GUILD

UX/UI Report
December 2020

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Chapter One

Executive Summary

Our goal was to create an application to connect young creatives, whether for the purpose of networking, collaborating, or socialization. There are applications and websites in existence today for those purposes, but there is not currently an application that combines all of those purposes with a focus on young creatives and their specialized needs. Often these applications are either geared for primarily socialization or 'corporate' networking, we aim to find a place in the middle. With the "Guild" app, users will be able to create a profile, feature posts, browse and post upcoming events, find collaborative opportunities, make connections, and more. After discussing the needs and desires of users with potential users themselves through user research, interviews, and usability testing, we feel confident we have created an easy to navigate and aesthetically pleasing mobile app that meets the users' needs and wants.

Chapter Two

Problem Statement

Young creatives in America, especially millennials and those belonging to generation z, need to be able to connect easily and casually with each other because they consistently report as being more lonely than older American demographics. For creatives, a contributing factor to feeling lonely is feeling misunderstood by a society catering to the more corporate world and pushing creativity to the side. Social media sites dedicated to young professionals, such as LinkedIn, don't seem to cater to the needs of creatives to really showcase their work in a more casual setting. In addition to this, it can be difficult on these sites to network with the right kinds of people. You're often shown people you may not have much in common with at all other than a school or workplace connection. Networking in general is seen as daunting and difficult, but in a more casual laid-back setting, really isn't any different than just getting to know someone and making connections. A mobile app connecting young creatives, whether they be in the big city or a small rural town, could help negate the loneliness and feelings of being misunderstood for creatives as well as help connect them with other creatives, whether as friends or collaborators, in a more casual, friendly setting. The primary focus of this app is on connecting with others and making friends, but a secondary benefit would be the ability to showcase your craft and announce to employers that you are seeking employment. A "job seeking" filter on profiles and posts would enable users to make that information known to employers. The impact of loneliness is great. As discussed previously loneliness is a growing problem with serious consequences. It has even been referred to as "The "Loneliness Epidemic." But research also shows that friendships are helpful in reducing serious consequences, like reducing risk of mortality and developing certain diseases. Art is also helpful for lowering the risk of disease. According to Harvard Health Publishing, "Studies have shown that expressing themselves through art can help people with depression, anxiety, or cancer, too" (Harvard Health Publishing 2017). If the problem of loneliness is fixed by connecting creative people, causing the creation of art and artistic communities, then less people would suffer from health risks. This matters especially in the year 2020, because the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has put us on a path of isolation and loneliness, and with our health mattering more than ever it's important to connect online in more meaningful ways.

Chapter Three

Related Works

There are apps in existence now with the primary purpose of connecting users to others with similar interests, for networking, for collaboration purposes, and for finding upcoming events in your area. Some of these apps even attempt to cater to creative individuals. However, none of these apps combine all of these purposes into one app specifically catered for young creatives. There are still some things we can appreciate about each app and website that may be useful to incorporate into our own.

#1 Behance

Behance is geared more towards finding work for creatives by allowing them to showcase and assemble a portfolio in one place. A secondary feature of this site is connecting with others on the site. I appreciate the ability to sort through work based on category, and would like to utilize a similar feature in the form of search filters. In regards to what we wish to create with our app, Behance puts too much pressure on users to receive engagements. There is a focus on numbers when visiting a user's profile, presenting their project views, appreciations, followers, and following. This could spark competition as well as discouragement, which could affect the ability of users to meaningfully connect with one another.

#2 Shapr

Shapr identified the need to make networking fun and less daunting, and decided to tackle this design problem by basing connections on shared interests, making these connections more meaningful for individuals than only being connected based on something such as a shared school background. While Shapr is a more casual way of networking than other apps, it still does not cater to the more specialized needs of creatives.

#3 Instagram

Instagram saw the need to create a way for people to express themselves as well as connect with people and things they love. Instagram is primarily picture-based, allowing users to quickly consume and make an opinion on the content that is shared. Primarily using photos and videos is the best way to showcase creatives' works as it's mostly visual. Instagram's scrolling design often results in users consuming media a little too quickly, not really taking in what they're seeing. This also puts creatives who use time-based media such as videos at a disadvantage in the feed, since videos take more time and effort to consume than pictures. Instagram's algorithm also favors users who receive higher engagement and numbers, making it harder for newer and less known users to be seen at all.

#4 Bumble

Bumble saw a need for people to be able to make healthy relationships, whether they be friendships, romantic relationships, or working relationships. Bumble enables users to create meaningful and healthy connections, whether the user is dating, looking for friends, or networking. Bumble is great in that it puts an emphasis on healthy relationships of any kind. Bumble also brands itself as more of a movement or lifestyle than just an app. Despite Bumble pushing for its ability to help foster connections of any kind, its primary use is still for dating and is commonly referred to as a dating app. They feature "success stories" often, but the majority of these success stories are for romantic relationships, scaring off users who really are just looking to make friends.

#5 Backstage

Backstage saw the need for a casting service for actors and performers to easily find, apply/audition for roles. This system addresses the problem by creating a site where you create a profile, search and apply to jobs easily. A deficiency we identified is that this website requires you to pay monthly which is frustrating especially for artists who are often underpaid. In respect for our goals this website specifically caters toward actors while our design will be for a variety of creative professions. This site is also not geared toward casual collaboration, it's strictly for professional jobs whereas our design would allow the user to seek casual collaboration.

#6 LinkedIn

LinkedIn saw the need for an online space where professionals can network and search for jobs. LinkedIn's design allows you to create a network of people in your field. This system recognizes that connecting those of similar interest is helpful for employment purposes which is a principle we plan to implement. LinkedIn's design caters toward corporate jobs and creates a very professional atmosphere, which can be frustrating for artists and creatives because their potential employers are not often attracted by LinkedIn's corporate world atmosphere.

#7 Vampr

This system addresses the problem of new musicians not knowing where to start out in the field by connecting musicians, industry professionals, and music lovers within your area, allowing you to create a profile with your latest creations, and by providing publishing support with their program Vampr Publishing. The deficiency in this design with regards to our project is that this design only provides support for musical artists while our design would provide support for a wide variety of creatives in different fields.

Design Process

4.1 User Research

Defining Our Users:

Our users are primarily members of generation Z and young millennials fresh or soon-to-be fresh out of college artists or are planning to work in a creative industry. We interviewed various students at colleges around the country who are close to graduation. The different groups who will be using this app include artists specializing in various different artistic mediums, because of this we interviewed students in various creative industries. The groups we covered in our interview include the film, music, theater, journalism, and writing industries. We reached out to the creative people in our lives that happen to cover different portions of the country and include a range of different creative industries. We chose these specific people because they are planning to work in different creative fields in different cities. We do have more than one JMU student respondent, however the JMU students plan to work in different fields and in different areas post-graduation. Because of our current circumstances as students with smaller circles during a pandemic, it would not be feasible to find interviews in every city we want to reach. We conducted these interviews over the phone.

We interviewed a total of 7 users: 2 males and 5 females. Here is more detailed information about our interviewed respondents:

Sara Banton:
Sara is a female senior media arts and design major at James Madison University, with a concentration in journalism and minors in political science and english. Sara currently lives in Harrisonburg, Virginia, but is planning on moving either back to Richmond, Virginia after graduation or to a new citing altogether. Sara has a passion for writing and design, though her own skill set lies primarily in writing so she enjoys collaborating with and getting advice from designers for various projects.

4.1 User Research

Defining Our Users (Cont.):

Sallie Sledd:
Sallie is a female senior film major at the Savannah College of Art and Design and resides in Savannah, Georgia. Ideally Sallie would like to work for National Geographic upon graduation travelling and filming for nature documentaries, but is open to moving wherever there is opportunity.

Becka Russo:
Becka is a female senior musical theater major attending James Madison University and residing in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Becka wishes to audition for various regional theater companies upon graduation and is open to moving wherever opportunity presents itself.

Noah Hamade:
Noah is a male junior musical theater and communications double major. Noah attends James Madison University, currently is living in Harrisonburg. He plans to move to a city and work as an actor/singer after graduation. Noah has also done film acting and plans to continue with this.

Joshua Wisdom:
Joshua is a male junior film major who attends Chapman University in Orange County, CA. Joshua aspires to be a director. He plans to move to LA, specifically West Hollywood after graduation. Josh has a passion for film, has a background in the theater and plans to work and live in LA.

Ryann Sheehy:
Ryann is a female senior theater and SMAD double major attending James Madison University. Ryann is a playwright, journalist, stage manager, and plans to attend graduate school. She plans to move somewhere new after graduation.

4.1 User Research

Defining Our Users (Cont.):

Sarah Katherine Lawless:
Sarah Katherine is a female junior musical theater major who attends Boston Conservatory at the Berklee in Boston, MA. Sarah Katherine is an actor, singer, and songwriter who plans to move to a new city after graduation. She often collaborates with others through songwriting.

Prepare and Conduct User Research:

Most of these interviews were conducted over Facetime on a laptop, allowing us to record the audio from the interview on our phones for later transcription. Others were sent the interview questions as well as a summary of the concept of the app over email. The following were the interview questions used:

1. Tell me a little bit about how you get connected with other artists/creatives currently?
2. What are some of the apps and websites you use the most to connect with others?
3. Do you plan on moving somewhere new after graduation or beyond? How do you feel about this process?
4. When you need a person for a creative project, how do you find them?
5. How do you feel when you hear the term "networking"?
6. What's your biggest problem/hardest part as a creative/artist?
7. What are the products/tools that help you do tasks (networking/job searching) as a creative/artist?
8. Is there anything you dislike about these products/tools/What is missing?
9. What features of these products are most helpful/Has a feature specifically helped you?

4.1 User Research

Prepare and Conduct User Research(Cont.):

*Here we take time to explain the product and it's features

Post Questions:
1. What's most appealing/important to you about this product?
2. Could you see yourself using this product?
3. Does this remind you of any other products?
4. Is there any feature that's missing that you would expect?
5. What would keep people from using this product?
6. What would be most important to you, networking, job searching or connecting?

Observing the Data: :

      After conducting the interviews we transcribed the audio to create transcripts of the interviewees' responses. We then color coded the transcripts looking for similarities in thoughts between the responses. After coding the transcripts we sorted the similarities we found into groups.

Sorting the Data:

      Our first step in sorting the data was reviewing our transcripts of the interviews and audio recordings. We chose to use the closed card sorting method. We went through the transcripts of our interviews color coding and looking for similarities between interviewee statements. After finding similarities in the interviews we created four categories to sort these statements into. These four categories we used were:

Positive feelings about Networking/Collaborating:
Negative feelings about Networking/Collaborating:
What is exciting about our Idea (specific ideas/features):
What could our idea be lacking?:

4.1 User Research

Organizing the Data:

We then used Miro to sort our statements into these categories to better visual the data. Here are our results:

4.1 User Research

Organizing the Data(CONT.):

What is exciting about our Idea (specific ideas/features):

"Virtual networking"

"talking to other people and finding what you need"

"The events page"

"Being able to customize your profile"

"Making the job process more informal"

"The job search page is most interesting"

"Events page, we make art so people can see it"

"Would help close distance between artists and employers, especially during the pandemic when artists and employers often can't physically meet"

"Good starting point for actors to get plugged in to their communities"

What could our idea be lacking?

"An option on your profile to include whether you are looking for a job or an employer"

Ability to upload "2 and half minute song cuts & videos" on profile

"in bio links to event"

"create your own homepage/main feed could be customized"

"Create a community of better-known companies willing to pilot the app."

Need for a "reward system, likes?? Or no likes?? Reward system, matches??"

"Like on hinge (dating app), it suggests, 'we think you're most compatible with!' it can open your eyes to different people, with the algorithm"

"Ability to post and see resumes/reels/portfolios/etc"

"Who exactly qualifies as a 'young artist/creative'?"

"Option say what you're looking for on profile"

"Create more like levels, based on amount of times you've done a successful collaboration"

"A place where it shows Friend activity, who matches with who"

"Can people who aren't necessarily young artists that are interested in the arts sign up?"

"Different features pander to different users" informal vs. formal networking

4.1 User Research

Summarizing Our Findings:

After summarizing our data we found that there were mixed feelings about "Networking." We found that some interviewees associated words like "cold," "anxious," and "business related." However other interviews expressed positive feelings about networking, using words like "friendly" and "opportunities." From this we concluded that the interviews often felt negative about networking if they related it also to "business" and "linkedin." As opposed to interviewees that were positive when relating "networking" to "art," "growing," and "collaboration."

When looking at what interviewees were excited about they had mixed reactions as well. However two commonalities seem to be interest in the events page as well as reforming the networking/job searching process, using statements like "virtual networking," making the job process "informal," and closing the "distance between artists and employers."

In looking at the categories "what could our idea be lacking?" we see that the interviewees want to be able to "customize" and have many "abilities." There were similarities in answers about wanting to have more information in the "bio" than we originally anticipated. Interviewees expressed wanting the ability to include documents, videos and links in their bio as well as the ability to customize the profile itself. The respondents wanted to be able to curate their feeds to what interested them and what they hoped to find within the app, whether that be job opportunities or casual connections.

Results:

After conducting our interviews, coding the transcripts and visualizing the data we came up with a few different ideas and ways to think about our product. We had previously thought that "networking" would have a very negative response and although some had this reaction others did not. Overall it seemed that our interviewees were open to networking and wanted to network but that they just didn't always like the networking products that

4.1 User Research

Results(CONT.):

exist. Many of the respondents preferred the idea of connecting with other like-minded individuals with similar interests and goals and helping each other improve their crafts than the more formal setting the term "networking" can sometimes entail.

It was also helpful to learn that many of the interviews could see themselves using our product and were excited about many of the features we explained. One dichotomy we were unsure before the interviews was the balance between "informal" and "formal" networking. After these interviews it became clear that the interviewees believed both formal and informal networking could take place on the same app but that different filtering and indicators should exist so that the user can customize their experience. This was another helpful observation, that the interviewees were very interested in being able to customize their experience as well as being able to customize their profiles. This seemed like something very exciting for creatives, the ability to show off that creativity in customization. Interviewees were also very excited about the "events" page, as one interviewee put it "we make art so people can see it." Another interviewee was hopeful about those who did not identify as a "creative" being able to use the app specifically for the events feature. This same interviewee wanted to better understand the term "young creative", as they were a bit unsure on who would and wouldn't fall into that category.

Two other observations made by interviewees were helpful as well. One identified the need for a "reward system" for example likes and matches. Many of the users were open to the dating app style reward system of "matches." The interviewees also expressed that they like "algorithms" that provide the user with "recommended matches" on dating apps. This is also similar to music streaming services that recommend music based on the music you already listen to. This led us to the decision to implement the system of "matches" to create a creative network as well as the feature that provides the user with recommended matches.

4.2 Personas

Personas: Primary Persona

Amy Johnson

CREATIVE | FRESH OUT OF COLLEGE | NERVOUS

background

Amy is graduating from James Madison University this year and plans to move to Chicago after graduation to pursue a career in graphic design. She currently only knows one person in Chicago and is job searching. Amy also has other creative interests like song writing and singing. Amy is nervous about networking and reaching out to collaborate with other creatives.

demographics

age: 21

profession: graphic design

gender: female

life situation: graduating college student

primary language: English

goals

- to find a job in Chicago related to graphic design
- connect and collaborate creatively with new people in Chicago

needs

- needs to network because this may lead to a job
- needs a platform that has creative jobs
- Amy needs a way to meet other creatives in her new city

frustrations

- websites like Linkden are intimidating
- many job search sites are lacking in opportunities related to creative interests
- meeting other creatives in a new city is difficult
- Amy likes the idea of networking but it also makes her anxious and feels very corporate
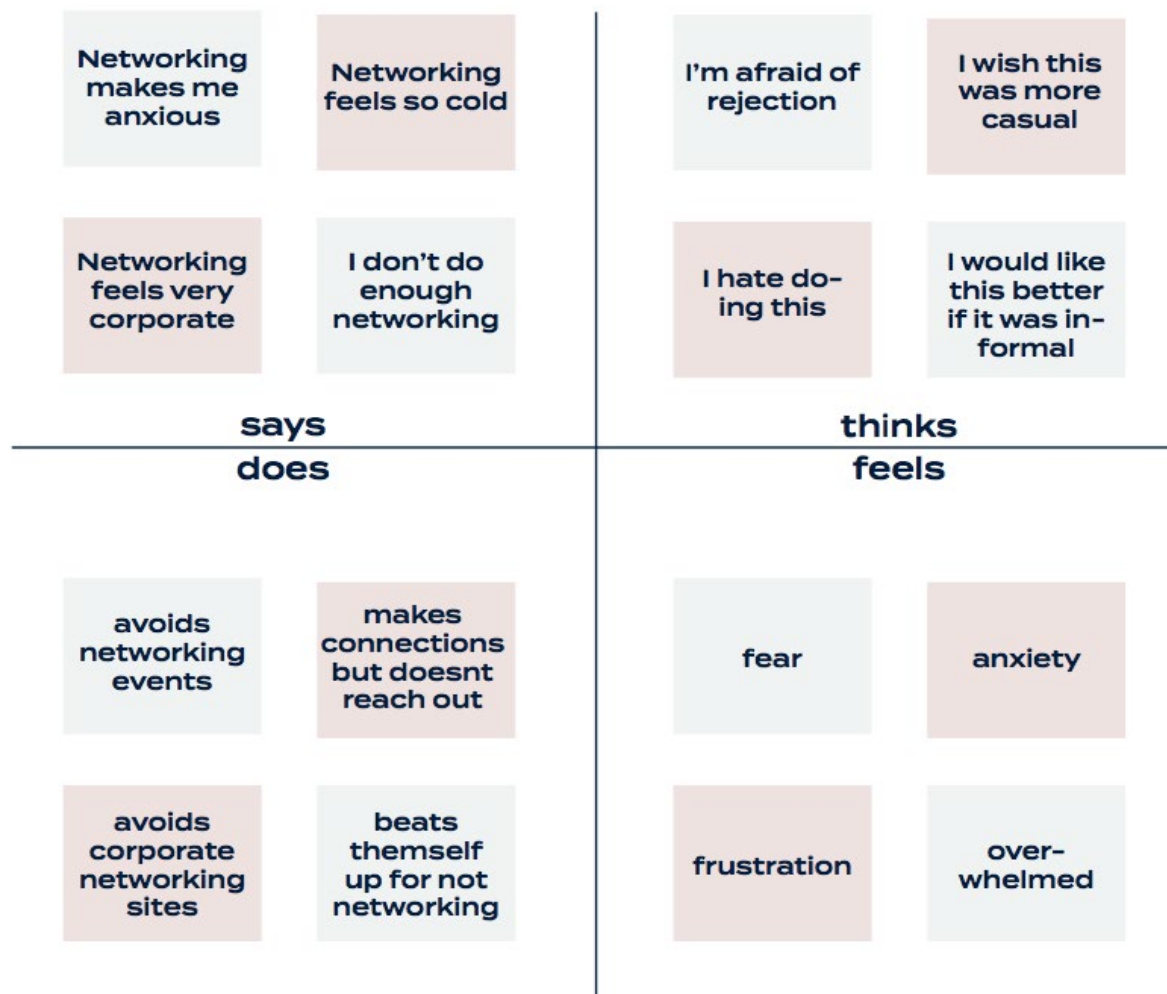
technology use

- skilled in mobile phone use and uses multiple times a day
- skilled with a laptop and design software, uses multiple times in a week
- a generally tech-savy individual

"I wish I could network with other professional creatives without feeling intimidated"

4.2 Personas

Empathy Map:

Amy Johnson
Empathy Map: Networking

says		thinks	
Networking makes me anxious	Networking feels so cold	I'm afraid of rejection	I wish this was more casual
Networking feels very corporate	I don't do enough networking	I hate do-ing this	I would like this better if it was in-formal

does		feels	
avoids networking events	makes connections but doesnt reach out	fear	anxiety
avoids corporate networking sites	beats themself up for not networking	frustration	over-whelmed

4.2 Personas

Secondary Persona:

Nick Garcia

ESTABLISHED| COLLABORATIVE | OUTGOING

background

Nick graduated from NYU's film program and has been working in the independent film industry around LA. He is a director and has already created a few films. He often creates on the spur of the moment and needs help! He is also passionate about collaboration and lifting up new artists and creatives.

demographics

age: 34

gender: male

profession: film director

life situation: graduated, career established

primary language: English

goals

- create independent films
- find local talent
- help up and coming artists
- collaborate with other artists in the area, informally

needs

- needs creative help for his films ie. mics, cameras, sound, actors
- sometimes needs help right away
- needs a better way of finding the creative people he needs

frustrations

- backstage can help with actors, but it costs money
- sometimes Nick needs help right away and current sites don't work in this way
- Nick at times just wants casual creative collaboration and many sites only cater toward formal collaboration

technology use

- skilled in mobile phone use and uses multiple times a day
- skilled with a laptop and editing software, uses multiple times in a day
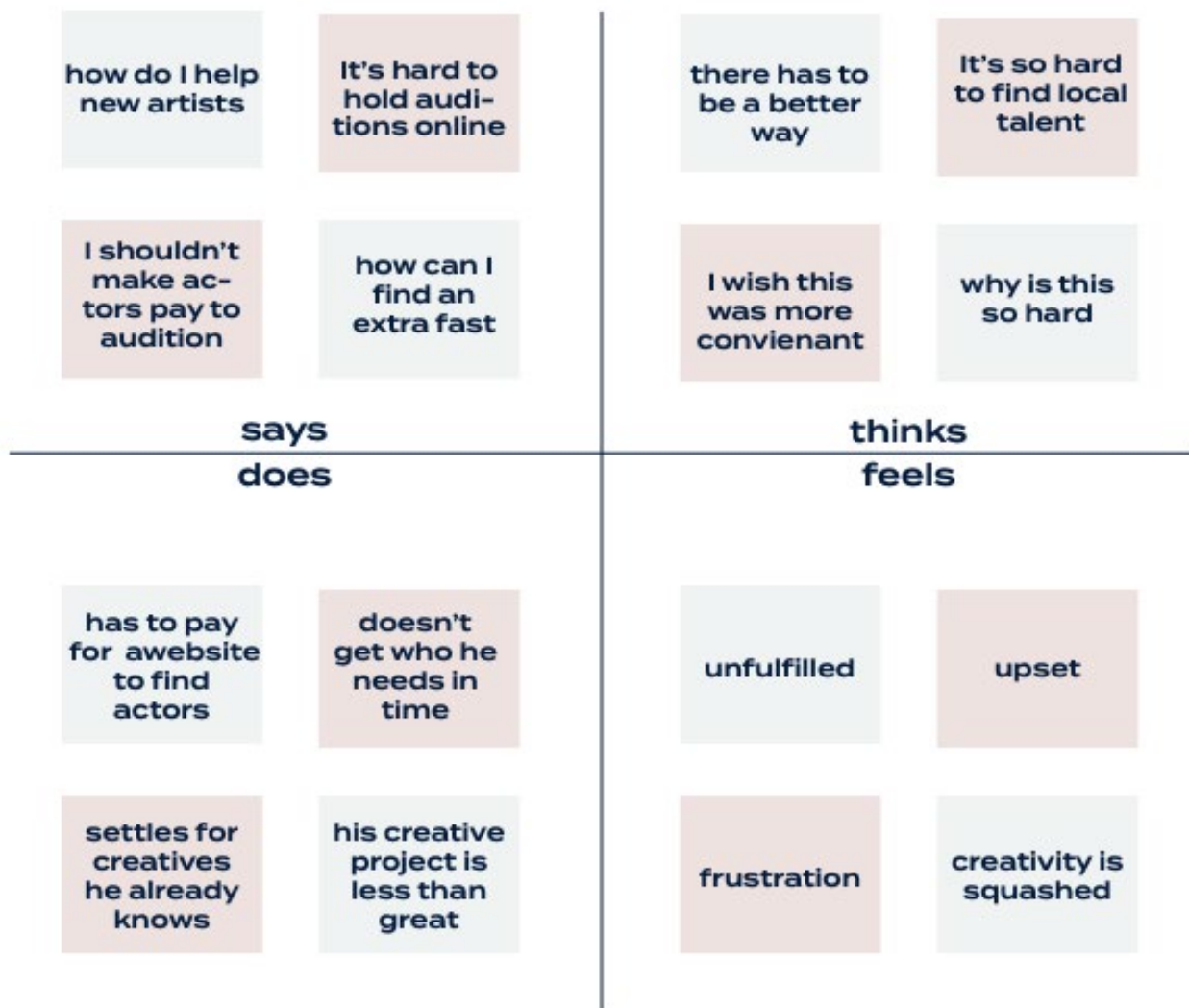- a skilled and very tech-savy individual

"As an employer I wish there was an easy way to get connected to creative individuals"

4.2 Personas

Empathy Map:

Nick Garcia
Empathy Map: hiring for and independent film

how do I help new artists	It's hard to hold audi- tions online	there has to be a better way	It's so hard to find local talent
I shouldn't make ac- tors pay to audition	how can I find an extra fast	I wish this was more convienant	why is this so hard

says   **thinks**

does   **feels**

has to pay for awebsite to find actors	doesn't get who he needs in time	unfulfilled	upset
settles for creatives he already knows	his creative project is less than great	frustration	creativity is squashed

4.3 Scenarios

Scenario 1:

Amy Johnson is graduating soon and is nervous about getting a job. She has a profile on Linkedin and has searched on other job sites but is dissatisfied because there are not as many creative individuals and opportunities on these sites. One of Amy's peers recommends the app "Guild." She says "Amy, definitely download Guild before moving to Chicago, it helped me meet so many people and actually got me my first job!" Amy follows her peers' advice and downloads Guild. First she creates a profile, she is able to customize the style of her profile as well as add her most recent work as a Graphic Designer. She is even able to add an audio file of her singing a song she wrote. She also designates on her profile that she's moving to Chicago and is looking for a job. Once she opens the homepage of the app she is already met with "matches" of employers and people with similar interests in Chicago. She chooses to match with a few of these people creating a network available to her. On the next page she is also met with job listings and creative opportunities for graphic design work. Finally on the third page she can find events related to graphic design work as well as open mic nights available to singer songwriters. After connecting with an employer on the app she messages Amy and tells her to apply to their graphic design position. Amy gets the job and moves to Chicago less nervous because she has already created a network of creative people. She attends an open mic night on her first night in Chicago and meets a band who happen to need a lead singer. Now Amy has a job, a network of creatives and a new band in her very new home of Chicago.

4.3 Scenarios

Scenario 2:

Nick Garcia has been living in Los Angeles since he graduated from NYU more than 10 years ago, and has successfully worked as a director on multiple films now. As an older professional in the film industry, he knows how difficult it can be to break out into a new creative community and has a passion for helping new local talent. Nick needs a variety of help on his creative pursuits, and he occasionally needs this help right away when members of his cast and crew unexpectedly drop out. He often uses the "Backstage" program to find help, but it costs money and often takes time before he finds the talent he is looking for. He also enjoys working on casual, personal projects to experiment and expand his reel, but most sites out there are catered to a more professional audience. Nick meets an aspiring actor fresh out of college on one of his sets. When Nick asks how the young actor heard about the opportunity to star in his new play, the actor says one of the other actors had posted about upcoming auditions on the new app connecting young creatives, "Guild". Curious, Nick goes home that night and decides to download the app and create an account. Nick finds that not only actors use the app, but all kinds of creators who are looking to offer their skills to various projects. Nick is able to easily connect with these up and coming creatives, and finds he has a newfound world of talent at his fingertips. This greatly reduces his stress when one of his stage managers unexpectedly drops out the next day, and he's able to find a new stage manager to come help out in almost no time at all. Nick is now able to quickly find new talent to invite on to his projects, professional and personal, as well as a great network of friendly creatives with his same passion of looking to help each other grow.

4.4 Storyboards

Primary storyboard:

4.4 Storyboards

Secondary storyboard:
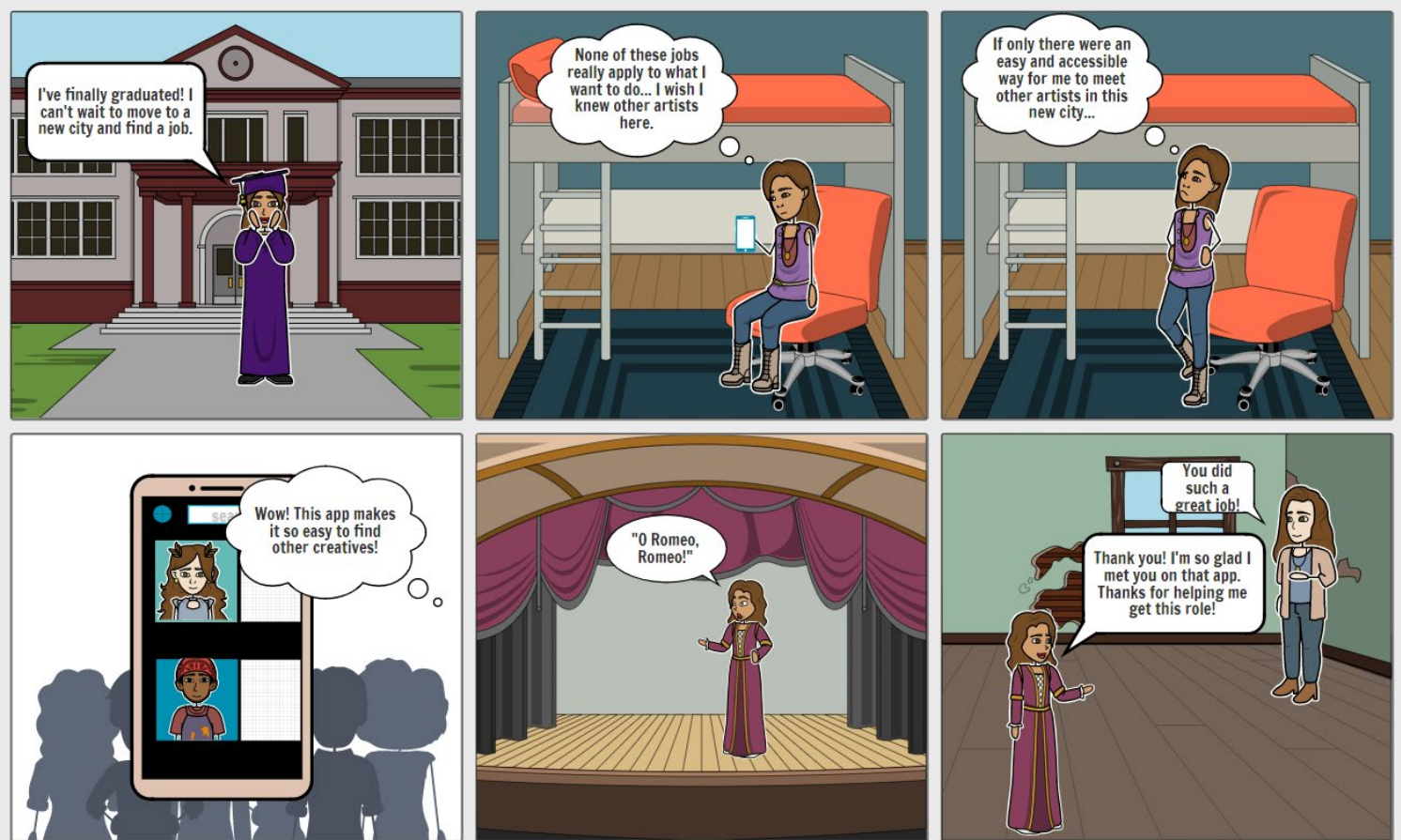
Create your own at Storyboard That

4.5 Data Requirements

Data Requirements:

- Personal data to create user's profile
- User's location to filter collaborations and connection that are within their designated radius
- User data and past activity, as well as user interests to create recommendations for connections and collaborations

Functional Requirements:

- This product should allow users to search for people specializing in specific creative endeavors.
- This product should allow users to easily search for and find jobs specifically in the creative field.
- This product should allow users to find other creatives within their city.
- This product should have a simple, easy-to-navigate interface that adheres to Fitt's Law.
- This product must put the focus on the work the person has done as well as their abilities.
- This product must recommend users to each other based on their similar interests and/or searches.
- This product should recommend jobs, people and events based on the information they input on their profile
- This product should allow users to upload videos, audio files, documents, and pictures to their profile to showcase their most recent work
- The product should be able to link the user's contact list and facebook friends to find other people that the user knows

4.5 Data Requirements

Contextual Requirements:

- The app should be able to put the user's profile in context by using their current location or preferred location

Technical Requirements:

- This product must fit the dimensions and requirements for the most popularly used smartphone devices (Apple, Samsung).

User Requirements:

- Users must register for an account using a valid email address.
- Users must specify whether they are open to jobs or not

Chapter Five

Design Solutions

Brainstorming and Sketches
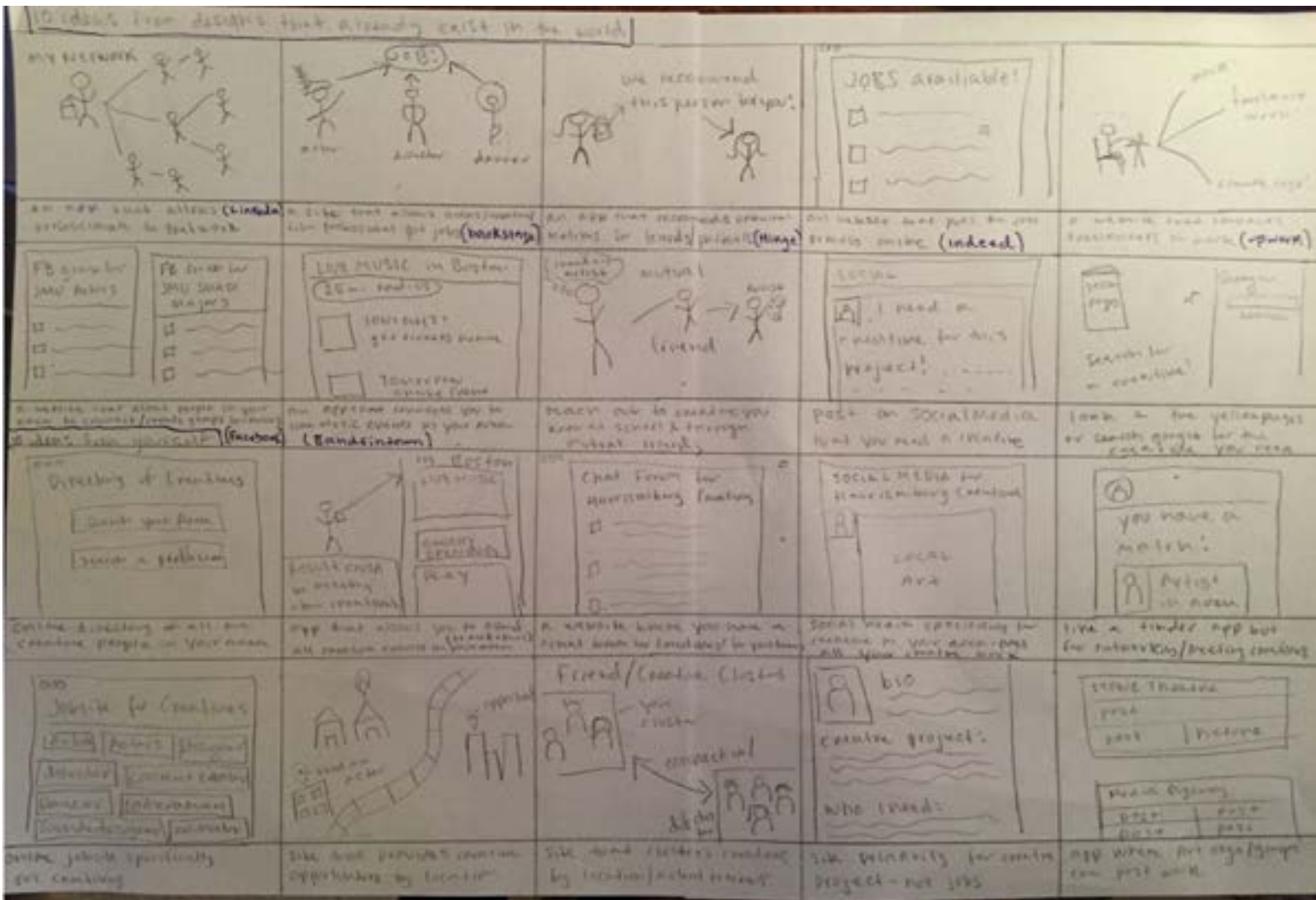
NUF Test for Brainstorming

Directions: Put each sticky note into the idea column. Score each idea from 1-10. Put total in the final column.

NEW-Has it been tried before? An idea will score higher if it is significantly different from approaches that have come before it. A new idea captures attention and possibility.

USEFUL-Does the idea provide a solution? An idea that solves the problem completely, without creating any new problems, will score better here.

FEASIBLE-Can it be done? A new and useful idea still has to be weighed against its cost to implement. Ideas that require fewer resources and effort to be realized will score better here.

Idea	New	Useful	Feasible	Total
online directory for creatives	3	5	5	13
app options for creative careers in your area	4	6	6	16
site that creating more brand awareness...	3	6	5	14
social medium based on location for creatives	4	4	7	15
directory app for different careers opportunities	6	8	7	20

Idea	New	Useful	Feasible	Total
make space for creating	3	6	6	15
site provides creative opportunities based on location	6	6	6	17
site that creates marketing tool or product channels	8	7	6	21
site for creative professionals	5	7	7	19
app for creative gigs to get started/jobs	4	7	7	18
app for professional networking	0	6	8	14
job site for makers/film/music	0	6	8	14
app that recommends potential matches	0	8	8	16

The Three Best Concepts

1. A website that clusters creatives based on mutual friends.

2. An app that operates similar to a dating app, but for networking creatives.
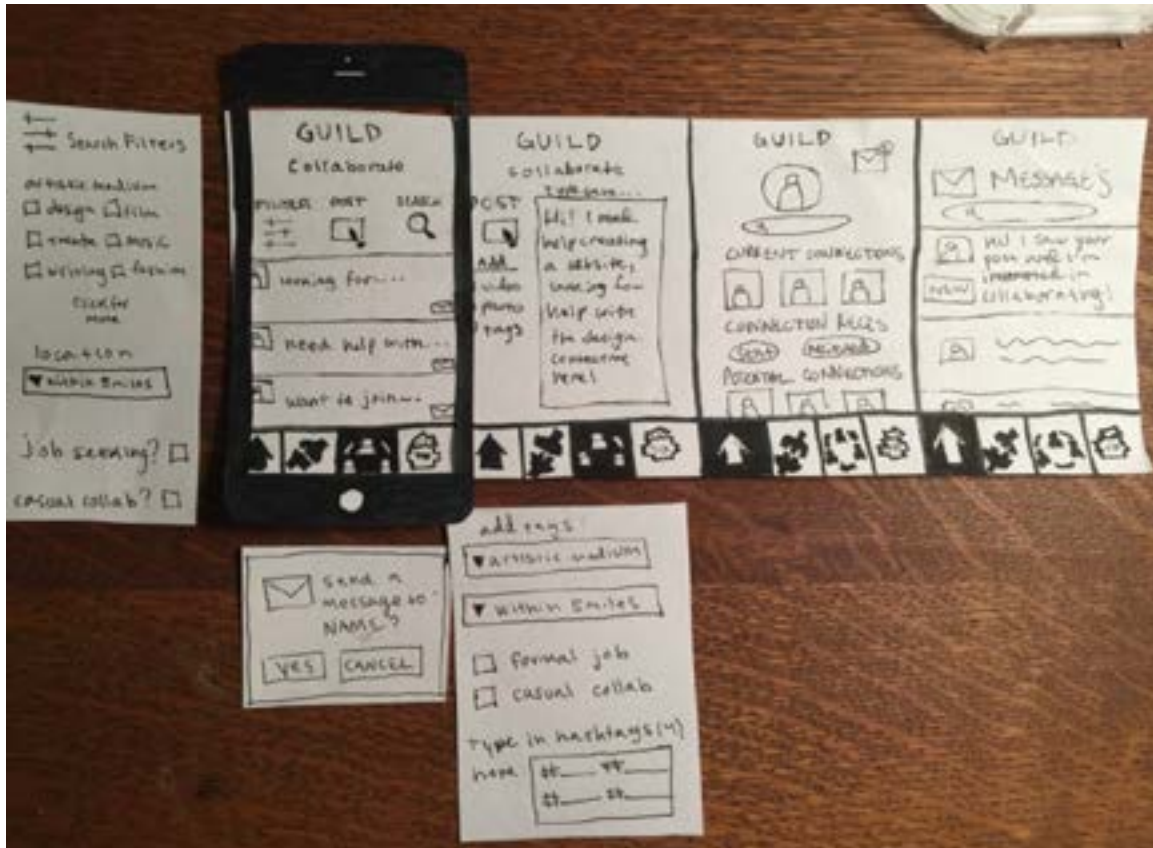
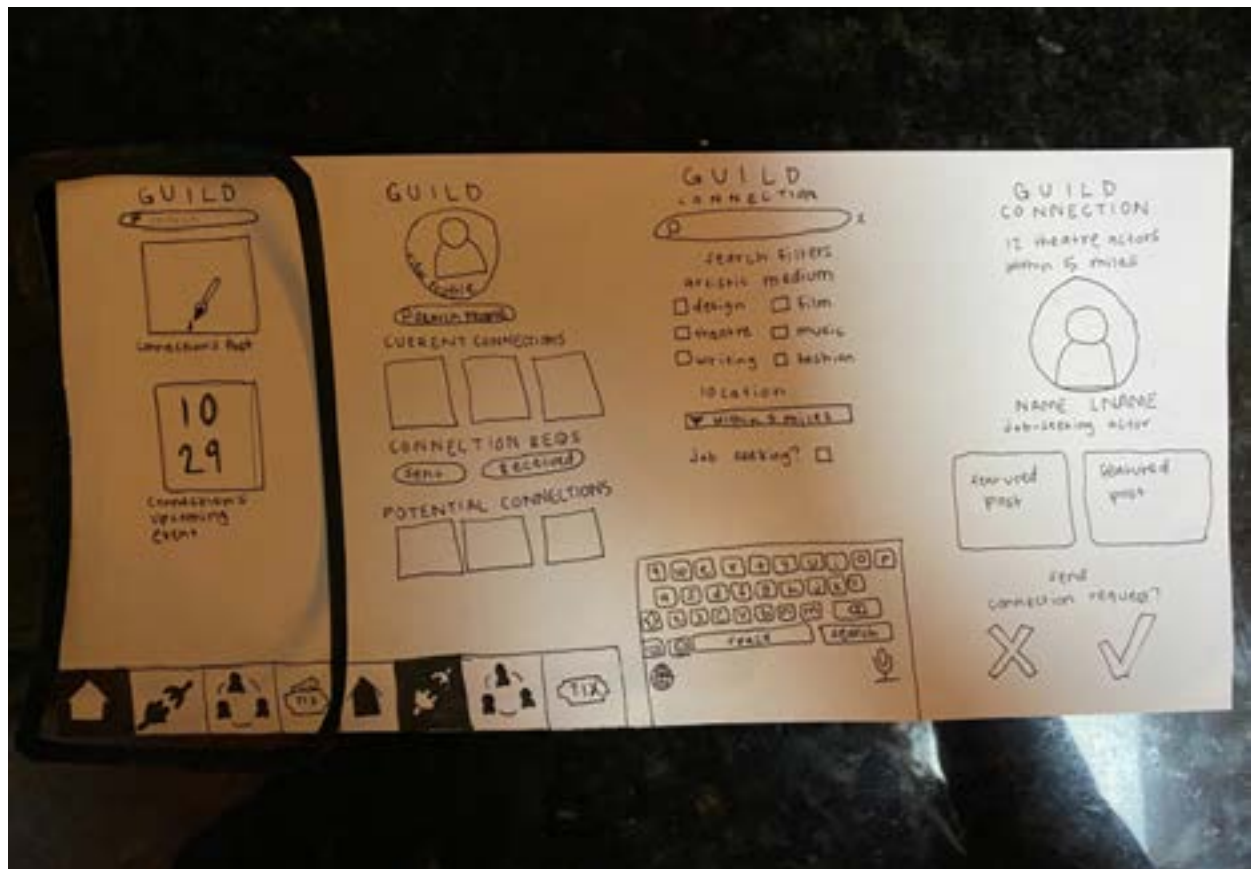3. A website for creative to post their creative projects.

Paper Prototype

Task one: Find someone to collaborate with

Task two: Find connections involved in an event
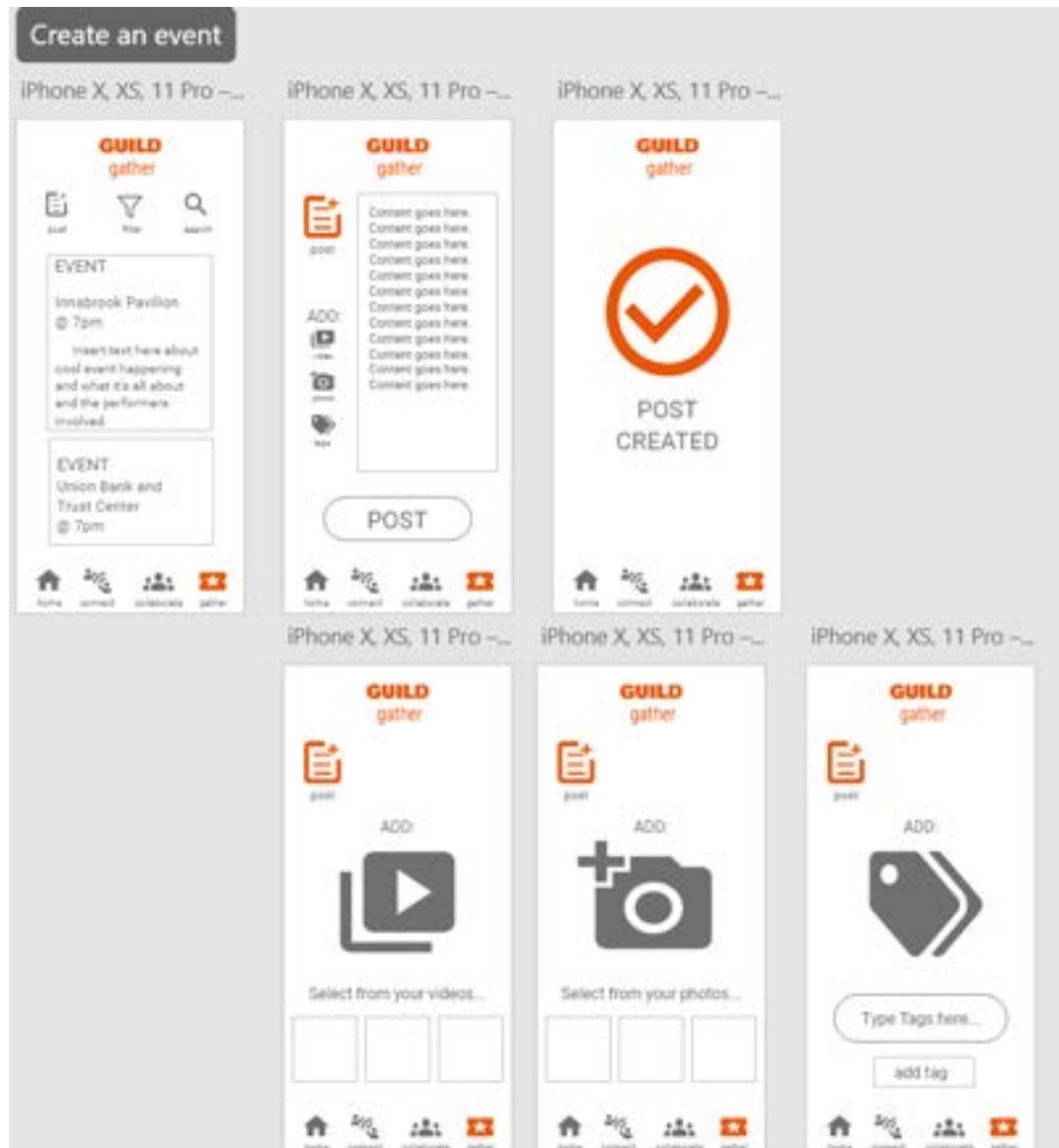

Task three: Search for connections
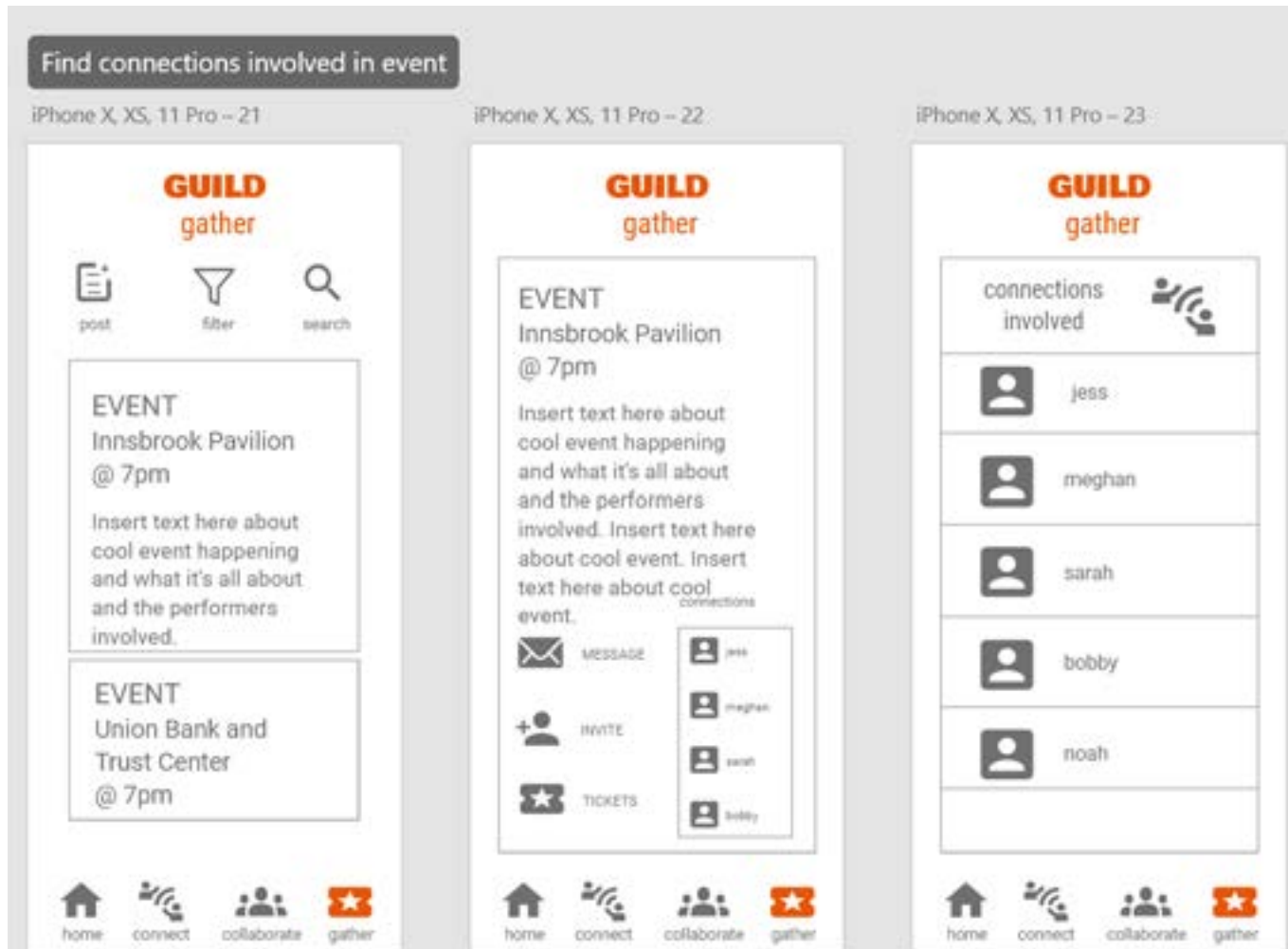
Paper Prototype Testing

The demographics of our participants were average college-aged creatives. While the users of this app don't necessarily have to be college students or of the average college age, these participants fit the criteria of the target demographic for our app: millennial and generation z creatives. We decided to test each of our three participants on three different tasks: finding a person to collaborate with, finding which of their connections is involved in a specific event, and searching for new potential connections. We explained the purpose of our app was for young creatives to connect, collaborate, and gather with one another in different scenarios and for various purposes. After each participant completed these tasks, we asked them how intuitive the interface was, what the most confusing part of navigating the interface was, and whether there was anything lacking that would have made it easier for them to navigate the interface. For each of our participants, the filtering options at the beginning of the app seemed confusing. The filter options were for the purpose of searching for a post, but that was not originally made clear. The second task, finding connections involved in a specific event, was by far the easiest for each of the users. The third task was also a bit confusing, as one user wasn't sure whether they should click an existing post or make a new one, and did not notice the search bar was available for their use. Overall the users all agreed the app wasn't too confusing or difficult, but that the navigation tools and their purposes could be made clearer. Additional issues were the lack of color, as the lack of contrast made some features difficult to notice. Some word choices were a bit confusing as well, such as "potential connections" and "job seeking".
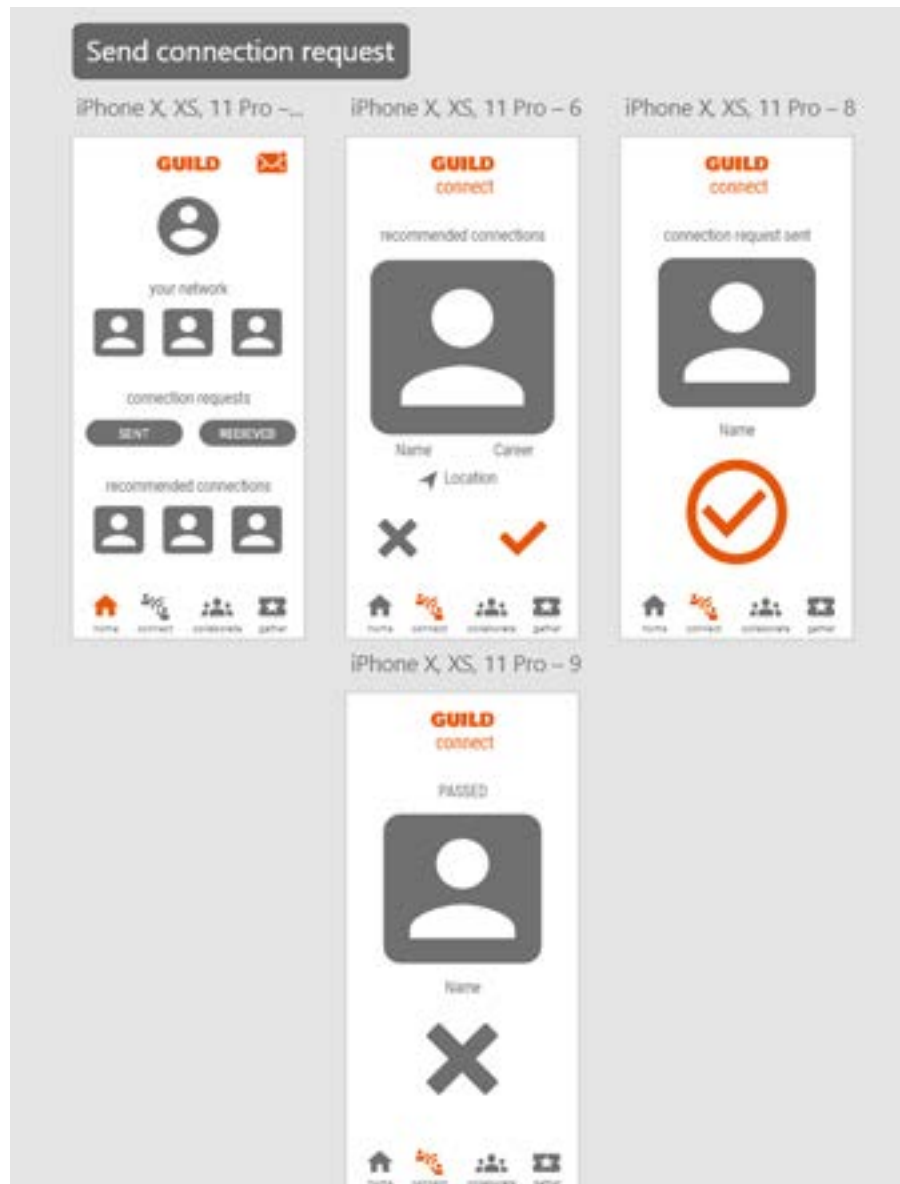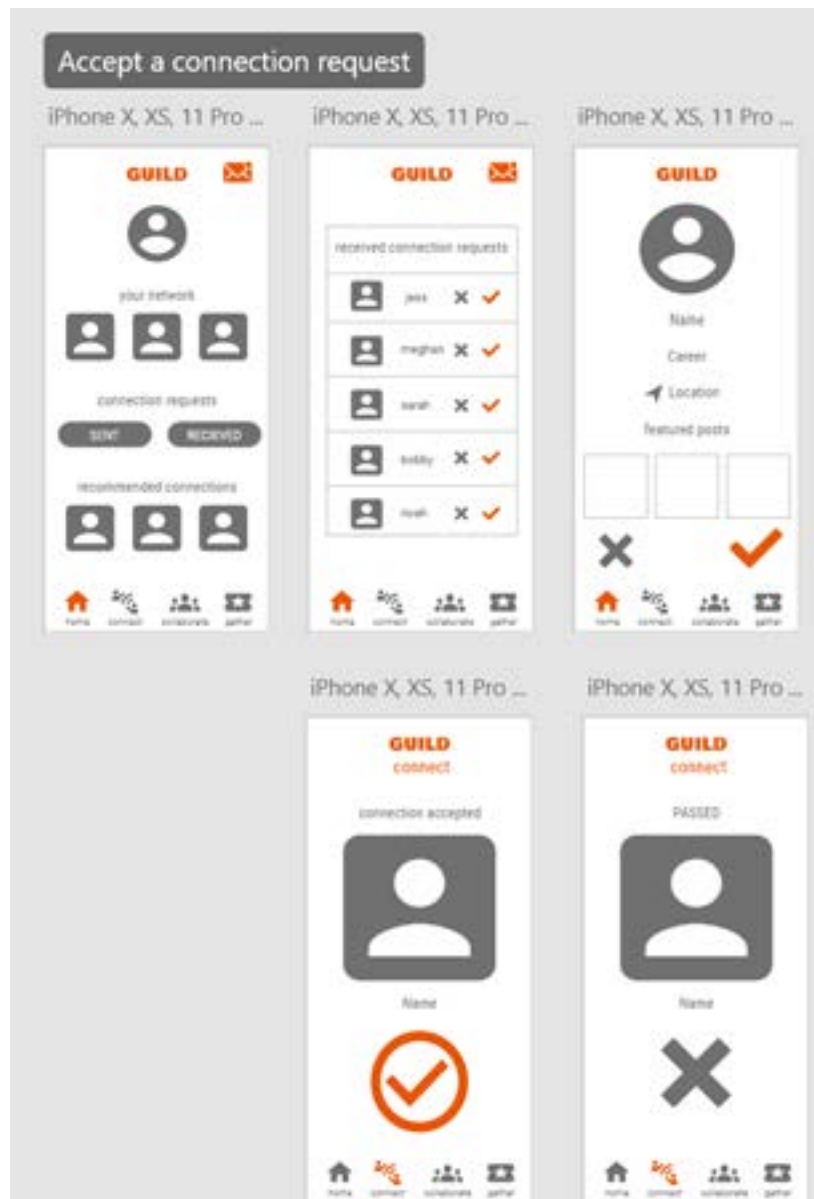
Low Fidelity Prototype
Task one: Create an event

Task two: Find connections involved in an event

Task three: Send a connection request

Task four: Accept a connection request

Task five: Find someone to collaborate with by posting
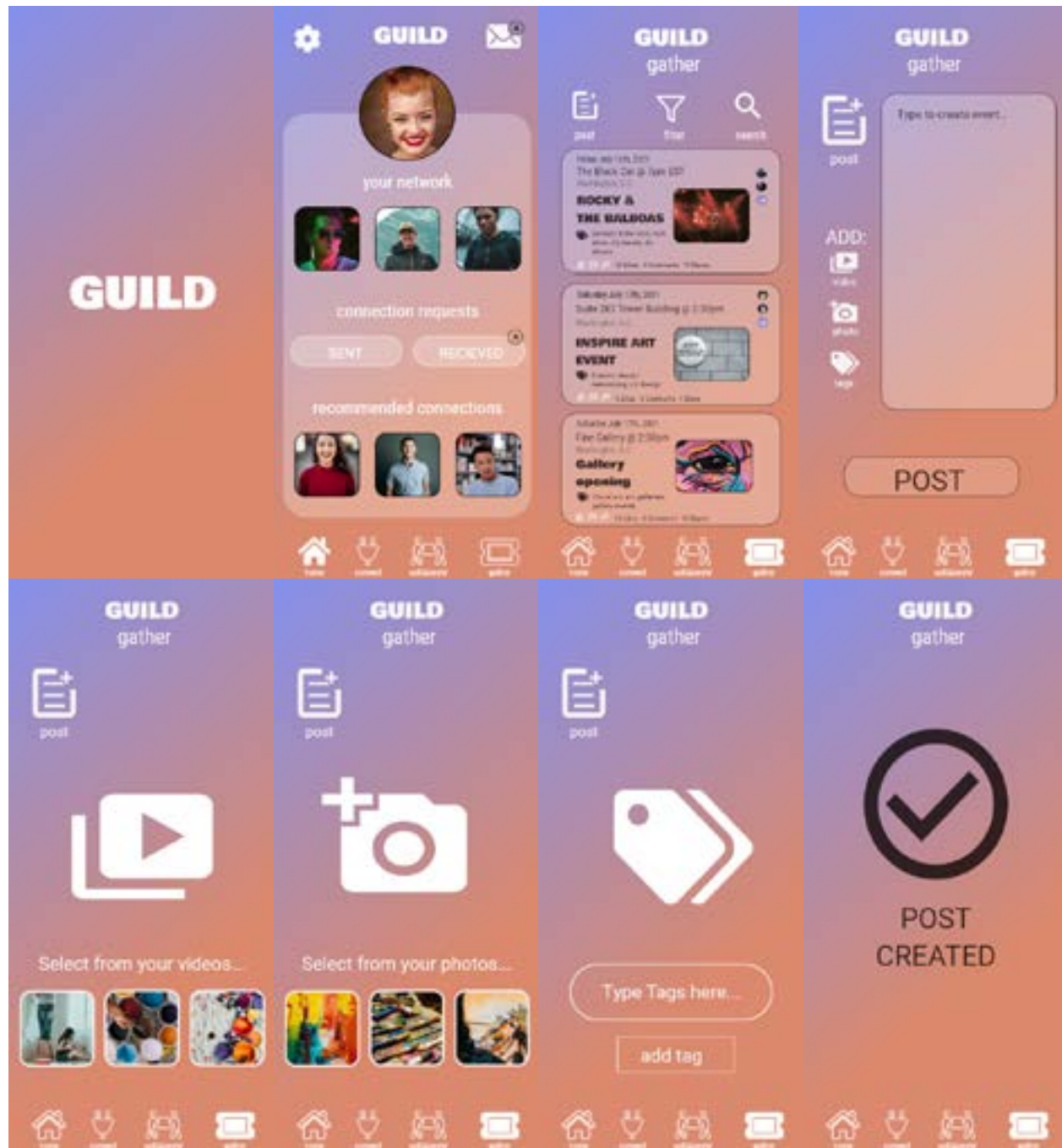
Low Fidelity Prototype Testing

Since conducting testing on the original paper prototype of the 'Guild' app, we implemented changes to address the original defects and pain points of those who tested the paper prototype. One such change is changing the order of the post, filter, and search buttons on the gather and collaborate tabs. We hoped that by putting the filters in front of the search tab, it would be more clear to users that the filters apply to the user's search. It is possible there is a better way to do this

The connections tab is set up with a swiping feature to send connection requests, which a potential connection can then accept or deny through their homepage by clicking the received button under connection requests. This system combines the more popular ways of adding people on other social sites by combining a match feature and a request feature. It was difficult at first for users to realize you had to click and drag while testing the prototype for a mobile app on a computer, but they did eventually understand and we believe this function will be more clear when testing on a mobile device like this app is intended for.

Another task we were unsure about is "finding a collaboration by posting." In this low fidelity prototype the way you would find a collaboration, meaning a project, opportunity, or job, is by posting on the "collaboration feed" and then waiting for an incoming message from someone who is interested. The users tested understood this task quickly, but the post function for this task was different from the post function for the event task, so we had to make them identical. Starting each task for the prototype on the page the task is on may not have been the most effective method, as at first one user was focused on the navigation bar at the bottom thinking they had to go to a different page. Overall, the users were happy with the app and the main changes that needed to be made were aesthetic changes.

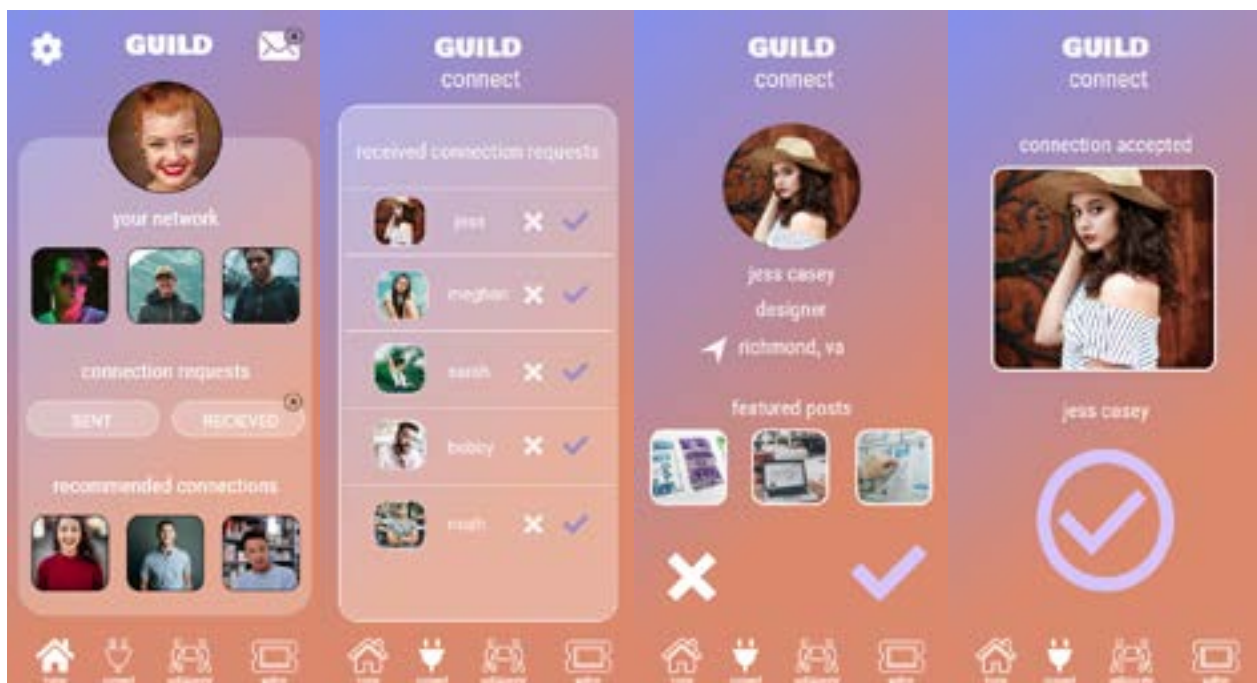# High Fidelity Prototype
Task one: Create an event

Task two: Find connections involved in an event

Task three: Send a connection request

Task four: Accept a connection request

Task five: Find someone to collaborate with by posting

High Fidelity Prototype Testing
Participants

Sarah Katherine
Sarah Katherine is a female junior musical theater major who attends Boston Conservatory at the Berklee in Boston, MA. Sarah Katherine is an actor, singer, and songwriter who plans to move to a new city after graduation. She often collaborates with others through songwriting. She is highly proficient with technology like iphones, apps and websites.

Taylor Wright
Taylor Wright is a female senior high school student living just outside of RIchmond, VA. Taylor plans to go to Randolph-Macon College after graduation in June and major in studio arts. She is highly proficient with mobile phone technology, apps, and websites.

Susy Koons
Susy Koons is majoring in public relations and plans to live in the New York City area after college. She could benefit from finding jobs on the app relating to publicity within the specified area as well as finding connections in the same field as her after moving. Susy is highly proficient with using social networking apps and websites.

Testing Methods

Participant briefing

The app that we have prototyped is called "Guild." The purpose of this app is to connect artists/creatives of various mediums to each other. This app connects the user to others by allowing them to create a network of artists, seek collaborations, find events and more. Today we will present you with a high-fidelity prototype and ask you to perform 5 tasks. This will allow us to seek pain points and opportunities for growth in our prototype.

Pre-session questionnaire

1. How proficient are you with apps on smartphones?
2. What apps/websites have you used in the past to network/find creatives?
3. Is there an artistic medium that you participate in?
4. Would you consider yourself 'creative."
5. How old are you?
6. Do you live in an urban, suburban or rural environment?
7. Would you like to collaborate with other artists/creatives?
8. Are you interested in attending artistic events?

Post-session questionnaire

1. How was your overall experience with our application?
2. What's most appealing/important to you about this product?
3. What task was the easiest/most intuitive?
4. What task was the most difficult?
5. Were you ever confused when completing the tasks?
6. If you could change one thing about the application what would you change?
7. What demographic do you think this app is intended for?
8. Did the design elements contribute to or distract from the purpose of the app?
9. Did the design elements communicate the correct feelings/experience in your opinion?
10. Any final comments?

Testing environment

Due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic and most of the people fitting our targeted demographics being at home away from school, our tests were conducted over the Zoom web application by sending the participants the high fidelity prototype and having them share their screen and speak aloud while they completed the given tasks. We then recorded both the video and audio from the zoom call during the test. One participant, Taylor, completed the tasks in a quiet room with Kali since the two of them live together. Kali screen recorded Taylor doing the tasks while also recording the audio of he speaking aloud.

Evaluation Measures

The quantitative evaluation measures used in our test included time required to complete a task, task-completion rates, and number and types of errors. Qualitative results were received by participant comments and subjective thought during the questionnaires.

Test Procedure

The test was conducted by asking the participant to complete 5 tasks using an Adobe XD hi-fidelity prototype. The tasks that we tested were:
1. Post a collaboration
2. Check Messages
3. Create an Event
4. Find Connection involved in an Event
5. Accept a received connection request
6. Send a connection request to a recommended connection

Findings and Recommendations

Performance Metrics

Time to Complete

Participants

Tasks	participant 1	participant 2	participant 3
task 1	43secs	32secs	52secs
task 2	5secs	3secs	7secs
task 3	1min 5secs	44secs	39secs
task 4	14secs	27secs	16secs
task 5	10.92 secs	12secs	14secs
task 6	33.59 secs	19secs	16secs

Performance Metrics

Errors

Types of Errors

Tasks	technical	wrong click	interface
task 1	III	III	
task 2			
task 3	I	II	I
task 4	I	I	
task 5			
task 6	I		II

Types of Errors:

technical: an error with the participants laptop or with adobe XD

wrong click: an error where the participant clicked the wrong icon/button in order to complete the task

interface: an error where the interface made the task more difficult

Performance Metrics

Task Completion Rate

Tasks

completion rate	task 1	task 2	task 3	task 4	task 5	task 6
%	33%	100%	33%	67%	100%	67%

Usability Issues

One usability issue was the swipe feature on the "recommended connections" page. I think this feature will be more intuitive on a mobile phone app, but because the high fidelity prototype testing took place on a laptop it was not as obvious as it would have been on a real mobile app. Severity ranking 1 on the Jakob Nielson severity rating scale.

Qualitative Results

EASIEST TASK:

Task 2 - Finding messages

DIFFICULT TASKS:

Task 3 - Creating an event

Task 1 - Posting a collaboration

Positive Comments:

Sarah Katherine
"I think like seeing the events and being able to actually go and network and to collaborate honestly"

Sarah Katherine
"I like specifically the feed design, like when I tap collaborate the way the bubbles look."

Negative Comments:

Sarah Katherine
"I'd probably go more, and maybe this is just preference, but like, more like blue/purple, like pastel." (referring to color palette)

Sarah Katherine
"it felt more on the professional side of things as opposed to a creative app for it I think." (referring to icons on the bottom of screen)

Taylor Wright
"I don't like how small the words are"

Susy Koons
"The white font is hard to read"

Design Recommendations

After looking at the results of our testing and questionnaire we felt that we needed to change the bottom navigation icons on our prototype. Once participants noted that they looked more "professional" rather than creative. Because we were trying to communicate less "corporate networking" with our design we decided to choose different icons for the main navigation. The participant also noted that the color palette was the one thing she would change about the app. We decided to tone and change the colors slightly after receiving this response.
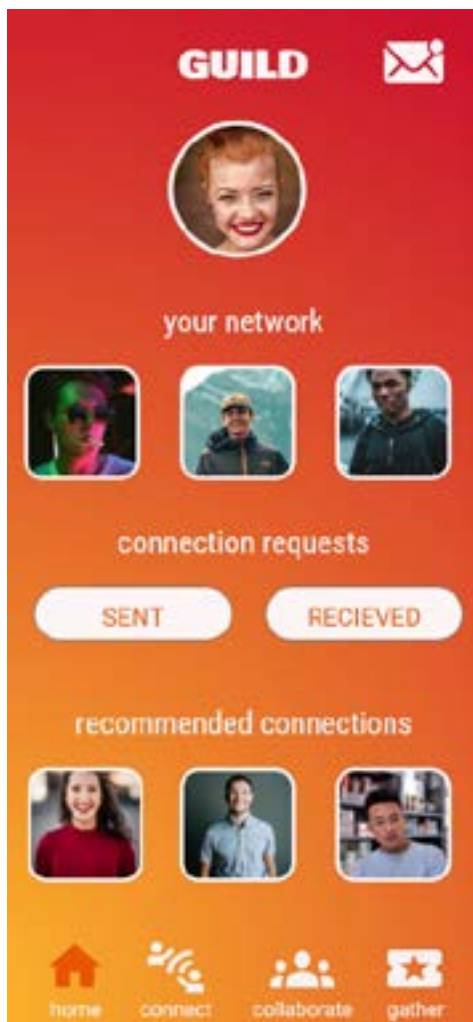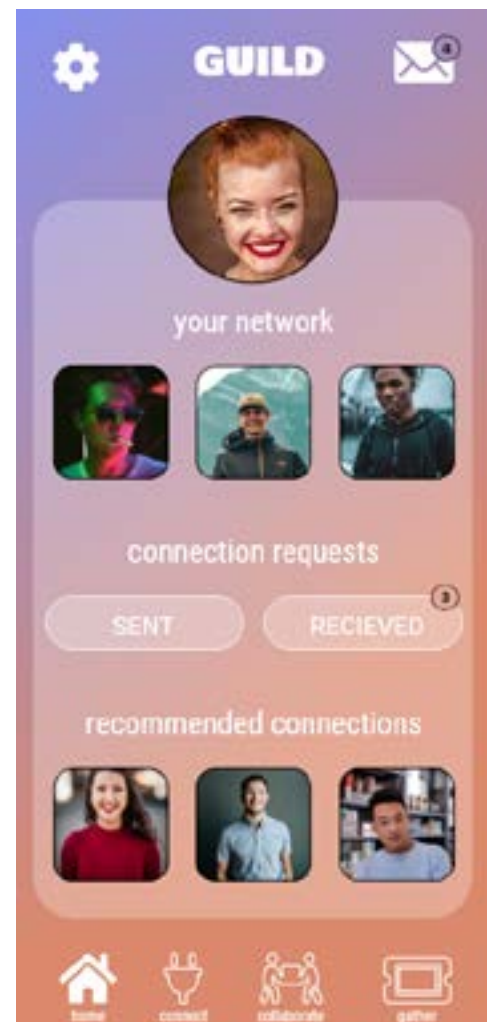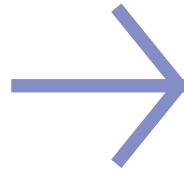
previous design   current design

Conclusion

We are proud of the work we have done this semester and the project we have created. This full semester long project has been so beneficial in understanding the process of user research, design, prototyping, user testing, and more. Our finished product combines facets of well-known social networking applications and websites while tackling a design problem that has not been adequately solved in the past, and we are confident that our product could help solve the needs of young creatives in one universal space.

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