The ABC of an efficient Service Design portfolio

Based on FB Ompeluseuran palvelumuotoilijat group's portfolio guide.

How this guide got started

FB Ompeluseuran palvelumuotoilijat portfolio evening 24th November 2021. The virtual event was held on Teams and Miro. **This guide is based on the talks and workshops from that evening.**

Participants and mentors

- 50 participants, half of whom were looking for their first designer job.

- 6 mentors from different design agencies or functions: Solita, Vincit, Gofore, Futurice, Tietoevry and SOK.

- Qaswua design & development presented their survey results on what recruiters want to see in a service design portfolio. Link to Finnish presentation here.

- 7 organizers and facilitators from FB OS palvelumuotoilijat network. Get to know us on the last slide!

- Help from the group administrators

Good luck with your portfolio!

What do you want?

Service Design

"Service design is all about making services usable, easy and desirable" (UK Design council, 2010).
"Service Design aims to ensure service interfaces are useful, usable and desirable from the client's point of view and effective, efficient and distinctive from the suppliers point of view"(Birgit Mager, 2009).

Service Design is a broad concept and roles differ. What role would you want to have within service design? Where could you most use your strengths and expertise?

Consultant

Consultants help clients develop their business and typically can work from the customers offices at least part time. Find out what consultancies are in the business that interest you the most.

Read consultancy career sites like:
https://futurice.com/careers
www.solita.fi/avoimet-tyopaikat/

In-house service designer

In-house service designer is an internal expert working in a variety of internal development projects.

Read:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284030949_In-House_Service_Design_Roles_-_A_First_Look

UX Designer

The purpose of UX (user experience) design is to create meaningful experiences for users. There are different roles, such as UX Designer or UX Researcher.

Read
https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ux-career-advice/?lm=ux-career-advice-original&pt=article

Business Designer

Business Design is largely the same thing as Service Design. The difference is that you work at a more strategic level and need to understand key figures of the business.

Read:
https://medium.com/spotless-says/what-is-business-design-58d849eaefef

Roles and portfolios should be linked – what is important in what role?

Consultant	In-house	Business Designer	UX Designer
The job • A consultant is recruited for each client project and the client selects experts based on their portfolios. As a person, are you ready to continuously sell yourself and be recruited? • It is important to adopt things quickly and bring this across already in the application stage. Consultants work on an hourly basis and therefore the results need to come quickly.	**The job:** • Depend very much on the company. For one it can be new e-com platform and for another customer journeys in health care. • On the other hand projects may be similar when done for one industry.	**The job:** • Master strategic thinking and understand business basics and numbers.	**The job:** • Competence can be visual, interaction or research-focused. • User orientation is key. Design that matches the real needs and challenges of the users, (using prototypes and wires) and secures the user experience after testing and iteration. • Different roles: like UX Designer or UX Researcher.
Portfolio: • As a consultant, the emphasis is on the final outputs. Show clearly which change you made happen/ impact visually or numerically in your portfolio.	**Portfolio:** • Impossible to anonymize the company in the case of a current or previous employer because they appear on the CV. That is, it can be challenging to tell about projects. • Showcase your skills on a general level. Find different perspectives on the projects if similar ones. • Bring projects to the portfolio from outside your own work.	**Portfolio:** • If the projects don't have anything visual to show the portfolio can be plain text with key figures and process description. • Some kind of data visualization is a bonus (charts, tables etc).	**Portfolio:** • Present the design process: this is how you show that you understand UX design. • Bring out visual skills: add a representative picture of the results and milestones. • Special attention to: functionality, usability and clarity of the portfolio • For research experience: sample images of the report views you've done.

Tips

- Spend time and research what your way in could be:
  - Career sites
  - Design groups
  - Blogs…
  - Participate in design sprints/hackathons/events
- Get to know people - networking is key
  - Bonus is that circles are quite small in Finland - easier to get your foot in the door
- Be in touch with companies/people you find interesting. Ask if they can talk with you about your career. It's surprisingly easy to get these talks.

The basics of a service design portfolio

Keep portfolio in mind from the beginning and build it over time. Update & maintain!
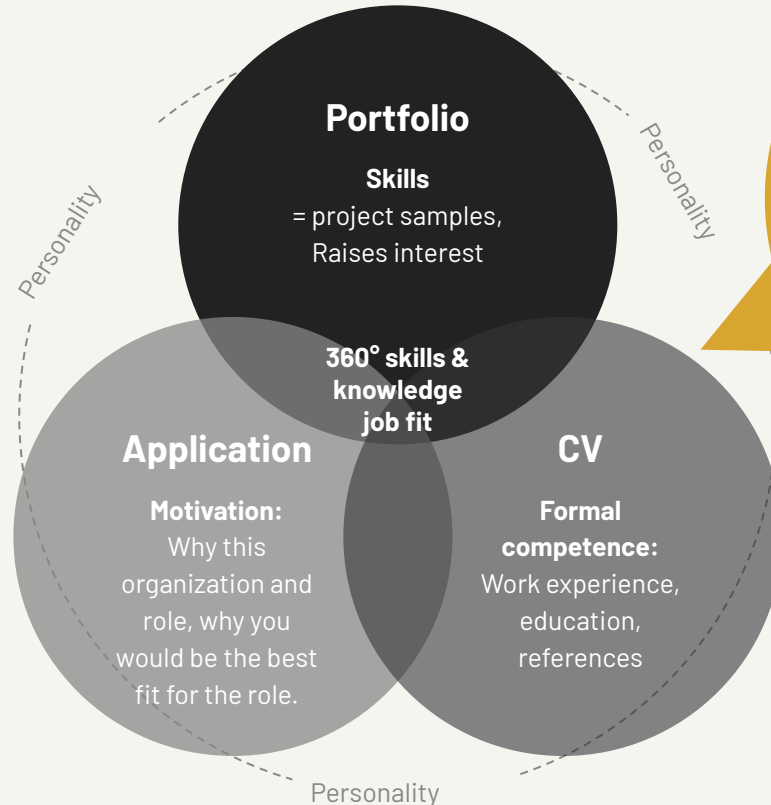
The role of portfolio

Portfolio is a selection of projects you have done.

The purpose is to raise interest (so be selective):

Crisp and diverse picture of your thinking, ways of working and experience, e.g.:

- Customers/industries
- Projects
- Methods
- Tools

Portfolio

Skills
= project samples,
Raises interest

Personality

Personality

360° skills & knowledge job fit

Application

Motivation:
Why this organization and role, why you would be the best fit for the role.

CV

Formal competence:
Work experience, education, references

Personality

Tailor all three by job/company/role description. If the role is about CX - think how you bring this across in all the documents (wording) & project selection in the portfolio. What makes you an interesting candidate? **Generic applying will most likely not bring good results.**

The basics of a portfolio

Start with:

- Table of contents
- One pager introduction of you: **what you're good at, interested in and what you want.** You can think of this as your sales pitch.
- Good to add own picture.

Contact info: consistently on every page.

- Name and some form of contacting you like email, Linkedin-profile, your website...

Format: It can be a slide deck or a word document (sent as PDF) but also own website. **All is good** for as long as it shows your thinking in a clear and concise way.

Language: Language match with the job ad or company website language (check career pages). Most likely both ENG and FI portfolios are needed. BUT you can contact interesting companies and ask what they require.

Length: keep it functional. It can be even 20 pages or longer as long as is clear, scannable and every page brings value. Avoid repetition! Give each project a role through which you can portray different skills, methods etc.

The selection of projects and order: Choose the projects based on what brings most value i.e. makes you interesting vs the job available. If it is about CX - concentrate on that. Show your crown jewels first!

Tip: add #keywords to all projects.

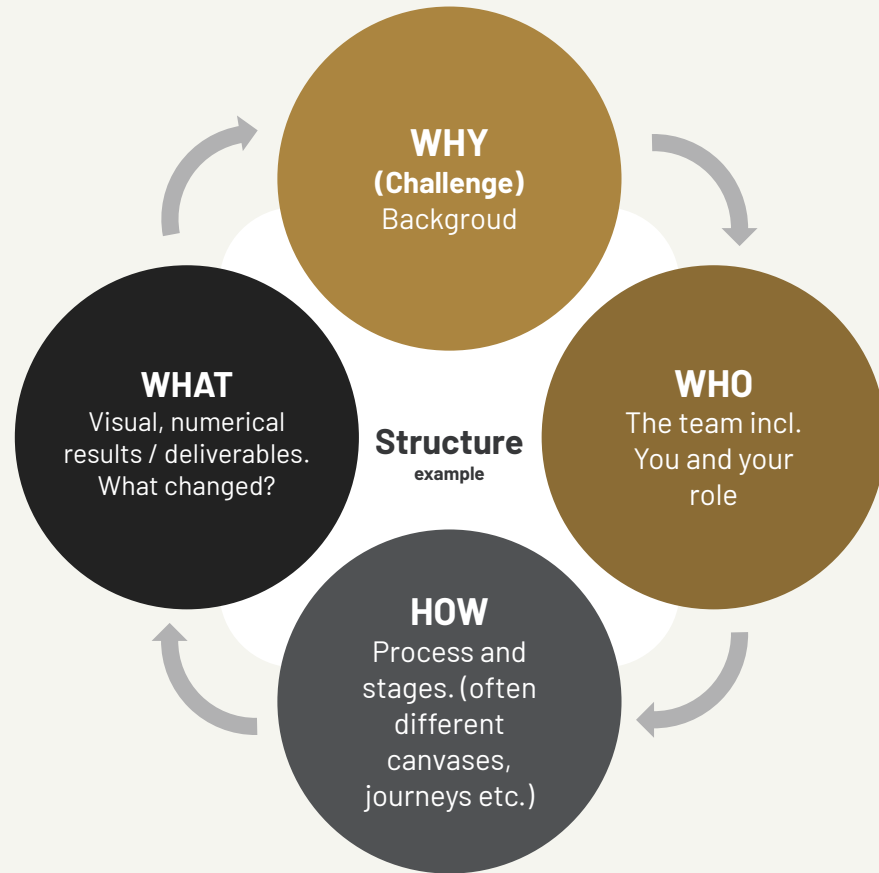"**One good bait is enough**"
Project, thesis...

Portfolio is the concrete proof of your thinking and skills.
"How do I solve problems"

How to present a project

Describe

- **To whom:** Customer/industry/field.

- **Challenge:** The challenge you solved.

- **Own role:** Be specific in what you did and how it had an effect on the process & solution.

- **Project description:** Important part! With this you showcase that you understand the design process (e.g. double diamond)

- **Result/solution:** What was the change, achievement, solution. If you can: How was success measured etc.

- **Self reflection:** What did you learn, what you would do differently (future orientation) etc.

WHY (Challenge) Backgroud

WHO The team incl. You and your role

HOW Process and stages. (often different canvases, journeys etc.)

WHAT Visual, numerical results / deliverables. What changed?

Structure example

How to present a project

Clarity of thought is the most important. **Try to keep the descriptions simple to enable quick scanning and understanding for the reader.**

- Portfolio is always a reflection of its maker. Be yourself and describe the projects in the most natural way for you (sketches, text, project chart...)

- Text and visuals should be balanced. The point of visuals is NOT to beautify but summarize and describe what the stages were or what was achieved or what the way of working was. Think of process model, journeys, blueprints, canvases...

- In bigger projects just show the key visuals - not all.

"Portfolio is your door opener to an interview. Be interesting and selective. Not all must be there."

"The reader scans through the portfolio quickly first and assesses if interesting for a more thorough read. **Portfolio must be scannable and clear.**"

- Help the reader by keeping your portfolio visually concise i.e. follow the same pattern when presenting the projects.

- Double diamond can be a good place to start but do not get stuck if that does not work for all the projects.

- Do proofread and ask a friend to proofread.

- Ask for comments on your portfolio like is done in all service design projects. It will get better that way!

The basics of a portfolio. Challenges with NDA

Non disclosure agreement (NDA):

- Strictest in consultancy.

- Even if NDA would be agreed on in your thesis or some other project – ask if you can show more in your portfolio when it is about job search.

- Portfolios are sensitive information just like CV's are. Those are not spread around the organization but read through by a few key people in the recruiting team.

- Think how you could generalize the project when customer is taken out from the description. What can you tell about the design process and solving the problem. What was your role? Do you have the permission to tell more in a job interview (where discussions are always confidential).

- Do not share NDA projects online at least not without a password protection. Take into consideration google search analytics so that it does not pop up unintentionally.

For beginners

Important qualities for a service designer

An interesting beginner's portfolio

Important qualities for a service designer

Often things need to be clarified for the client after the briefing. Clear communication / visualization.

Also in new places

To see the barriers hindering change

Emotional and interpersonal skills with different stakeholders. Service design does not exist without it.

Crystallization and clarification of things.

Ability to see the benefits of design

The will to solve problems

Authenticity, curiosity, enthusiasm, learning new, challenging oneself

Top notch collaboration skills

A clear passion for service design and a burning desire to work for exactly the company you are applying for.

Good knowledge of one or more industries

Ability to combine things and see the bigger picture.

A good listener, knows how to ask questions. Understanding of different perspectives.

Good networking skills

Fluent communication

Important especially as a consultant. Career changers are in good position.

Service designer always works at the crossroads of things. In that sense, generalist skills are valued. On the other hand, in-depth expertise / substance expertise is also required. The ability to quickly take over a new industry, especially as a consultant, is key.

Skills in verbal, written and visual storytelling.

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An interesting beginner's portfolio through the eyes of the recruiter

Process: clarity, stages, methods

- It is important to **structure projects** in an understandable way and highlight **the steps in the design process** e.g. how user insight was collected. Based on this the recruiter can estimate how well the candidate understands how projects are run and what the design process is.

- The ways of working show through the **methods and tools** used. Those are not end results but **project stages.**

- Choose different parts from different projects to showcase **your skills in methodology.** Avoid repetition.

Own role within the team

- The bigger the team and organization, the more important to **bring own role and input across.**

- **Concrete examples** on what you did and how it benefited the project:

   - e.g.: I held x interviews, which brought across these insights, which clarified the direction for the solutions.

- Present the **stakeholders and team members** in the project.

Description of the solution (result)

- It is usually about change that is sought after. More profitable business model, better CX etc. **Present the solutions clearly. What were the deliverables and outputs – big or small.**

Beginner! Create content in your free time.

Look into some current interesting phenomena or a service (or its part) you could make better *

E.g. Observe a customer journey, analyse it and make it better. Describe this as a project in your portfolio. Show your methods of analysing, the tools you used and how you apply knowledge and naturally how your journey looks like and what the points of difference are and why. Remember self reflection and always the digital connection. You can also limit the project and say that you did it e.g. over the weekend - hence you looked into x, y and z. With more time you would've additionally done xx and yy (shows your understanding of the process).

* Read through different design sites to see what's cooking, check career sites to see what is searched for currently, or something that really makes you tick and where you would want to develop.

Tips from the mentors

"You could have a short portfolio e.g. online and a broader version that you will present in a job interview."

"Visualize the stages of your career (such as studies and other highlights) by drawing your path to being a service designer."

"The portfolio should show what your 'thing' and strengths are - what value you would bring to the company."

"**Career changers:** Past experience can be presented as projects or verbalized the "design way". E.g. how did customer focus come about in a previous job / project. "

"If NDA be active and ask if the case/client can be told in the portfolio. "

"Ask if the project sponsor wants to be your referee (recommend you"

"It's worth asking for comments on your portfolio in exchange with someone (FB groups)! If possible feedback also from non-service designers. "

Tips from the mentors

"Think about the portfolio projects / work samples from the perspective of the role / company you are applying for to be a match. Could you show how your own work link with the company's projects? "

Substance is important not a specific format. It can be a slide deck or a word document (PDF) but also own website. All is good for as long as it shows your thinking in a clear and concise way.

"As with any job search, ask the recruiter what skills they are looking for, what they emphasize, etc. Edit your portfolio accordingly."

"Although there is a long list of competencies in the job ad, the recruiter does not expect the applicant to meet all the criteria. Still, certain basic skills need to be demonstrated and these vary by industry (e.g. between Business design and UX). "

"Contact companies that interest you, as there are always hidden jobs available. You can even get to talks with the employer before the actual recruitment, in which case you are already in the employer's mind. "

"You can download your portfolio to Linkedin."

BUT make sure no NDA issues.

Remember!

1. Tailor all documents per job (CV, application, portfolio).
2. Make yourself interesting. You can tell more details later on in the interviews.
3. Clarity of thinking is what you want to bring across over fine tuning of visuals etc.
4. No one way of making a portfolio or special requirements. But it must be easy to scan and understand: clarity, keywords, unity within the portfolio.
5. Make sure that document sent works: all links checked, possible PDF looks like the original document etc.

The worst portfolio is the one which has not been made at all.

Believe in yourself and ask for comments and help in design circles (many groups on FB).

Portfolio is a process!

Inspiration and examples

Qaswua design & development show what to take into consideration in a design portfolio (Finnish)
https://qaswua.fi/palvelumuotoilijan-portfolio-mita-miksi-ja-miten/

Hopefully these examples help to you get you started!

Go through how different companies/agencies showcase their projects:

- https://www.vere.fi/asiakastarinat - concise way in Finnish

- https://futurice.com/case-studies/k-auto one example on their site - see for more

- https://passiripatti.fi/asiakkaat-projektit/helsingin-sanomat-hstv/ - concise way in Finnish

UX Designer -portfolios: (Google UX Design Certificate)

- Lisa – www.lisasuefischer.com

- Shabi – www.shabnamkashani.com

- Dane – danegalbraith.com

- Josh – joshglucas.com

- Kaiwei – kaiwei.design

- Penny – pennybanks.com

The ones who made the guide happen

Jenny Kurjenniemi: www.linkedin.com/in/jenny-kurjenniemi/

Ajatuksen alullepanija. Työryhmän rekrytointi, illan suunnittelu ja fasilitointi, sparraajien rekrytointi ja yhteydenpito, oppaan suunnittelu.

Susanne Ådahl: www.linkedin.com/in/susannetheresiaadahl/

Ryhmän antropologi/etnografi. Illan suunnittelu, sparraajien rekrytointi, fasilitointi, muistiinpanot ja testiryhmän rekrytointi, haastattelut sekä oppaan teko.

Mervi Karesto: www.linkedin.com/in/mervi-karesto

Ryhmän AD ja UX. Oppaan taitto, visut ja käyttökokemus teknisesti.

Elisa Hietakymi: www.linkedin.com/in/elisa-hietakymi/

Illan suunnittelu, fasilitointi, oppaan teko.

Leena Markiet: www.linkedin.com/in/leenamarkiet/

Illan suunnittelu, fasilitointi, Eventbrite ja Mentimeter.

Ulla Tynjä: www.linkedin.com/in/ullatynja

Ryhmän tekniikkaguru. Illan suunnittelu ja illan tekniikka sekä sparraajien rekrytointi.

Anu Sauramaa: www.linkedin.com/in/anusauramaa/

Illan fasilitoija (lyhyellä varoitusajalla <3). Oppaan oikoluku.

Anna Palokangas: www.linkedin.com/in/annapalokangas

Illan fasilitoija (lyhyellä varoitusajalla <3). Myös YP-tiimin jäsen.

Thank you!

Mentors in the event:

Petra Tarkkala, Tietoevry:
www.linkedin.com/in/petratarkkala/

Johannes Hirvonsalo, Solita:
www.linkedin.com/in/johanneshirvonsalo/

Heidi Majuri, Vincit:
www.linkedin.com/in/heidimajuri/

Emma Similä, SOK:
www.linkedin.com/in/emmasimila/

Heli Ihamäki, Futurice:
www.linkedin.com/in/heliihamaki/

Teija Hakaoja, Gofore:
www.linkedin.com/in/teijahakaoja/

Qaswua Design & Development Oy:

www.linkedin.com/in/johannasaynajakangas/

www.linkedin.com/in/sinisofiaforsberg/

Testgroup designers, who gave us valuable comments during the making of the guide:

Anni Ojajärvi www.linkedin.com/in/anniojajarvi/

Saara-Sisko Jäämies www.linkedin.com/in/saarasiskojaamies/

Raija Kaljunen www.linkedin.com/in/raijakaljunen/

Tiina Lehto www.linkedin.com/in/tiilehto

Jenni Leppänen www.linkedin.com/in/jenni-leppanen/

Ompeluseuran pamujen YP-tiimi, jolta sai aina hyviä ajatuksia ja vinkkejä.

How to use this guide

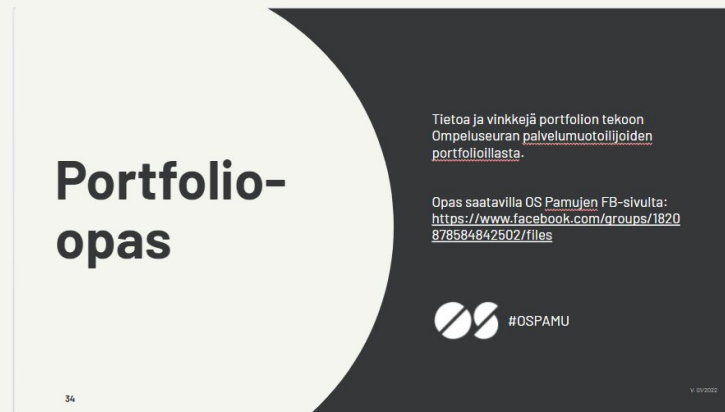**You can use this freely yourself but if you refer to this guide e.g. in Linkedin or other please use the reference:**
Hietakymi, E., Karesto, M., Kurjenniemi, J., Ådahl, S. 2022. Portfolio-opas. Julkaisematon teos.

If helps a friend in need you can share.

Source

Portfolio-opas

Tietoa ja vinkkejä portfolion tekoon Ompeluseuran palvelumuotoilijoiden portfolioillasta.

Opas saatavilla OS Pamujen FB-sivulta:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/1820878584842502/files

#OSPAMU

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