

Staff+ Portfolio Checklist

Score each case study out of 12. The category where you keep failing is the gap between your portfolio and a Staff+ offer.

Scope & Ownership

- ☐ **Your role in a cross-functional decision is explicit**
Why recruiters check this: vague "we" language is the single most common reason a Staff+-level case study reads as Senior work.
- ☐ **At least one case study spans more than one team or product area**
Why recruiters check this: single-feature scope is expected at Senior; Staff+ requires evidence of broader influence.
- ☐ **You describe a decision you made against pushback**
Why recruiters check this: this is the clearest signal of design judgment, not just execution.

Narrative & Language

- ☐ **"I" appears in every key decision, not just "we"**
Why recruiters check this: recruiters skim the first two paragraphs specifically for this pattern.
- ☐ **The problem statement includes the business or user stakes, not just the design brief**
Why recruiters check this: shows you understood why the work mattered, not just what was asked.
- ☐ **You name at least one thing you'd do differently now**
Why recruiters check this: retrospective judgment is a stronger Staff+ signal than a clean, conflict-free story.

Metrics & Outcomes

- ☐ **At least one metric is a shipped result, not a projection**
Why recruiters check this: "projected to increase conversion" reads very differently from an actual measured outcome.
- ☐ **The outcome is tied to a business or user metric, not just a design metric**
Why recruiters check this: "cleaner UI" isn't an outcome; retention, conversion, or time-to-task are.
- ☐ **You can explain how the metric was measured if asked live**
Why recruiters check this: interview follow-up questions expose unverified or borrowed metrics quickly.

Cross-Functional Influence

- ☐ **At least one case study mentions influencing a PM or engineering decision**
Why recruiters check this: Staff+ scope is defined by influence beyond your own team.
- ☐ **You describe how you handled disagreement with a stakeholder**
Why recruiters check this: conflict-navigation is a core Staff+ competency interviewers probe for directly.
- ☐ **You can name who you mentored or unblocked on the project**
Why recruiters check this: even in an IC track, Staff+ roles expect some multiplier effect on others.

My Score: _ _ /12

What It Means

0–6 (reading as Senior, real gaps)

Not there yet — and that's fixable. Book a 1:1 portfolio review:
adplist.org/mentors/olha-bahaieva

7–9 (borderline, usually a metrics or language problem)

Close. See real portfolios that clear this bar:
olhabahaieva.com/resources/portfolio-directory

10–12 (Staff+ ready)

Ready. Now practice saying it out loud — the interview guide:
olhabahaieva.com/resources/staff-plus-interview-guide