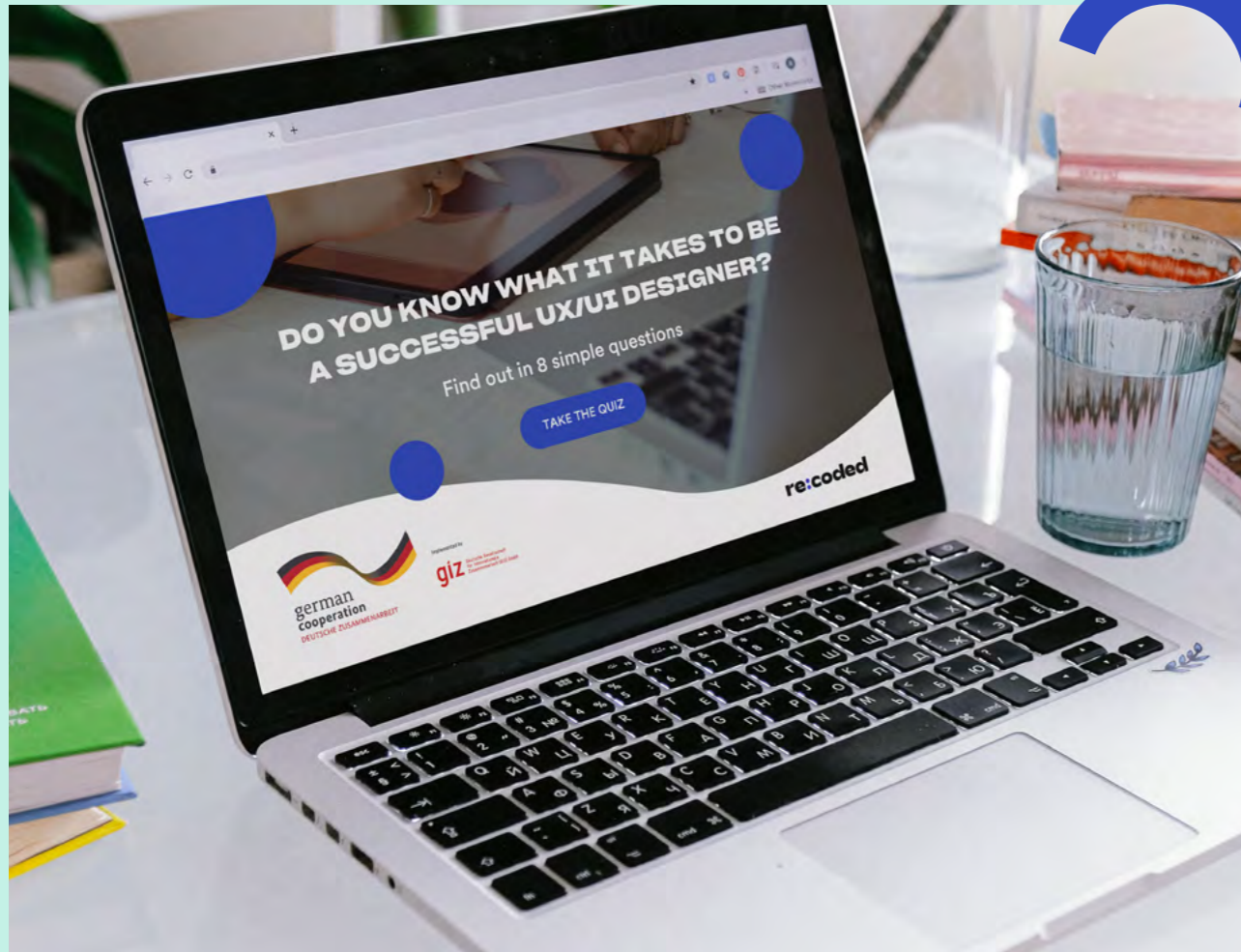




In **Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon**, professions in **creative and cultural industries** have long been regarded as non-serious jobs by society, government authorities, and economic players. However, with the ever-increasing demand for digital design professionals, especially in the field of **User Experience/ User Interface (UX/UI) design**, the domestic supply cannot keep up with the needs of the market.



Therefore, [Re:Coded](#) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) teamed up to change this perception. As part of the project [Cultural and Creative Industries](#), they jointly developed a two-phased advocacy campaign to promote the UX/UI design profession.



Re:Coded was founded in 2016 with the belief that talent is universal, but opportunity is not. Their aim is to empower students with not only digital skills, but also a critical mindset to thrive in the job market and become life-long learners and leaders.

Phase 1 : Kickstart your Career in UX/UI

The goal of phase one was to **introduce UX/UI** as a **viable, income-generating, and sustainable career option** and **trigger curiosity**. The campaign aimed to reach as many creative professionals in the design sector as possible. Social media ads directed interested users to a landing page with valuable and interactive content.

9 captivating blog articles explored the fascinating world of UX and UI Design

13 inspiring YouTube videos presented remarkable role models

1 engaging quiz
Is there a UX/UI designer in you?

1 download link to
The Ultimate List of Free UX/UI Resources

Phase 2 : Get Hired in UX/UI

In phase two, the primary goal was to **guide digital designers** early in their careers to find work by understanding the needs of employers. Since video content performed particularly well in the first phase, video productions became an important part of the second phase and were most effective in reach. This campaign was based around a landing page that hosted multiple content pieces and culminated in an event. This phase included:

12 compelling videos, including
How can I stand out as a UX/UI designer?

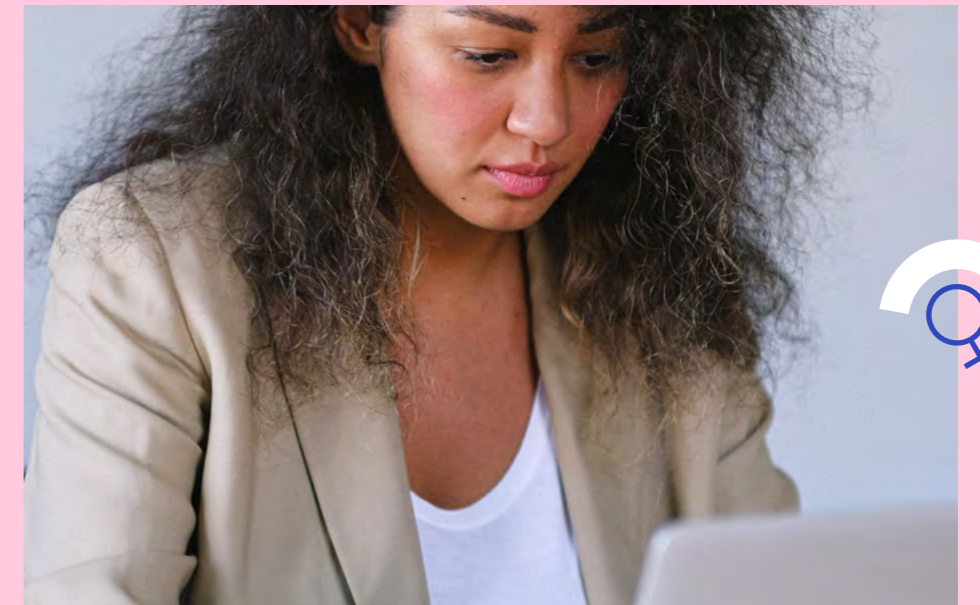
4 blog articles with content such as
Create a stellar UX/UI design portfolio in 5 steps

1 exclusive feedback event for upcoming UX/UI designers and their portfolios

USER EXPERIENCE

Bridging the Gender Gap in Tech

To encourage women's participation in tech-related fields such as UX/UI, the advocacy campaign featured female role models and used search engine keywords that particularly appeal to women.



A Success Story

Campaign #1: Garnering **2,113,984** impressions and **108,276** YouTube views, while attracting **5,393** unique visitors to its content.

Campaign #2: Surpassing expectations with **5,296,884** impressions and a remarkable **1,401,719** YouTube views, accompanied by **13,905** unique visitors to its content.

High Engagement

The organic campaign* generated a noteworthy **+9%** engagement rate, which does not include the engagement rate of paid advertising. This indicates a significant interest in the topic area. The audience not only viewed the content but also actively engaged with it by clicking, liking, sharing, and saving it.

This level of engagement is relatively high, particularly given the low conversion rates from impressions to engagement that are common on business accounts, which typically fall between **0.1%** and **4%**.

**Organic content refers to any type of content that is created and distributed without paid promotion or advertising.*

How to set up an advocacy campaign

Step 1



Identify the target group in order to reach all those affected.

Have open discussions with the target group to identify possible enabling or discouraging factors.



Step 2

Step 3



Produce the campaign content such as landing page, blog articles and social media content, based on the results.

Plan the social media outreach and define keywords for search engine optimisation (SEO) in an iterative process.



Step 4

Step 5



Spread the campaign content with the support of partners.



"The bootcamp gave me a solid foundation in UX/UI design and the confidence to pursue my ambitions. I now proudly proclaim my status as a UX/UI graduate wherever I go."

Ajer I. shared, an Erbil-born graduate of the Re:Coded bootcamp. She is now a successful UX/UI designer and an ardent advocate of the profession.



Alongside the advocacy campaign, Re:Coded organised two UX/UI design bootcamps in Iraq and Lebanon with the support of GIZ. The concerted efforts to promote women's participation in UX/UI design yielded noteworthy results.

At Re:Coded's first UX/UI design bootcamp, an encouraging **34%** of applicants were women. The build-up continued at the second bootcamp, attracting an even higher percentage of female applicants, namely **43%**.

During the bootcamp, trainers guided a selected group of students, over **60%** of whom were women, through a comprehensive curriculum that included more than 86 hours of online UX/UI design lessons over 18 weeks. In addition to the online lessons, students received valuable soft skill training that included time management, agile management, teamwork and business communication. These skills were taught through self-study courses and face-to-face mentoring sessions, all aimed at improving the students' readiness for a successful career.

Upon completion of the bootcamp, a significant number of graduates were actively seeking employment, and within six months of completing the programme, an impressive **91%** of them had found jobs. Most notably, **73%** of the employed graduates were women.





Lars Højholt, Re:Coded



Richard Epstein, GIZ Jordan

Interview

Why is it so important to raise awareness for digital design disciplines in the Middle East?

Lars Højholt (Re:Coded):

First of all, it is worth taking a step back here to look at the global economic situation as a whole and where jobs are going to come from in the future. The digital economy has grown 2.5 times faster than global GDP in recent years, and even despite the pandemic, it continues to grow.

With this in mind, it makes a lot of sense to focus on job creation and job opportunities in the digital economy if we want to create more modern and sustainable economies. While global demand is high, the local tech and digital design industry is in its early stages. But in a study from 2021, creative digital skills were cited among the top 5 skills employers required in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and this data is also validated by our own experiences as we have a 91% employment rate of job-seeking graduates from our UX/UI Design Bootcamps.

So, we know that there is both a global potential and a local demand for digital design skills, and that is the message we wanted to spread.

We wanted to get youth interested in this field by showcasing the viability of pursuing a career as a UX/UI designer in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan and started a campaign to bring more awareness towards this new pathway.

For the campaign, we worked with a core message: Ask the right questions to unlock your creative potential! Our target audience for this first campaign were young people in the current design community across all sub-fields of creative industries. The challenge is that they often struggle to build sustainable careers for themselves in the industry. We showed them how they might upskill themselves to apply their know-how in the digital field and what opportunities they could find here.

Throughout the campaign, we have interviewed people working as UX/UI designers in Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan to help young creatives see others as role models. We used the campaign to connect everyday skills to UX/UI design. We tried to inspire our audiences with examples that show how impactful UX/UI is in the tech space and give them clear pathways into this profession.

Richard Epstein (GIZ Jordan):

It is crucial to identify career paths that are and will be in demand, not only within a country, but also in other countries. UX/UI design as a digital design discipline does not necessarily need the physical presence of designers but can be delivered online and therefore easily exported to other countries as a service. The country in which the designer is based also benefits from these service exports, as its trade balance shows. Advocacy campaigns are the first step in raising awareness and building knowledge in this new field.

Following the media campaign, Re:Coded uses immersive courses and UX/UI design bootcamps to actively empower youth from untapped communities to build careers in technology.

How do these courses and bootcamps ensure that young students learn the critical skills they need for scoring decent and stable jobs in the tech industry?

Lars Højholt:

Our bootcamps are basically designed for people with little or no skills to join and be, at the end, ready to apply for and get their first job in the digital economy. To get them that far in just 3-5 months requires **two things**:

First of all, an intensive high-quality programme that teaches not only the right technical skills but also the soft skills needed to work and collaborate with others to solve complex digital design problems.

Secondly, it requires a group of highly motivated students who are ready to work hard, are eager to make a difference, and excited to build a sustainable career for themselves in the digital economy. As for the training, our UX/UI design bootcamp takes our students through 250 hours of content where they learn through live online classes for 10 hours per week and do self-study through our learning platform for 15-25 hours per week. The curriculum is provided and certified by Flatiron School, voted the best coding and design school in the world in 2021, and adapted by Re:Coded to make sure that it fits market demands.

The programme teaches students to think and build like designers by solving user-centred assignments and working on real-life projects. We believe the best way to learn is by doing, which is why the final four weeks of the bootcamp are all about applying everything our students have learned in a final project.

The skills they will learn within the project will ultimately prepare them for a role in the tech industry.

As for the students in our programmes, Re:Coded has a four-phased selection process for intensive bootcamps that we use to ensure participant interest, motivation, and determination. We often get over 600-1000 applicants for a programme and from that pool of applicants, we select 25-50 students. Frequently, they already have some experience or interest in design from one field or another, but in essence, the bootcamp teaches them everything they need to know to land that first job.

Not only regional industries benefit from a skilled workforce in UX/UI Design. COVID-19 has accelerated the shift towards international digital trade.

What potential brings a skilled workforce in UX/UI design to a global level?

Lars Højholt:

Great design is not only a huge added value for any product. In the digital economy, in which you are typically competing in a much larger market, whether nationally or globally, and in which the attention span of users is minimal, design and user experience is absolutely critical to the success of your business.

Businesses realise this and that is why the demand for UX/UI designers is on the rise and salary levels are higher than in other design fields.

However, this is not just an argument for digital design in general. It is also an argument for educating local designers to enter in the global digital economy.

Understanding the audience is such a critical aspect of design, so we need greater diversity in digital design and in the tech industry as a whole in order to build solutions that fit and attract a wider audience.

Which challenges must be met to reap this potential?

Richard Epstein:

The most important step is to make the skilled workforce visible to international potential employers so that they can find and hire them. However, for many countries this is not enough: The rules governing international trade in services are not yet as harmonised as those governing goods. Locally, designers may face difficulties with tax regulations. Employers may also encounter difficulties with customs and other issues.

Sometimes the banking system is a huge burden for an individual person to cope with, with high charges for international transactions and tailor-made rather for the big companies. Another challenge is to create conditions which enable fair working conditions.

In design, form follows function. For this reason, one of the most crucial questions a UX/UI designer could ask is: What is the problem that we are solving?!

If Re:Coded could ask global policy makers to solve one problem of your industry, what would that problem be?

Lars Højholt:

There is plenty of work ahead on a structural level to support the development of the digital design field that goes well beyond education - from ensuring stable high-speed internet or investing in the digital economy on a national level to creating networks or platforms for designers to meet and push each other forward or to help encourage greater diversity within the field.

One thing that stands out, however, would be ensuring stable digital banking capacities so that digital designers can work remotely and still get paid easily. This is often a stumbling block to a lot of designers in the tech industry and as we are seeing an increase in and appetite for remote work, this is an opportunity missed.

It would allow designers to work outside of their local economies, while still bringing that money back into the country.

“Understanding the audience is such a critical aspect of design, so we need greater diversity in digital design and in the tech industry as a whole in order to build solutions that fit and attract a wider audience.”

Lars Højholt, Re:Coded

DIVERSITY

Key Learnings

Co-creation is key: The co-creation process of the advocacy campaign involved a participatory approach that included focus group discussions with the target group and educational institutions. The discussions helped to identify enabling and discouraging factors.

Scalable video styles work: The first campaign involved managing professional videographers in each country, which was challenging. However, the second campaign used an online meeting tool for recording and editing, resulting in better performance, lower costs, and less coordination time.

Be aligned with your target audience: The campaign was set up completely digitally to target an audience with interest in UX/UI design. Utilising the same campaign audience was beneficial for the second campaign's paid outreach. The audience's prior exposure to the first campaign's content increased their engagement with the second campaign, leading to improved results.

Less is more: The second campaign demonstrated that focus on the topic rather than sheer quantity can yield better results. Despite producing slightly less content, the reach of the second campaign surpassed expectations, proving that quality and relevance are key factors in achieving broader engagement.

Including regional brands is helpful: Collaborating with renowned regional employers allowed access to their audiences and engaged individuals interested in opportunities with these reputable companies. This partnership expanded reach and facilitated content sharing.

Focus on effective outcomes: The second campaign's employability-centric call to action resonated better with the audience, driving stronger engagement compared to the exploration of new career paths.

UX/UI alumni networks: Alumni networks can help graduates get hired. Alumni who are now working in the industry can spread the word about job vacancies and receive recommendations for qualified candidates.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project Cultural and Creative Industries is jointly implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Goethe-Institut on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

It improves employment and income opportunities for creative professionals in six partner countries; Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa and operates mainly in the music, fashion, design and animation sectors. In addition to promoting the development of entrepreneurial, digital, creative and technical skills through training programmes, the project aims to strengthen the framework conditions and the ecosystem of the cultural and creative industries.

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