

B U I L D Y O U R T

Build Your T

Grace Chen

Where I Am

After picking up a light sprinkling of graphic design and psychology in high school, I was lucky enough to absorb the fundamentals of UX at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), the home of Don Norman himself. Eager to apply the skills I was learning, I jumped into SmartBit Inc (2016), a small start-up. My title as "UI/UX Intern" may have glossed over my actual duties as a graphic designer, but it taught me the basics of business and what UX was *not*. Along the way, I dabbled in data and computer science, working as a computer science tutor (2018) and at the UCSD Center for Digital Learning (2018).

I also tried my hand at leadership and campus involvement, joining the Cognitive Science Student Association (CSSA) and helped organize its annual conference twice. Thrilled with a new sense of purpose and emboldened by my foray into campus life, I also joined Design For America (2017) to put my design skills to do social good, helping low-income seniors in the process. This led to my internship at MatrixCare, Inc. (2019), a company focusing on long-term care, where I got my first taste of UX in the workplace.

After finishing my BSc in Cognitive Science (2019), I set my sights on graduate school. Coming from the birthplace of cognitive science and its interdisciplinary roots, I searched for an equally multifaceted program and found it at the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. My experience in pursuing a Master of Information (2021) mirrored that of my undergraduate years; I practiced the UX process through my co-op position at RBC (2020), contributed to the student community as Survey Committee Chair on the student council, and carried the torch for the World Information Architecture Day conference in Toronto. While my formal education is swiftly coming to an end, I hope to never stop learning.

Where I'm Going

Business Strategy, Project Management, Leadership, & Communication
These four key disciplines are the building blocks for becoming an effective UX leader, and consequently, the areas where I would like to improve the most.

I will shore up my business acumen through courses and organizational resources, focusing on understanding the business side of things and the art of persuasion to better evangelize UX with other stakeholders. Achieving the project management certifications will be invaluable proof that I have learned the material and practiced the relevant skills extensively.

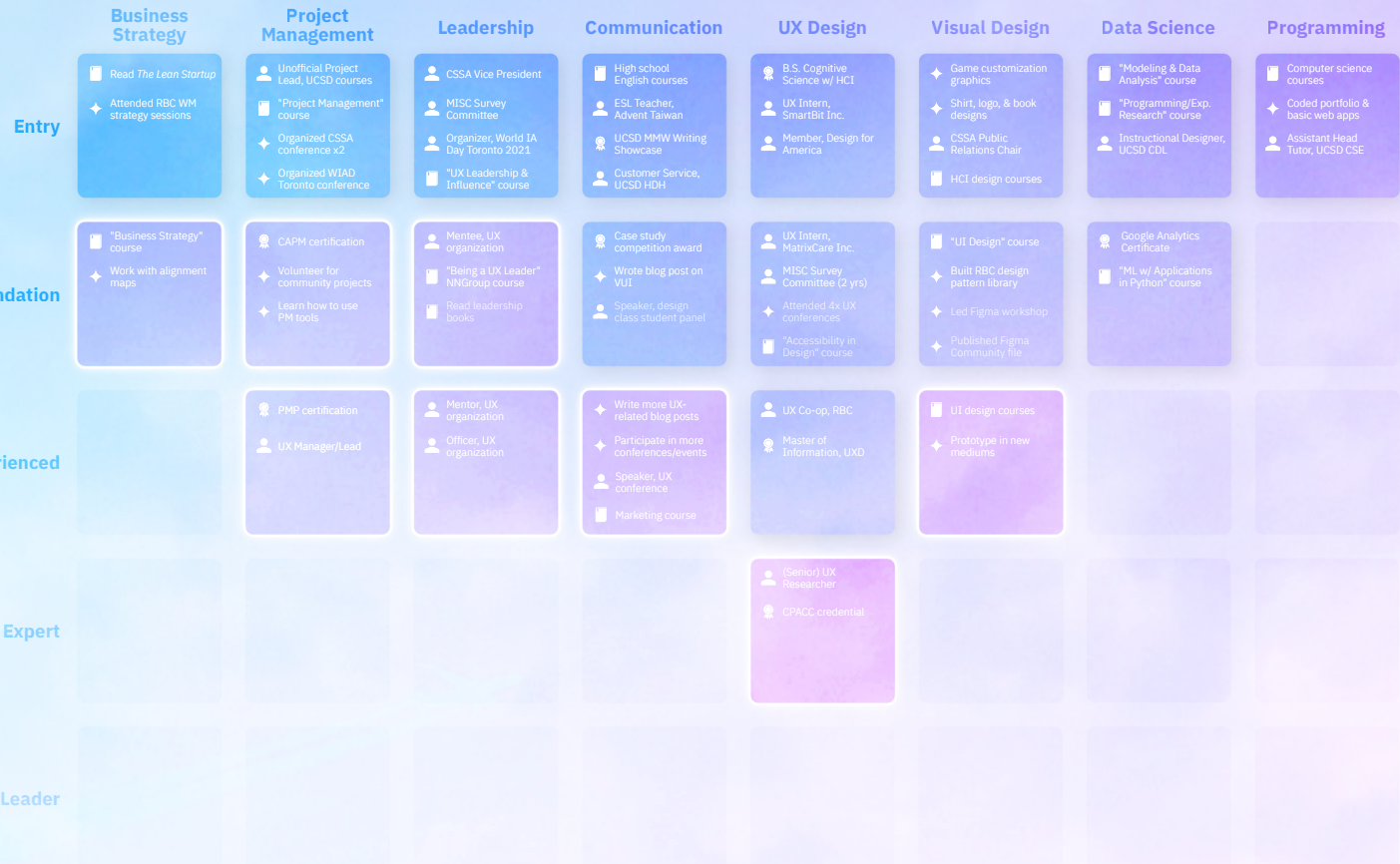
Improving in these areas also comes through consistent, quality engagement with the UX community. I plan to attend more UX-related events, contribute my thoughts to the online landscape, and volunteer my time and skills to meaningful projects. Eventually, I hope to be in a position where I can mentor others in the field to pass on my knowledge or guide teams to deliver their best.

UX Design & Visual Design

Alongside these key leadership skills, I will continue honing my core competencies in both UX and UI design. As designers, we must be conscientious of new trends and evolve with the changing technologies and philosophies of the times. In addition to diving deeper into new mediums and modalities (e.g. VUI, VR/AR), I will also explore other emerging design practices, such as inclusive design and service design.

Data Science & Programming

While these skills aren't essential for UX, understanding the nuts and bolts of creating digital experiences will help me communicate with developers as I take on more roles that require cross-collaboration. I will likely brush up on these skills in the future to stay fresh, but I don't foresee myself going any deeper in these fields anytime soon.



◆ **Actions & events**
Practical application

📖 **Courses & books**
Theoretical foundation

👤 **Roles & job titles**
Professional experience

🏆 **Awards & certifications**
Summation of knowledge