



Contribution of the Certified Usability Analyst Credential to UX Career Progress

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Over 6,000 individuals since 2002 have become Certified Usability Analysts. Attaining this certification has made a difference to so many UX professionals in their careers. Many have also attained the advanced Certified User Experience Analyst (CXA).

Enthusiasm, discipline, and a strong drive to make things better are some of the hallmarks we've seen from successful CUAs. They are leading teams, participating at higher levels of decision-making, and extending the influence of UX even further in their organizations.

HFI is delighted to highlight the stories of a few individuals who have been honored in the past as CUA of the Month and have now provided us with updates of the value they received from the certification.

“I have never forgotten what it was like to receive my first introduction to this field of usability and how it changed the arc of my career.”



Mary M. Michaels

CUA of the Month, July, 2005

Excerpt from Mary's CUA of the Month article:

I try to distinguish between opinion and science. Oftentimes people make design suggestions based solely on personal preference. Having the CUA credential helps me justify the rigorous methods and research behind our design decisions. My HFI course manuals are still a wonderful reference – I get a ton of knowledge out of them.

Mary's update, December, 2015:

I found that my colleagues and management accorded greater respect for my UX recommendations once I had my CUA, and I was able to provide valuable input for the various internal and external projects I worked on.

My passion for UX led me to want to do usability and user experience work all the time. So with my CUA and depth of work experience under my belt, I had the good fortune to join HFI 10 years ago as an instructor and consultant. My expertise expanded with the various clients, industries, and projects I've worked on over the years, including top names in financial services, telecommunications, and insurance, plus government agencies and non-profits.

I absolutely love instructing and helping others to learn about this great field of UX and human factors. So in 2014, my role at HFI expanded to become Global Director of Training Evolution, Certification, and Strategic Advisor. My work now involves overseeing the updating of all the CUA courses, plus the CXA courses and other specialty ones. I help to train new instructors, and mentor existing ones. And I also oversee the certification exams.

But I never have forgotten what it was like to receive my first introduction to this field of usability, and how it changed the arc of my career. Looking back, I am so grateful for receiving my CUA. It was a vital step in eventually attaining this dream job that touches so many people, and helps in some measure to make the world a better – and more usable – place.

“In 2007, I needed a CUA to launch my career. Now I’m in the position to launch the career of others.”



Evan Sunwall

CUA of the Month, December, 2014

Excerpt from Evan’s CUA of the Month article:

You can use techniques like paper prototyping or wireframing to gather user validation. The freedom and experimentation that these cheap techniques introduce into the design process is crucial. It’s certainly possible to do this with code, but the conversations will unavoid-

ably shift towards technical concerns. You may be fostering emotional attachment and financial investment into something that maybe isn’t worth it. Don’t buy into your ideas until you know you have something that your audience understands, values, and is willing to pay money for.

Evan’s update, December, 2015:

Since being featured as CUA of the Month in 2014, I’ve been promoted to managing a team of User Experience Designers. It’s rather surreal. I’ve become the person reviewing resumes and wondering, “Does this candidate understand the fundamentals of user experience design?”

Formal education in human factors is great – but uncommon – and effective UX Designers can still come from a variety of backgrounds. Seeing a candidate with a CUA reassures me that they’ve been instructed on the basics of user research, testing, and design theory. It’s also one of my training recommendations to get new junior designers up-to-speed quickly.

It’s interesting how some of the topics from my CXA have become very relevant now that I’m tasked with staffing and managing a design team. You begin to appreciate the importance of maintaining design standards, organizing an effective team structure, and having an executive champion with budgeting power. These are issues you may not appreciate working alone or in a very small team, but they become crucial as UX adoption increases within your organization – a goal all UX professionals strive towards.

When I shifted my professional focus into UX back in 2007, I needed a CUA to learn the basics and launch my career. Now I’m in the position to launch the careers of others. Today’s companies have an incredible need for UX folks; more of us are needed to achieve business goals by improving the experiences of users. I’m glad to be doing my part to fix it.

“Today I am fortunate to have a global role at IBM with responsibility for exceeding customer expectations as it relates to driving strategy beyond UX.”



Farzana Sedillo

CXA Spotlight, November, 2014

Excerpt from Farzana’s CXA Spotlight article:

Taking the CXA classes shows you the opportunities of how to tie in brand. As I was going forward with doing all of the different tasks involving UX in my daily job, and even on the side helping people with websites or start-up ideas, I really started noticing how huge trust

and persuasion were becoming in people using certain brands. It was evident that successful brands created great customer engagement. Engagement helps create the trust factor. And trust, in turn, persuaded you to want to come back and keep engaging.

Farzana’s update, December, 2015:

It’s been a catapult without a doubt. When I received my first certification it helped open my eyes to the possibilities of what I could do to help drive the UX agenda. The CUA certification has allowed me to accomplish things that would not have been within my grasp at the time. To help frame where I was at, my role at the time was a software architect at HP. With the CUA I was able to expand on my abilities to enhance and achieve my objectives. This was a critical step in my career path.

Thanks to the training and ongoing active use of what I learned, I was able to expand my role and responsibilities. The next step in the evolution of my career was to help architect the revamp of a website for one of the largest utility companies in the United States. It was an amazing project that helped stretch my imagination and drive my abilities. Getting the CXA certification on top of the CUA enabled me to also understand the power of persuasion, trust, and emotion within the entire user experience.

Today I am fortunate to have a global role at IBM with responsibility for exceeding customer expectations as it relates to driving strategy beyond UX.

Fortunately I have been able to use what I’ve learned to help our team drive a transformation of change within the business of our clients. All of this would not have been possible had I not received my CUA. The CUA is about passion to me, love what you do and it will show.

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“I had a great opportunity to visit Oman and designed the Cloud platform for the government of Oman.”



Igor Gubaidulin

CUA of the Month, October, 2013

Excerpt from Igor's CUA of the Month article:

My main activities and responsibilities include establishing UX activity for the company. I'm producing user interface design including visual design, wire frames, interactive models, etc. As a UX architect, I work with functional prototypes in HTML, CSS and Javascript. And

of course I'm managing UX research, usability testing, and scenario modeling, user requirements, user task analysis, mental models, and interaction design specifications. I also lecture about UX, usability, design and accessibility.

Igor's update, December, 2015:

Getting the CUA of the Month two years ago was an inspiring reward, which motivated me to grow even faster in a professional sense.

Back then I was designing E-delivery – a national registered e-mail system. Today I'm proud to say we've released a new version with fully responsive UI recently.

The next big thing for me was a Lithuanian eHealth system – the huge national platform for integration of Hospital information systems into one network. The platform also includes a universal portal for doctors and patients, where both parties can access all medical records from every Lithuanian hospital or clinic. I was responsible for user analysis, design of main workflows, creation of visual design and a library of UI elements, and other UI tasks.

Furthermore, I had a great opportunity to visit Oman and designed the cloud platform for the government of Oman. Arabic culture, mentality, and understanding of visual design differ from European in many ways. However, we managed to work efficiently, thanks to the common understanding of easy-of-use and good approach to accessibility.

The popularity of UX is growing in Lithuania and I feel that I have contributed to this as well. Within the last 2 years I delivered about 15 comprehensive lectures about UX, including a few about PET (Persuasion, Emotion, and Trust) Design. Now I'm working on Krug „Don't let me think“ translation into the Lithuanian language.

With like-minded friends we started the first Lithuanian UX & interaction design blog called *Interakcijos* ('Interactions') with interviews, job offers and other important things for our design community.

“Being a CUA has given me immense credibility and confidence leading projects and teams to deliver exceptional designs for our clients.”



Kshama Vijayakumar
CUA of the Month, July, 2013

Excerpts from Kshama's CUA of the Month article:

With heuristic evaluations, before the certification I would look at projects and say, "OK, this needs to change in the design" or "that needs to move around."

But now, with what I have learned from the certification, I'm more confident about any feedback that I give and any design decisions I make. I have gotten enough principles from the materials and gained more knowledge to be confident and say, "OK, this is how to do it."

I think the biggest value, to tell you very honestly, that the CUA certification had for me is I know I can go out today and say I'm an expert in the field and I know what I'm talking about. It's given me enough confidence in what I'm doing and what I'm talking about, especially when it comes to user research. And when it comes to going out to the user, going out to the customer site, it's better to do a certain process and know what questions to ask and to know what feedback you need from them. I think that's a great thing that I've gotten from this certification.

The CUA training made me feel more professional. Everybody talks about design, everybody thinks they're a designer, but the CUA training gave me the confidence that I know what I'm talking about because I'm an actual designer. I'm a certified designer and that's what the training has done for me.

Kshama's update, December, 2015:

I am currently working as a UX Design Lead at Tata Consultancy Services. TCS is into IT services and business consulting across various industries like Healthcare, Banking, Life Sciences etc. Being a CUA has given me immense credibility and confidence leading projects and teams to deliver exceptional designs for our clients. We are able to bring great improvements in user productivity and enhance the user's experience with our designs. The knowledge I received from the CUA program on the design process and its application has definitely contributed to the success of all my projects.

“The HFI CUA certification has certainly become a very popular short course and certification in South Africa. It is high in demand with many organisations.”



Marco Pretorius
CUA of the Month, August, 2013

Excerpts from Marco's CUA of the Month article:

I completed my PhD using the Western Cape Government (WCG) as a case study. The topic was on institutionalizing UX in Government. This research really helped me to institutionalize UX in the WCG. Big breakthrough moments as a result of this research were incorporating UX into the SDLC, delivering official WCG UX policy, strategy and guidelines, and creating the first usability lab for a South African government.

We are currently migrating from a very old content management system on our main citizen website, a project that is very near completion. We are then going into an enhancement project, where we will improve the UX and content of identified sections of our site. I'm really looking forward to this project, as every single new thing that comes out needs to go through the usability lab. Then we are also working on a beta site concept to improve the overall information architecture.

A project we are ready to launch internally is what we call a UX Toolkit website. Here we provide wireframe and design templates for commonly used elements of the system, such as signing in and creating an account. The goal is to provide a consistent usable experience on all our systems. We also envision coding to be provided – so this will save a lot of development time and costs. This site will also be made available nationally to all South African provincial governments – so that our UX lessons are shared with the rest of the community.

Marco's update, December, 2015:

When I completed the CUA in 2007, an aspect of the material I enjoyed the most was the practical examples. The HFI CUA certification has certainly become a very popular short course and certification in South Africa. It is in high demand with many organisations. I have sent several of my team members on the CUA track. The CUA certification is very valuable, especially for new comers and junior UX practitioners to enhance their view of UX, its methods and best practice. Congratulations to HFI on the 6,000 certifications milestone!

“Currently I lead a team of 10 creative consultants, local and offshore, in UX and UI consulting. We provide our services to numerous local and international clients.”



Murie Chow

CUA of the Month, December, 2007

Excerpt from Murie's CUA of the Month article:

As a senior usability and creative consultant for NCS, a leading IT and communications engineering services provider for the Asia Pacific and Middle East regions, Murie has been developing user-centric interface design for Web and online application projects since the

late 1990s. Murie joined NCS after having spent several years in the advertising industry as a "visualizer" - an art director who conceptualizes and conveys the client's product/services into persuasive ideas in the form of a storyboard. "It's like telling a story," says Murie. Currently I lead a team of 10 creative consultants (local and offshore) in UX and UI consulting providing usability consulting services and creative designs for numerous local and international clients.

Murie's update, December, 2015:

Technology advancement sees more and more users relying on their smart devices to learn, play, socialise and work, and resulted in an explosive increase in content and different kinds of user interfaces. This gives rise to many new challenges in user-experience. In tandem, we saw an exponential increase in expectations of users when they interact with their smart devices. It is at this point that I am convinced I made the right decision – to be a Certified Usability Analyst.

Being a CUA from Human Factors International, my role as a Creative Consultant has since expanded.

NCS Pte Ltd, my employer and a leader in the IT industry, saw a surge in project demands for UX related services. This created opportunities for me to work on exciting and challenging projects and interact with people from local to overseas including commercial and government sectors – covering health care, education, security and defence domains, just to name a few. It has been a great learning journey with opportunities for personal growth and recognition. These experiences have taught me how to tackle UX issues effectively, apply usability techniques, conduct researches, gather data, and perform usability testing to enable my customers to present their services or information to their audiences more effectively.

No one can be certain where technology will take us, yet, I am confident that good user experience is fundamental to successful system fielding, and the key to help our businesses grow.

“Currently I am working as a freelance UX designer for a large travelers’ association company in The Netherlands, but I also work for several other mid- and large-sized Dutch companies.”



Sven-Eric Buschgens

CUA of the Month, March, 2012

Excerpt from Sven-Eric’s CUA of the Month article:

Because I’ve spent time working within so many different aspects of the web development industry, I’ve developed an understanding of how projects unfold. I can take a quick look at a web interface and suggest small changes which can make a large difference. This

is what inspired me to engage usability on a deep level. Since the success of a project is always dependent on the response of the end user, it’s very important to make their experience a top priority during every phase of web development.

Sven-Eric’s update, December, 2015:

Since being the CUA of the month in March 2012, quite a lot has changed. Beginning in May 2013 I’ve become a fulltime freelance UX Designer, which was quite an exciting step to take.

I still spend at least one hour a day reading blogs and all sorts of books to keep my skills up to date. I have a built-in drive (maybe even an urge) for new information, techniques and technology. I’ve found over the years that when I read something, there will be a project in the near future where I can use or fit in this new knowledge.

I’ve visited several congresses and workshops in Chicago (Susan Weinschenk), Boston (UI18), Copenhagen (UX Intensive) and Berlin (Mobx) over the last years to meet other professionals and find inspiration. I will be visiting *Interaction16* in Helsinki in March 2016 – so come meet me and say Hi!

Currently I am working as a freelance UX Designer for a large travelers’ association company in The Netherlands, but I also work for several other mid- and large sized Dutch companies. Getting known as a freelance UX designer in the Dutch market is the next step, but I wouldn’t mind working abroad as well.

Over the last years, not once I have doubted my decisions to become CUA and CXA certified, while it was quite an investment at the time it has surely paid off!

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“Today I am working as a Lead UX in one of India’s largest corporate groups.”



Nidhi Gulatee

CUA of the Month, November, 2013

Excerpt from Nidhi’s CUA of the Month article:

As Manager of UX Design, I am part of the UI/UX design team of a group at Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited (RJIL). I am responsible for gathering requirements, planning, designing and usability testing for all the

services/products the company plans such as collaboration and communication mobile applications, web-portals, etc. So there’s a lot of scope, and a variety of things to be done.

Nidhi’s update, December, 2015:

I would like to congratulate HFI and all the CUAs for our growing numbers! Every member added in our community is a step towards making user friendly products and institutionalizing UX.

HFI has played a major role in helping us to make more useful products and user experiences. I did my CUA three years back and it has been a wonderful journey in the field of UI/UX since then.

Even though my formal education is in the field of communication design, the knowledge that I got from HFI has changed my views and has added value to my career. Today I am working as a Lead UX in one of India’s largest corporate groups.

I work in the telecom domain, where devices and applications are ever-changing. Adapting to rapidly changing user needs was always a challenge, but HFI’s knowledge of usability testing has helped a lot in this direction. Its VIMM (Visual, Intellect, Memory and Motor) model is the magic mantra that works most of the time to make products better and also helps to convince stakeholders of the importance of usability testing and its benefits.

I am proud and happy to be a part of the CUA family! Thanks to HFI for its initiative and efforts to make the CUA numbers grow!

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“We’ve had more and more products adopt our global accessibility methodology, and the tools have seen improvement and expansion, including the addition of step-by-step testing videos and native mobile requirements.”



James Green
CUA of the Month, February, 2015

Excerpts from James’ CUA of the Month article:

We all work very closely on projects, typically assigning a few staff to a cross-functional UX team that plugs into the various projects we support. While I am responsible for

Usability and Accessibility at Visa and my focus is naturally in those areas, there are two distinct facets to my focus.

The first can be described as internal to my team: Providing leadership and subject matter expertise to projects we are working on. In a given week I may line up work for the team and manage tasks while also facilitating a user test or providing accessibility consulting to a development team.

The second facet of my role could be seen as external to the team and also arguably more important: Institutionalizing UX at Visa. I spend a lot of time evangelizing and educating staff about usability and especially accessibility, a field that is unfortunately not well understood by many in the IT industry.

James’ update, December, 2015:

I had a lot of people reach out when they read my February 2015 CUA of the Month interview. It helped quite a bit in my role as an evangelist and gave me a thorough summary to share with people interested in what I do.

Since then, a lot has happened. We’ve had more and more products adopt our global accessibility methodology and the tools have seen improvements and expansion, including the addition of step-by-step testing videos and native mobile requirements.

I also joined the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative Education and Outreach Working Group as an Invited Expert where I have been able to contribute to education and evangelism efforts with a worldwide reach. On the usability front, I’ve hired 5 additional full time staff to support our new Usability Lab and we’ve seen so much interest that we’re currently booking studies as far as 3-4 months out. I really appreciate HFI’s certification programs – as I said before, they establish a common language for us to work with and are well known and respected, which helps us establish immediate credibility when working with new stakeholders.

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Mary M. Michaels, BFA, MBA, CUA, CXA
Global Director of Training Evolution,
Certification, & Strategic Advisor
Human Factors International

About Mary

Mary M. Michaels has more than 15 years in the field of user-centered design. Her expertise includes all aspects of user-interface design: stakeholder and user interviews, personas and scenarios, task analysis, information architecture, wireframes, visual design, usability testing, and institutionalization of usability. She is skilled in strategy development and design for Web sites, intranets, and applications. Industries include: e-commerce, financial services, government, healthcare, insurance, nonprofits, and telecom.

Mary oversees and manages HFI's training courses, their content, and the instructors for HFI worldwide. She also leads and performs test development and item writing for the CUA and CXA certification exams for individuals.

She has taught over 100 courses, in both public sessions as well as onsite at clients, across the U.S., the U.K., Ireland, The Netherlands, and South Africa. She has moderated over 500 usability sessions, both in-lab and remote, within the U.S. and across several countries around the globe.

Before joining Human Factors International, Mary's experience included: Senior Web Project Manager, The McGraw-Hill Companies; Project Manager, Princeton Partners, Inc.; Project Leader, Educational Testing Service (ETS); and Director of Operations, Microcon Computer & Software Center.

She is currently a member of the User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA), and served for five years as treasurer of the New York City Chapter of the UXPA. Mary also is a practicing visual artist. You can view her work at marymichaels.com.



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