Ashley McWilliams

UX Researcher and Designer

Portfolio with samples of my work from over 20 years of experience in UX Research and Design

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I am a UX Researcher and Designer specializing in inclusive design, mixed research methods, and building excellent digital experiences.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems, and earned UX certifications from Nielsen Norman Group and Human Factors International. I have worked in B2B and B2C e-commerce, insurance, and non-profit/education.

Ashley McWilliams UX Researcher & Designer

ashleyLmcwilliams@gmail.com LinkedIn: Ashley McWilliams

TOOLKIT

Figma

- Wireframing
- Mockups
- Prototyping
- Figma Make
- Journey Maps

I transitioned to Figma from Adobe XD.

Balsamiq

I like to use Balsamiq for quick wireframing, as it has many libraries with UI elements pre-created.

User Interviews

I have used User Interviews for recruiting, especially for quick turnaround.

UserTesting

I have used UserTesting for moderated interviews and unmoderated usability testing.

Visual Studio Code

I began my career as a front-end developer, so when it comes to prototyping, I still like to get into the code and make interfaces.

Brightspace

I became familiar with Brightspace for creating courses with their templates as well as creating custom templates and layouts using HTML and CSS.

Azure DevOps

Using Azure DevOps as a code repository and project management tool keeps everyone on the same page and everything in one place.

JAWS

I am familiar with JAWS screen reader for testing accessibility of web applications.

NVDA

I use NVDA frequently to test web applications, PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, and Word documents for accessibility.

VoiceOver

While I am primarily a Windows user, I am familiar with Mac OS and VoiceOver as well.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Analytics showed that engagement with learning content was low, abandonment within courses was high, and users were not renewing paid subscriptions. The Learning Content team needed to understand why these things were occurring so they could make necessary changes.

I conducted *one-on-one qualitative interviews* to learn:

1. How do users feel about the current design and content of our learning offerings?
2. Why would or wouldn't they pay for a subscription?
3. What could be added or changed to make our offerings more engaging and valuable to our users?
4. Of the 2 presentation formats shared, which is preferred and why?



Roles: Researcher - Recruiting, Session Moderator, Analysis

RESEARCH SETUP

01

Recruiting from Internal User Pool

Sorting through internal users to find participants that fit our criteria of having engaged with our learning content, but not more than 2 courses.

02

Scheduling and Planning the Qualitative Sessions

Using Calendly, scheduled participants and observers for 30 minute sessions via Teams or Zoom (participant preference).

While sessions were being scheduled, I worked with the Learning Content team to craft the interview script.

03

Conducting Sessions and Gathering Insights

For the first part of the session, the participant was directed to share their screen, log in to their account, navigate to particular courses (requested by the Learning Content team), and give their feedback on the courses.

For the second part of the session, I shared my screen to give them a view of the redesign being considered and get their feedback on that experience and how it differed from the live experience.

FINDINGS & OUTCOMES



Low Engagement

- Not easy to discern between articles and courses
- Summaries for courses discouraged engagement
- Navigation and organization makes finding relevant courses difficult; lack of direction



High Abandonment

- Users cherry-pick content relevant to them at the time
- Information not in depth enough to suit needs
- Lack of subject matter for international students and non-traditional learners
- Shorter videos (less than 10 minutes) are preferred



Low Subscriptions & Renewals

- Most only subscribed for practice tests, not courses
- Didn't find enough course content to justify renewal or subscription



Format A/B Test

- Overall, users preferred the 'B' style - primarily the animated characters instead of real people for interviews
- Users prefer a transcript they can view on the page rather than download
- A collapsible navigation is preferred, especially for tablet users

The Learning Content team has created a plan to transition new and updated courses to the 'B' style. They will be working with the Development team to update summaries to be more helpful and less discouraging. The information architecture of the entire website is being redesigned to make navigating easier and organization clearer. The Learning Content team has plans to include information for non-traditional and international learners in their next batch of courses.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The New Product Team wants to create an experience for users to “upskill” in preparation or in conjunction with higher education. They want this experience to feel personalized and guided.

I created *wireframes* and *mockups* to conduct *one-on-one qualitative interviews* to learn:

1. How do users feel about using an AI assistant to create a more personalized experience and to guide them?
2. What kind of questions feel more appropriate for gauging someone’s skill level?
3. What kind of output would be expected and wanted?
4. Would they be willing to pay for something like this, and what price point would be acceptable?



Roles: Designer - Wireframes and Mockups
Researcher - Recruiter, Session Moderator, Analysis

DESIGN AND RESEARCH SETUP

01

Collaborative design sessions with stakeholders to create mockups of idea

Meeting with stakeholders and using Adobe XD to create low-fidelity mockups of their idea to put in front of users. We ended up with 1 mockup for the AI Assistant, 2 for the question types so we could ask which makes more sense, and 3 for the results, again to be able to ask which makes more sense and is more desirable.

02

Scheduling and Planning the Qualitative Sessions

Using UserInterviews.com, a screener was created and recruiting for 10 people who were considering higher education in a particular field.

While sessions were being scheduled, the team and I collaborated on the interview script.

03

Conducting Sessions and Gathering Insights

Each participant was shown our mockup screens in order, as if they were going through this tool themselves. At each screen, they were asked to speak aloud their thoughts on what they saw and provide guidance as to what would be expected at each stage in the process. At the end, they were asked what output was expected and what they would be willing to pay for a tool like this that accompanied or recommended online courses.

AI Assistant Experience

This AI Assistant starts out getting to know the user to build a profile, so it can then guide them through their learning journey.

We asked if users were comfortable with AI being using in this method.

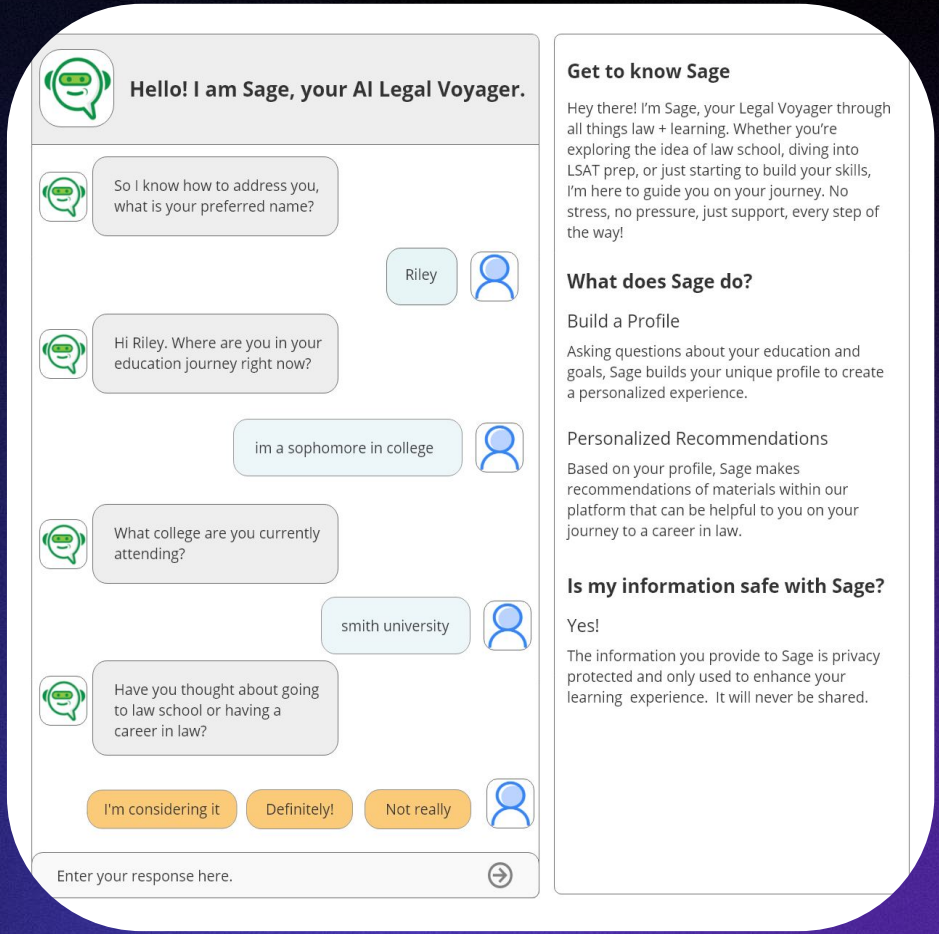
Most participants were comfortable with AI being used in this method. It was said that they would prefer an AI Assistant over a chatbot, as long as it was clear that it was AI and not a real person.

Did they think an AI Assistant was the appropriate way to build a profile or did they have another suggestion?

Most participants liked the idea of an AI Assistant for building a profile, but a few said a basic form would suffice (based on the mockup).

What would they expect as an output from the AI Assistant as this stage?

Depending on all of the questions asked, they would expect recommendations for online courses or colleges based on what they want.



Skill Assessment Questions

We had a simple, fun, “personality quiz” style question and a more detailed, “diagnostic” style question to get their opinions.

- **We asked if users thought someone’s skill level could be accurately assessed using either of these types of question.**

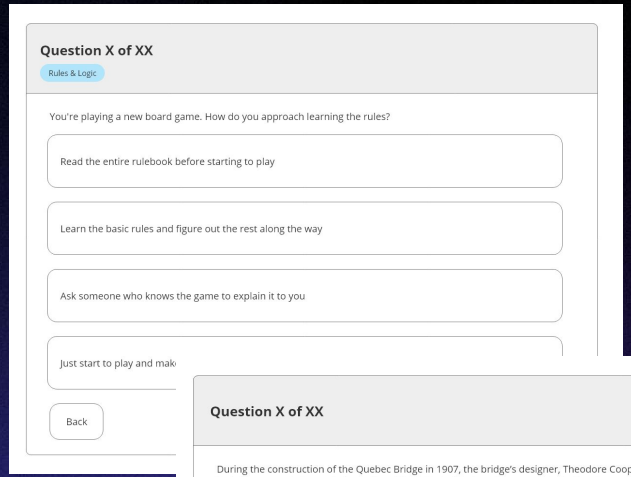
  Participants felt the diagnostic style questions were better for assessing skills, but would be tiring after a shorter time than the “lighter” questions. A mix was recommended.

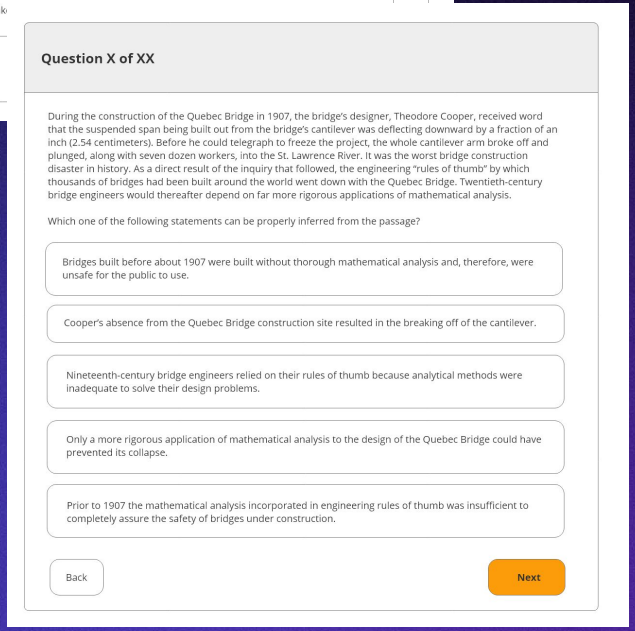
- **We asked how many of each would they feel was appropriate to gauge skill level without being too many or too exhausting.**

  For the “lighter” questions, 15-20 was the consensus, while 10-15 was recommended for the diagnostic questions.

- **We asked what output they would expect after answering the skill questions.**

  They would want rationales of each question so they could learn as they go; they wanted to be able to retake the quiz; they expected to be told what their skill level is and how they can improve.





Results Screens

We had 3 styles of screens: 1 graphical, 1 descriptive, and 1 guided.

The graphical screen was liked for the colors and content, but they felt information was missing.

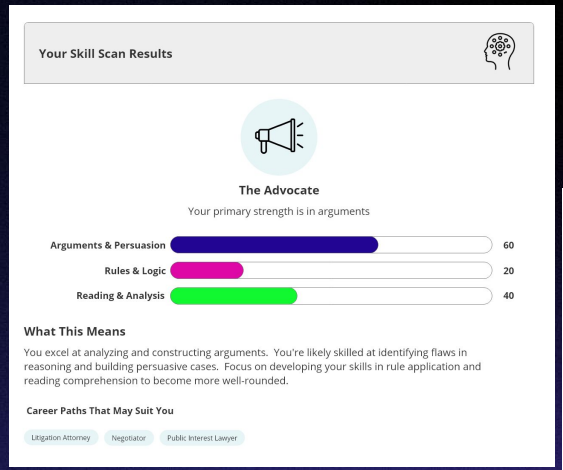
The recommendations at the bottom were well-received, but participants felt they didn't really know what to do with this.

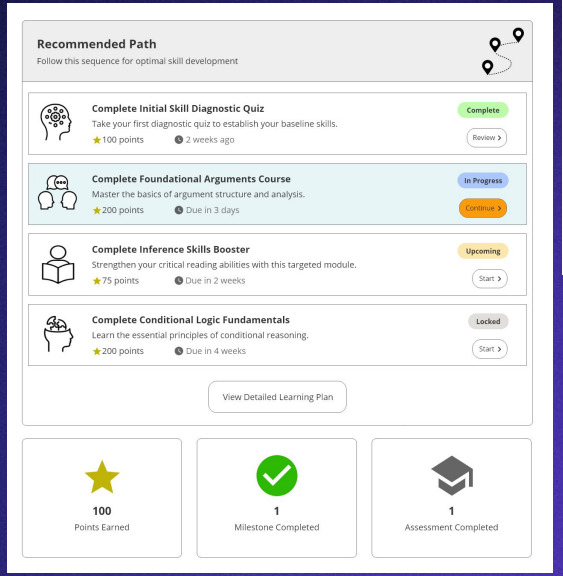
The descriptive screen was liked for its detail, but it wasn't very helpful.

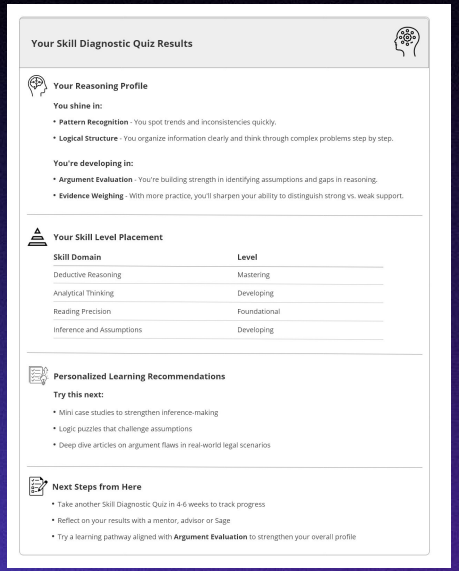
There wasn't enough explanation as to what things meant or guidance as to how to improve.

The guided screen was the best received.

Participants liked a "to-do" list of how to improve and an easy way to keep track. They did ask for the recommendations to be added to this screen, as they really liked that feature.







Thank you for your consideration.

My Contact Information

Ashley McWilliams
ashleyLmcwilliams@gmail.com