

VSP Ideation Workshop 2

Sept 19, 2019

How to prepare for the workshop:

1. Update your Slack status that you'll be away for 2 hrs
2. Close Slack and ZenHub (unless you're on call)
3. Have a way to take notes at the ready
4. Have whatever coffee, water, snacks you want with you for the next 2 hrs
5. Be open to the unconventional / seemingly impossible

Agenda:

20 min: Breaking the “Platform” concept box

20 min: VSP North Star investigation

10 min: Future Press Release activity

30 min: Share, discuss, create themes

30 min: “How might we” activity

5 min: Dot voting

5 min: Wrap up

Why are we “ideating” ?

To explore a wide solution space -- wide in both quantity and diversity of ideas -- which will later help solidify vision and roadmaps, and help uncover things we may want to prototype and test with users.

More specifically:

- Get obvious solutions out of our heads, and drive beyond them
- Harness collective perspectives and strengths of team members
- Uncover unexpected areas of exploration

Source: [ideate mixtape, Stanford d.school](#)

What is a platform?



United States Web Design System

There are a lot of different kinds. Here are some traits:

- **Common framework** which others can leverage to build and is **sometimes invisible to the end user** (USWDS).
- **Reduce barrier to entry** to a given ecosystem (Drupal).
- Enable connection between **many “vendors” and many users** (Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace).
- Leverage the **network effect** - i.e. its value increases as the number of active participants increases, either through user data (Waze), or through user content (Facebook Marketplace).
- Leverage **usage data and user ratings to prioritize functionality** (Gmail Labs).



Facebook Marketplace



Drupal™



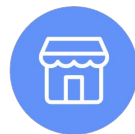
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Facebook Marketplace



What is a platform you love? Why?

Could VSP advance it's north star (scaling builds that improve Veterans' lives) by...

Our Customers: VFS Teams

End-Users: Veterans

Launch Darkly (feature toggles)

- documentation and startup guide were super fast?
 - This is more focused on Our Customers. Could we have startup guides that are specific to the various things a VFS team might need to build? Startup guides for small pieces of our platform — like the 508 app, or any of the other atomic pieces?
- 20 min to get website running locally to test?
 - We could have a goal to get ppl un and running in 1 day — north star idea for Tools, rather than super long onboarding and documentation reading. Prioritize up and running w/code locally, OVER documentation/onboarding ramp up? It's a feeling, feels productive to have it running locally — it affects the mindset of how you approach the work. Why can we start small? Here's a tiny bit of knowledge you need to get started, and that base grows as you work.
 - If there was an installations script, one for FE one for BE, where you just run it, it clones the repos, prompts you for the info it needs, fires up FE and BE on local host, and you have a local instance running you an click around in within 3 min. Reference/mimic thoughtbot laptop which takes 10 min (instead of 1 hr to do on own). Need to capture nuances of different machines and OSs. Prompts/wizard in the script.

Create React App

- Gives exploration space / see it actually working and not static / whole stack at one time for quickly learning a complicated concept
 - We already have a BE Rails generator starter script, points end user in right direction. Design System, Sketch Library are also an example of this — could we have a closer loop btwn Sketch Library and React (write to Sketch file when React is updated? Mimicking Airbnb). Expand beyond Sketch — what about other tools like Figma that's OS agnostic.
 - Instead of documentation based on boarding, what about building a teeny thing using our real stack and libraries? A codecademy like tutorial (wizardry) to get to a "live" (but not on VA.gov) "hello world" product. Could incorporate 508 into this too.

Future Press Release Activity

It's 2021, and the VSP is a wild success!

Write a short press release announcing this ambitious, innovative Platform to the world.

Future Press Release Activity

Guidelines:

- 5-8 sentences
- Build off of the ideas from the North Star activity
- This is aspirational! Embrace the seemingly impossible
- Go beyond describing responsibilities, and start describing potential solutions

Answer these questions:

- How are VFS Teams and Veterans feeling?
- What can VFS Teams and Veterans do now that they couldn't before?
- What are one or more unconventional VSP features, services, or processes that have disrupted the traditional govt model for building technology solutions?
 - What about those features, services, or processes led to the successful outcomes we're seeing?
- What were some issues / challenges we overcame to reach this wild success?
- What surprising or risky decisions or bets did we make that led to success?

Prompt reminder:

It's 2021, and the VSP is a wild success!

Write a short press release announcing this ambitious, innovative Platform to the world.

Distilling themes + “how might we...”

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17ubZRzXGaNjxCRE9rdHTdiRjSXtTTgORHGVfb3IVd6k/edit#gid=1978428025>

Dot (or in our case Emoji) voting



= greatest potential for advancing the “helping VA scale builds” part of the VSP North Star

You have 8 scale emojis that you can copy and paste onto the post-its of your choice to represent your votes.

You can vote for a post-it more than once.

Dot (or in our case Emoji) voting



= greatest potential for advancing the “enabling builds that improve Veterans’ lives” part of the VSP North Star

You have 8 blue heart emojis that you can copy and paste onto the post-its of your choice to represent your votes.

You can vote for a post-it more than once.

Thanks!

Next...

- Leadership Team will share ideas from all 4 workshops
- DSVA + Leadership Team will use ideas as fodder for VSP Vision
- VSP Teams should use ideas as fodder for Roadmaps and Backlogs

Additional Resources

<https://stratechery.com/2019/shopify-and-the-power-of-platforms/>



Did you love this? Did you find it pointless? Were you bored stiff? Do you have other feedback?

@rroosh on Slack.

What is a platform you love? Why?

Flickr, Amazon Marketplace, Robinhood, Shopify, Big Cartel, Gum Road, Uber, AirBnb, Wikipedia,

- ~~Makes it a meritocracy~~
 - ~~Anyone can participate regardless of experience - from small “guys” to big wigs~~
- ~~Self-organizing by shared interest - can join groups w/rules on what you can share, but all set by the actual users not the Platform.~~
 - Can skin the site differently (bc of open API)
 - Default look is pretty
 - Can choose what to display privately vs publicly
- ~~Personalized settings and recommendations~~
 - Access to sellers / products I wouldn't otherwise have
- ~~Makes a scary thing less scary~~
 - Simple UI - anyone can understand the necessary info
 - Choose to still evolve - builds trust
- ~~Take the stuff you don't want to do and give you tools for doing that, so it's out of your way and you can focus on doing the thing you want to do~~
 - Don't try to get involved in more than just giving you a Platform you love
- ~~User centered and user focused (w/o user there is no Platform), w/more users it scales, more features etc~~

VSP North Star

Could VSP advance it's north star (scaling builds that improve Veterans' lives) by...

... leveraging the network effect like Waze? How?

... connecting many providers to many users like Craigslist? How?

... leveraging usage data and user ratings to prioritize functionality like Gmail Labs? How?

... ? How?

VSP North Star - digging deeper in small groups

Could VSP enable VA to build at scale and improve Veterans' lives...

... by leveraging the network effect? How?

... by enabling connection between many “vendors” (i.e. VFS Teams or Products) and many users? How?

... by removing the barrier to entry to build within the VA ecosystem? How?

... by leveraging usage and user ratings to prioritize functionality? How?

... by making it a self-organizing experience by shared interest? How?

... by making a scary thing for VFS Teams less scary? How?

... by incorporating personalized settings and recommendations? How?

... by doing the stuff you don't want to do for you, so you can focus on your main goal? How?