continue to collect resources that tie into the topics of the book and post them to the website.

Book Structure

You'll notice that the title is not about a *career*, but rather *careers.* UX is not a single pathway, but rather an umbrella that encompasses a variety of overlapping careers. Chapter 11 breaks out a number of these career pathways, describing each in detail. If you are specifically interested in investigating individual UX career pathways, by all means, jump right to Chapter 11.

The rest of the book contains a ton of advice, techniques, worksheets, and tips for success across all careers under the umbrella that we call UX. You really have much more control over your own career success in UX than you may realize, and whether you're reading this electronically or in print, prepare to

dive into worksheets (or print them from the companion website) or jot down some notes on the many career tips you'll find within the chapters of this book.

While much of the advice in this book could certainly apply to career fields beyond UX, the information and guidance it contains is tailored to tackle the unique challenges of the hot, exciting, and dynamic field of user experience.

Establishing your Foundation (Part 1)

The first four chapters are focused on making sure that you have yourself together before you start looking for a job, whether you are looking for a job right now or want to set yourself up so that it's easy to do so months or years down the road. Do you have the formal educational foundation necessary? Are you continuing to learn informally? If someone looks you up online, will they see a person who is clearly branded as a UX professional? Are you well connected with other UX professionals? **Even if you are mid-way through your UX career, review these foundations, and identify gaps to solidify your career potential.**

Getting a Job (Part 2)

Once your foundations are in place, Part 2 focuses on getting a job—whether a first job or a new job. We'll talk about how to sharpen your resume and work samples and make sure that you can tell your story well. Regardless of where you are now, you'll need to decide whether you want to work as an in-house UX professional, work as a UX consultant with an agency, or perhaps even go independent or start a small UX business. You'll then need to conduct a job search or seek out new contract work, and then you'll need to interview and negotiate. Part 2 guides you through all these steps to getting a job in UX, from start to finish.

Recruiters & Employers (Part 3)

Part 3 focuses on considerations around recruiters and employers.

If you are a job seeker, learn what to consider when working with recruiters (whether in recruiting agencies or company human resources departments), how recruiters can be most helpful to you, and what makes an optimal UX environment with a new employer.

If you are a recruiter or employer, learn what to be aware of as you search for new UX talent and create a work environment that is optimal for UX

professionals. *Note that while this part of the book is specifically targeted at your intersection with UX professionals, expect to find valuable insights about UX professionals throughout the book that will aid you in your efforts to best understand and employ them.*

Career Glimpses: What, Specifically, Can You Do? (Part 4)

Part 4 is where we break out the UX umbrella into each of its representative components. You will find yourself described somewhere in here—your particular area(s) of interest and/or your current UX career pathway(s). Learn about these different pathways to understand your options and specifically where you can head within the UX umbrella. You may focus on one of these career pathways, or multiple ones. You can also use this section to get an idea of what your colleagues in other areas of UX do and how they integrate with what you do.

Feedback is encouraged

I've always made sure that anyone who wants to can contact me directly without having to look too hard or use convoluted methods. As such, I continue to be reachable at my one main email address, cory@lebsontech.com. Please feel free to reach out to me:

Have something for the companion website? Please let me know if you are aware of good resources I should add to the website.

Want more content? As you read this book, if you can't find some information that you were hoping to see, let me know. I'll try to blog about it, perhaps find a guest blogger who can address this topic, or remark on it on the companion website.

Bring topics to life! Are you excited about the UX career topics in this book and want me to speak about some of them to a group or at an event? Let me know! I love to speak about UX career topics, help to pull together UX career-oriented events, and get involved in networking opportunities for UX professionals.

We've covered the ins and outs of how to use this book, and you know how to get in touch with me, so now **it's time to dig in!**