QUESTIONS FOR APPLICANTS FOR A POSITION AS USER EXPERIENCE PROFESSIONAL

Inspirational guide with questions that can be asked by recruiters in a job interview to assess the applicant's professional UX maturity

Introduction

This guide is intended as an inspirational aid for job interviews for UX professionals. The term "User experience professional" ("UX professional") represents a multitude of different job titles, for example, UX researcher, UX designer, UX manager, usability engineer. The focus in the guide is on the technical questions of a job interview to assess the UX maturity of the applicant. By this we mean the awareness and capability of a company in the operational implementation of a systematic process of human-centered design of interactive systems[1]. Questions about the applicant's personality or potential are not addressed and are, of course, the responsibility of the recruiter.

The guide is also helpful for applicants who want to prepare themselves for a UX job interview.

The guide contains four sections:

> The document was prepared by the German UPA e.V. Working Group for Quality Standards with the participation of the Young Professionals Working Group and numerous volunteer UX professionals, who provided valuable comments and suggestions during workshops and by email.

> Note: In addition to this document with "Questions for Applicants for a Position as User Experience Professional", another document is available for applicants with "Questions to the company offering a UX position". This helps to assess the maturity and attitude of the company with regard to human-centered design and user experience.

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[1] Based on ISO 9241-220:2020 on Human-Centered Design process capability and ISO 33020:2019 on general process assessment. Technically correct in terms of process and awareness, it is therefore theoretically called HCD maturity or HCD process capability. However, we use the term UX maturity used in the market. Cf. with the definition in the CPUX-F Curriculum of UXQB e.V. (https://uxqb.org/en/documents/).

Section 1

Procedure for a Job Interview

A job interview can be conducted in many ways. This guide assumes the following approach:

1. The participants of the job interview introduce themselves.

2. The recruiter introduces the company, the work situation and the position to be filled.

    The applicant asks questions about the position to be filled. Topics may include: team size, hierarchy, colleagues, managers, challenges.

3. The recruiter asks the applicant general questions.

    The purpose of these questions is to get an idea of the applicant's personality and potential.

4. **The recruiter uses the UX related questions on the following pages to get an idea of the UX knowledge and maturity of the applicant.**

5. The participants agree on how to proceed.

The recruiters should familiarize themselves with the questions in advance and determine the questions that are relevant for the position. They should also consider personalizing the questions according to the desired conversational tone if required.

Some of the questions may sound like exam questions, for example R3, R13, and R16. Exam-like questions that the applicant cannot evade are useful for checking competencies and attitudes thoroughly before hiring. Depending on the company culture, the recruiter may decide to omit these questions or replace them with alternative questions.

The structure of the questions

- **Target group** – The target group for the question, for example all, research, design

- **Purpose** – The purpose of the question

- **Supplementary questions** – Questions that can be used to expand on the original question, or alternative phrasings of the original question.

- **Indicators of high maturity** – Provides hints for possible elements of a good answer

- **Comments** – Additional information about the question, where applicable

Questions are numbered consecutively, R1, R2, ... R stands for Recruiter.

Section 2

Questions for Applicants

2.1 For All Applicants

R1. Why are you applying for this position?

Purpose:

- Interest in the company; self-assessment of own abilities to live up to the job description.

Supplementary questions:

- What particularly interests you about our company?
- What about our job advertisement particularly appealed to you?
- What would you particularly enjoy doing?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- The applicant has read up on the company ahead of the job interview, spent time exploring the company's products, browsed their website, and used their app if they have one.
- After the job interview, the applicant sends the recruiter a "thank you"-email, stating their continued or even increased interest in the position

R2. Why did you become a UX Professional or a UX Researcher?

Purpose:

- Passion for UX; motivation

Supplementary questions:

- Why are you looking for a career change as a UX professional?
- Why did you specialize in human-centered design during your studies?

- What motivated you to become a UX professional?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Signs of passion and enthusiasm for UX during the job interview
- Voluntary UX activities, for example, participating as a volunteer at one or more UX-related conferences
- Goals for where the applicant wants to be in two or three years with respect to UX

R3. What do you understand by user experience and human-centered design?

Purpose:

- Basic knowledge of UX terms

Supplementary questions:

- What are the main differences and similarities between usability and user experience?
- How do you explain the terms "usability" and "user experience" to someone who is unfamiliar with them?
- What are the main activities in the human-centered design process?
- What criteria do you use to evaluate people's experience before, during, and after using products or services?
- In your opinion, what is a good user experience?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Is obviously familiar with the terms and can illustrate the explanations with well-chosen examples from personal experience.

R4. How do you analyze users' needs and expectations?

Purpose:

- Basic understanding, methodological competence

Supplementary questions:

- How do you analyze users' needs and expectations *for interactive systems*?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Is obviously familiar with terms such as interview, requirement and user requirement and can illustrate the explanations with well-chosen examples from own experience.

R5. What have you learned recently from working on a project?

Target group:

- Everyone, because even beginners have hopefully worked on a project, for example in their studies.

Purpose:

- Attitude towards errors and learning

Supplementary questions:

- What have been your biggest challenges in the projects you have done recently?
- How did you overcome the challenges?
- What would you have liked to have done differently?
- Tell us about a project where you learned something and what it was.
- Tell us about a project where something went wrong. How did you handle it?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Talks openly about their own mistakes and what they learned from them.
- Explicitly acknowledges colleagues who have contributed to successes.
- Makes a point of recognizing misunderstandings and mistakes early on.

R6. How do you change the attitude of stakeholders who are critical of the benefits of UX?

Purpose:

- Communication skills; assertiveness; problem-solving skills.

Supplementary questions:

- How do you convince others of UX who are rather critical of the topic? Have you ever had to convince others and how did you deal with it?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Listens carefully to criticism.
- Learns the language of stakeholders and asks what is important to them.
- Demonstrates success, for example, through measurement.
- Knows how to communicate results effectively internally.
- Invites stakeholders to observe usability tests, for example, when testing a company product and a competitor's product.
- Establishes, measures, and tracks KPIs in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Actively supports management in making UX successful.

R7. How do you keep up to date on the topic of UX?

Purpose:

- Ability to learn; passion for UX

Supplementary questions:

- From your perspective, what are the biggest changes in the UX area right now?
- What are your three favorite UX-related books/blogs/podcasts/streams?
- For a book mentioned, ask: What was the topic? How would you rate the content? What did you find particularly good?
- In which UX-area would you like to develop further?
- How much time do you spend per month maintaining your UX-knowledge?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Reads articles, blogs, etc., and discusses them with others.
- Is willing to spend a reasonable amount of free time maintaining their knowledge.
- Knows that continuing education happens not only through project participation.

R8. How do you approach a project to ensure a good UX?

Target group:

- Everyone, as students have done projects as part of their studies – if not, the recruiter needs to find out why.

Purpose:

- Determine if the applicant is familiar with the core concepts of human-centered design: users, evaluation, and iteration.

Supplementary questions:

- Specifically, how do you involve users during analysis and design?
- How did you go about ensuring a good UX in your most recent project?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Fluently talks about user involvement; contextual interviews; evaluation; iteration, according to the HCD model of ISO 9241-210 or similar.

R9. How do you prioritize when you have more project requests than you can handle?

Purpose:

- Prioritization

Supplementary questions:

- If you have two project requests, how do you choose which project to work on? (Alternative wording)

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Prioritize the project in which you can do the best.
- Instead of saying "no," ask management to prioritize UX activities based on what is best for the business.
- Optimize your time by delegating work to product teams, for example, scenarios, personas, user requirements, prototypes, usability test scripts, etc. Offer guidance by reviewing their work products.

- Prioritize product teams where experience shows that your advice will have the greatest impact, for example, in terms of product quality and process productivity. Assign a lower priority to product teams that mainly ask you for help to check a box on a checklist.
- Prioritize product team requests according to the importance of the business goal they are pursuing.
- Hire a consultant to help you.

R10. Imagine you can give a talk at a UX Meetup. What topic would you choose?

Target group:

- Everyone. The question is also suitable for newcomers, who could for example present their final project.

Purpose:

- Areas of expertise; passion for UX

Supplementary question:

- Why did you choose this particular topic?
- Have you given presentations in the past? Tell me about the topic.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- The applicant has previous public speaking experience
- The applicant is actively engaged in the community to advance UX topics.

R11. How do you find out how users perceive a UX that you created?

Purpose:

- This specific question allows the recruiter to determine if users are only mentioned because it sounds good, or if applicants actually know how to specifically engage users.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Knows evaluation methods, in particular early usability testing of low-fidelity prototypes.
- DOES NOT talk about "gut feeling" and years of experience.
- Presents drafts to users for commenting after solving relevant tasks.

R12. How do you familiarize yourself with a new topic area?

Purpose:

- Ability to learn

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Interviews multiple users and managers on-site in the context of use. If the company has multiple offices, conduct interviews in multiple offices.
- Finds one or more experienced partners interested in UX who are willing to answer questions and provide training in the future.
- Works as a user for 2-8 weeks to learn about the context of use in general. Example: A UX professional in a hypermarket works as a sales associate in three different markets for two weeks each.

2.2 For UX-Professionals with a Focus on Research and Testing

R13. Describe your knowledge of the following methods:
- Quantitative methods;
- Automated or data-driven research methods;
- Analysis of user needs;
- Statistical methods;
- Methods for effective implementation of insights in teams and organizations

Purpose:

- Methodological competence

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Knows the difference between quantitative and qualitative data.

R14. The UX of one of your company's products has been scathingly criticized in an influential newspaper. The product team responsible feels the criticism is grossly unfair. The management has asked for your view on the criticism. How do you go about it?

Purpose:

- Problem solving skills; stakeholder management; ability to increase team design skills.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Starts by confirming or refuting the criticism. The following steps presume that the criticism is confirmed.
- Ensures the product team understands the criticism.
- Tries to get the product team on board by conducting a usability test with focus on the criticized parts pf the product. The product team should be invited to participate in the usability test planning (usability test tasks, target group, recruitment

questionnaire), to observe the usability test, and to participate in determining the test results, for example by using the KJ method.

- DOES NOT present their own opinion and announce it as the truth.
- DOES NOT conduct a usability inspection and announce the result as the truth.

R15. How do you ensure that the results from a usability test are effectively implemented or used?

Purpose:

- Communication skills; effectiveness; ability to increase team design skills.

Supplementary question:

- How do you ensure that insights from UX measurements are effectively implemented or used?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Places greater emphasis on good communication than on reports.
- Discusses findings with stakeholders.
- Involves stakeholders in determining outcomes, for example by using the KJ method (Affinity Diagramming).
- DOES NOT rely solely on a usability test report.
- Favors discussion rather than one-way communication.

2.3 For UX-Professionals with a Focus on Design and User Interface

R16. Describe your knowledge of the following methods and terms, using examples from your professional experience:
- Design process;
- Involving users during design;
- Design quality;
- Design critique;
- Design system;
- Design sprint

Purpose:

- Methodological competence

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Is obviously familiar with the terms, can differentiate between them and illustrate them with well-chosen examples from their own experience.

R17. Share a great professional success regarding UX and what was successful about it and why

Purpose:

- Determine what the applicant means by success.

Supplementary questions:

- What are the characteristics of this success?
- If the success has nothing to do with UX, ask applicants to tell about their greatest UX success.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Considers the big picture rather than the small stuff.

R18. How do you make sure your creative designs are implemented by the development team?

Purpose:

- Working methods; communication skills

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Ability to increase design skills of teams.

R19. In your opinion, what is the ideal process for the design of products and services? What methods do you use to achieve this?

Purpose:

- Methodological competence; expectations

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Structured approach to design using recognized methods instead of subjective decisions

R20. How do you make sure you find the best design solution to a problem in the design process?

Purpose:

- Methodological competence; design critique; design competence.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Describes an iterative approach, problem analysis and research as important elements
- Involves users early and frequently in the process

R21. What connection do you see between brand and UX design?

Purpose:

- Understands the interplay between design and business; design competence.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Can adequately explain the importance of a brand
- Highlights the impact of a positive UX on the perception of a brand

R22. What role do style guides play in your work?

Purpose:

- To determine if applicants are willing to exercise the necessary discipline to respect the agreed upon style guide. Determine if applicants understand what a "style guide" is.
- Determine if applicants are willing to exercise the necessary discipline to use the agreed upon design patterns.

Supplementary questions:

- What role do design patterns and design systems play in your work?
- Please give me an example of a design pattern.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Explains that they find style guides valuable and therefore will naturally respect the agreed upon style guide.
- Knows that it must be possible to get questions about the style guide answered in a timely manner.
- Knows that there must be a provision for how the style guide can be changed.
- Recognizes that style guides DO NOT limit their creative freedom and that impressive new concepts can emerge even if style guides are followed.

R23. What heuristics and interaction principles guide your work?

Purpose:

- Check that applicants know and understand these two important terms.

Supplementary question:

- Please name a specific heuristic and a specific interaction principle.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Knows recognized heuristics and interaction principles, such as Jakob Nielsen's heuristics and ISO 9241-110's interaction principles.
- DOES NOT talk about "gut feeling" and "years of experience".
- DOES NOT confuse heuristics and interaction principles with design rules.

2.4 For UX-Professionals with Several Years of Professional Experience

R24. Describe your knowledge of the following areas:
- Increasing UX maturity;
- Business management;
- Dealing with corporate policy;
- UX Strategy.
This is particularly important for a management position

Purpose:

- Using specific questions, test applicants' concrete knowledge of and experience with advanced UX topics.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Has a good understanding of the terms.
- Has concrete experience with these topics and shows the experience through concrete examples.
- Can distinguish between product maturity and process maturity.

R25. What questions would you ask to assess our company's UX maturity?

Purpose:

- Knowledge of maturity models; organizational development.

Supplementary questions:

- In your view, what aspects demonstrate a company's ability to successfully design user experiences and learn from interactions with people?
- (For a consultancy) What questions would you ask to reasonably assess the UX maturity of a new customer?

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Knows UX maturity models and how to apply them.

- A sign of a high UX maturity is that teams are able to bring a product to market that significantly improves the lives of users without involving the UX team.

R26. What would you do strategically to increase an organization's ability to successfully design experiences and learn from interactions with people?

Purpose:

- UX strategy; organizational development.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Says that the answer depends on the company's current UX maturity.
- Gets to know the company, management, and employees through interviews.
- Conducts usability tests to demonstrate that there are usability problems even in the company's own products.
- Translates usability problems into business values.
- Communicates usability successes repeatedly, consistently, and in clear language using understandable and relevant examples.

R27. At past employers, what contributions have you made to advancing the UX maturity of the company or your department?

Purpose:

- Passion; leadership

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Demonstrates leadership by engaging in evangelization and continuing education.
- Takes initiatives.
- Presents UX test results in an engaging and compelling manner.
- Makes UX development transparent.
- Hosts barcamp.

R28. Tell me about a situation where a stakeholder disagreed with your approach. How did you resolve the issue?

Purpose:

- Problem solving skills; communication skills; assertiveness.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Seeks to understand what the disagreement is about.
- Suggests compromises that are acceptable from a UX perspective.
- Conducts usability testing to objectively determine if the stakeholder or UX professional is right.

R29. A developer shows you a finished system. It does not match the design. How do you handle this situation?

Purpose:

- Problem solving skills; communication skills; assertiveness; personal commitment.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Repeatedly expresses high concern about the deviation. Emphasizes that UX research needs to be repeated as a result of the deviation.
- Tries to understand the cause of the deviation and document it with the developer. Suggests compromises that are acceptable from a UX perspective.
- Conducts usability testing to objectively determine if the finished system meets user requirements.
- In the future, insists on regular discussions with developers so that deviations can be identified early.

R30. You will be the first UX professional in our company. Up to now, we have occasionally used a UX service provider to develop design concepts and carry out usability tests. We now want to pursue UX systematically in our company. What steps would you take in the next two, three or six months?

Target group:

- UX professionals with some experience, who will be the first UX professional in the company.

Purpose:

- Knowledge of maturity models; organizational development.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Interviews stakeholders to understand the culture of the company.
- Conducts usability testing to demonstrate that the organization has UX issues that impact competitiveness, and that it is possible to systematically address these issues.
- Communicates the results of usability testing and other UX activities repeatedly, consistently, and in clear language with salient examples.

R31. How have you promoted or evangelized UX in the companies you have worked for so far?

Purpose:

- Communication skills; personal engagement

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Communicates salient results of usability testing and other UX activities repeatedly, consistently, and in clear language with salient examples, for example, in the company newsletter or at staff meetings.
- Visits development teams, presents UX accomplishments to developers, and discusses the accomplishments with them afterwards.

R32. Tell me about your experiences in the agile environment, for example, pros and cons of agile approaches to designing successful user experiences.

Purpose:

- Ability to increase design skills of teams, development process.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Describes appropriate and realistic experiences.

Section 3

Assignments

The solution of specific assignments is useful to assess the applicant. For example, talking about an interview and mastering the theory of interviews is very different from conducting an interview.

The proposed assignments require some preparation on the part of the applicants. Any concrete assignment should be provided to the applicants in advance so that they can, for example, write usability test tasks, write an interview guide, or similar.

A1. Please conduct a short interview with me as an interview participant. Afterwards, summarize the most important results.

Target group:

- UX researchers

Purpose:

- To determine whether the applicant masters interviews in practice and not only knows about interviews in theory. This is important because interviews and usability tests are the most important activities of a UX researcher.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Shows appropriate curiosity; asks questions if something is unclear.
- Asks open and neutral questions.
- Respects the master-apprentice model.
- Does not talk too much.
- Uses an interview guide.

Comment: *The interview should last no more than 15 minutes. Applicants should have the opportunity to prepare for the interview. The topic of the interview will be made known to the applicants in advance and must be relevant to the company.*

A2. Please conduct a short usability test with a representative of the company present as the test person. Summarize the most important results afterwards.

Target group:

- UX researchers

Purpose:

- To determine whether the applicant masters usability testing in practice and not only knows about usability testing in theory. This is important because interviews and usability tests are the most important activities of a UX researcher.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Writes appropriate usability test tasks.
- Shows appropriate curiosity; asks questions if something is unclear.
- Avoids leading questions
- Avoids explaining the test object if asked by the test participant.
- Asks questions if something is unclear, but does not talk too much.
- Reports what they observed in the test rather than their opinions or comments.

Comment: *The usability test should take no more than 15 minutes. Applicants should have the opportunity to prepare for the usability test. The test object as well as the purpose of the usability test will be made known to the applicants in advance and must be relevant to the company.*

A3. Please create a prototype based on given research results, and explain your decisions.

Target group:

- UX designers

Purpose:

- To determine whether the candidate can create a reasonable prototype based on given research results, and not only knows about prototyping in theory. This is important because prototyping is an essential activity in UX design.

Indicators of a high applicant maturity:

- Decisions are explained well by the applicant based on research results.
- Decisions are explained based on, among other things, gestalt laws, heuristics, and interaction principles.

Comment: *Applicants receive relevant research results so that they have a good basis for the development of a prototype. In addition, the level of the prototype – paper vs. software, or low- vs. high-fidelity – should be defined so that the applicants have the chance to address the desired level.*

Section 4

Overview of the Questions

R1. Why are you applying for this position?

R2. Why did you become a UX Professional or a UX Researcher?

R3. What do you understand by user experience and human-centered design?

R4. How do you analyze users' needs and expectations?

R5. What have you learned recently from working on a project?

R6. How do you change the attitude of stakeholders who are critical of the benefits of UX?

R7. How do you keep up to date on the topic of UX?

R8. How do you approach a project to ensure a good UX?

R9. How do you prioritize when you have more project requests than you can handle?

R10. Imagine you can give a talk at a UX Meetup. What topic would you choose?

R11. How do you find out how users perceive a UX that you created?

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R14. The UX of one of your company's products has been scathingly criticized in an influential newspaper. The product team responsible feels the criticism is grossly unfair. The management has asked for your view on the criticism. How do you go about it?

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Imprint

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