Next2Friends.com Evaluation

Document v1.7

by Rob Romine - VML UX 2008

Thu Jul 31 2008

Project
Next2Friends.com Evaluation

Page 2
Table of Contents

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Table of Contents

Next2Friends.com was evaluated with particular attention to live streaming media in a social networking framework, using the following categories of standard web heuristics measures:

- **Navigation**
- **Language/Nomenclature**
- **Visual Layout and Consistency**

VML evaluated compliance with heuristic standards, and ranked key issues in terms of usage severity. The report summary details those issues considered to be of highest severity, and affecting the majority of users. Rankings are expressed in a letter grade as follows:

E **Excels**
No errors found, user experience is in compliance with industry best practices and provides above average tools, services, and overall user experience (UE).

S **Satisfactory**
Errors found are minimal and low in severity. Adequate compliance with industry best practices. Overall UE is acceptable, but not exceptional.

N **Needs Improvement**
Errors found are medium in severity. Inadequate compliance with industry best practices or accepted heuristics. Overall UE needs improvement, users unable to complete needed tasks without effort.

U **Unsatisfactory**
Errors found medium to high in severity. Does not comply with industry best practices and accepted heuristics. Overall UE unacceptable; users are unable to complete tasks/navigate without effort.

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Page 3
Navigation

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Navigation:

The primary purpose of this site is to engage users in a social network by way of unique content and new technologies. It is vital that users have clear paths by which they can view content they feel is personally relevant and clear means by which to participate within the site. The following navigation and content groupings are not clearly aligned with the priorities that target users expect from the site. Top-level navigation items **Community**, **Videos**, **Ask**, and **Mobile** are misleading; the user is given false expectation upon accessing these pages.

N

1. **Community** simply shows a list of users on the site. The options are limited and lend themselves to no real discovery. Users are denied a feeling of community and are left wanting more.

N

2. **Videos**, much like **Community**, the options are severely limited and the page displays a list of videos, offering the user little discovery value.

N

3. **Ask** does have enough value to support a top level navigation spot. Its purpose is unclear and gives no value to the end user. A more adequate fit for this section would be in a lower tiered navigation such as within group discussion.

N

4. **Mobile** is misleading and is falsely represented. This page presents general information about the technology and company, but provides little or no value to a user trying to download the application or stream videos to the site. One would expect to find mobile application instructions, devices available, information on how the technology functions as well as a mobile help section; all of which are absent.

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Page 4
Navigation: continued

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Navigation: continued

It is important for the navigation to represent exactly what the user will see. There should be no confusion or guess work to understand where the user will be going. Below are the recommended levels of navigation that match the goals of your target users; **Guest navigation** and **Logged-in navigation**. The Main navigation items drop down showing related pages and action items. These items are used to reinforce the navigation heading and to give the user the opportunity to dig further into the site without having to jump page by page. Actions, such as "create a group", are also listed allowing easy access to popular items.

Guest navigation:

Main

Next2Friends

Home | N2F Tour ▾ | Register | Explore ▾ | Mobile ▾

N2F Tour	Explore	Mobile
What is N2F	Live video	Check availability
Our mission	Search	Downloads
How it works	Featured	Install Tutorial
Join in	Browse videos	Select your phone
Participate	Browse images	-
	Browse groups	Help
	Popular Tags	FAQ
	-	
	Find my friends	
	Find events	
	-	
	Highest rated	
	Most watched	

Header

Register | Sign In | Help

Footer

Mobile	Next2Friends		
Check availability	What is N2F	Blog	Terms of use
Downloads	Our mission	News	Privacy policy
Install tutorial	Management team	Events	Contact us
Help	Investors and partners	Developers	
	Business opportunities	Labs	

Logged-in navigation:

Main

Next2Friends

Home | Friends ▾ | Groups ▾ | Events ▾ | Explore ▾ | Mobile ▾

Friends	Groups	Events	Explore	Mobile
My friends	My groups	My Events	Live video	Check availability
Recent	Watched topics	Watched topics	Search	Downloads
Annoucements	Annoucements	Announcements	Featured	Install Tutorial
Events	Group events	Group events	Browse Videos	Select your phone
-	-	-	Browse Images	-
Find people	Featured groups	Featured events	Popular Tags	Help
Invite	Find groups	Find events	-	FAQ
	Create a group	Add an event	Highest rated	
		-	Most watched	
		Archived		

Header

Inbox (0) | Log out | Help

Footer

Your Account	Mobile	Next2Friends		
Edit profile	Check availability	What is N2F	Blog	Terms of use
Reset password	Downloads	Our mission	News	Privacy policy
Stats	Install tutorial	Management team	Events	Contact us
My friends	Help	Investors and partners	Developers	
My videos		Business opportunities	Labs	
My photos				
My groups				

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Page 5
Language

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Language:

The overall verbiage on Next2Friends.com meets the needs of the end user, however certain areas of the site contain confusing language.

Areas for improvement include:

N

1.   **Unclear Terms -** The terms "Mobile" and "Ask" in the top-level navigation are unclear and misleading. These terms in such a prominent area of the site contribute much of the navigation issues.

N

2.   **Duplicate Terms -** "Friends" within the profile navigation and "Friends" as a top-level (for logged-in users) navigation item leave the user confused. The duplication of navigational language is cause for concern. As recommended, within the Navigation section, "Friends" should be located within the user profile only. "Videos" also present a problem when viewing the profile page. It is our recommendation to differentiate the two video sections by changing "Videos" within the user profile to "My Videos".

Duplicate Terms

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Page 6
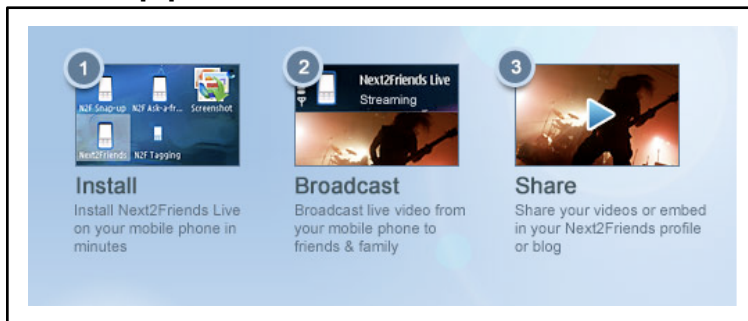Language: continued

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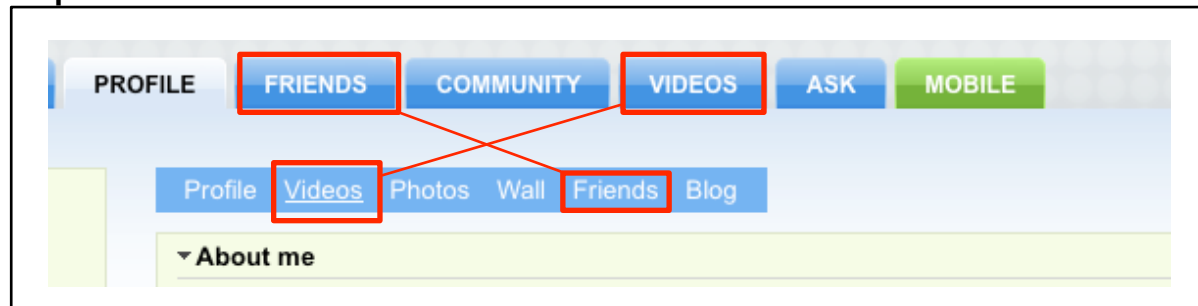
Language: continued

N

3.   **Vague Instructions -** The instructions included in the 1-2-3 step process shown on the home page are vague and not detailed. Users are left with no real direction or a clear path to follow the instructions. Items are not clickable, nor do they describe how these actions should take place.

1-2-3 step process

The goal of this process is to show the user how the product works and to get them to sign up and participate. It is our recommendation to introduce "N2F Tour" on the main navigation of the home page for guest users. This will allow you to go much farther in depth with new users while also showing experienced users exactly how your technology works. Detailed instructions, videos and related items should also be available. These instructions should also be readily available at all times for all users. See Pg 4. Guest Navigation & Logged-In Navigation: Footer / Mobile.

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Page 7
Language: continued (2)

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Language: continued

N

4.   **Lack of Information -** There is no title for the video bar located on the home page, giving no real value for this function to the end user. The video bar is also lacking video titles, user names, as well as additional video information.
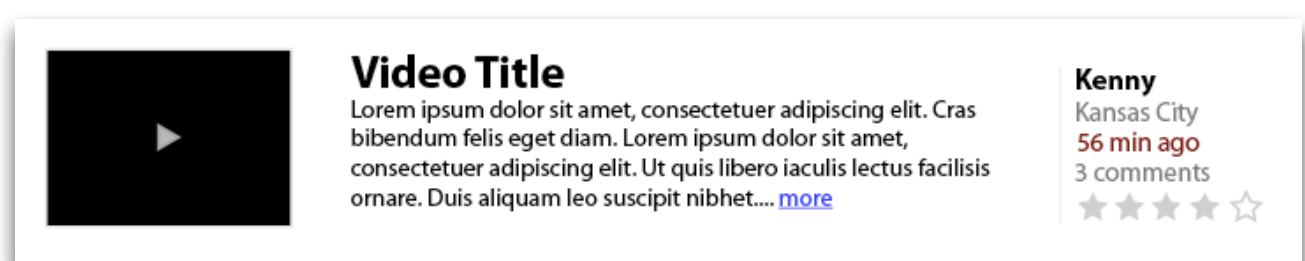
Lack of Information
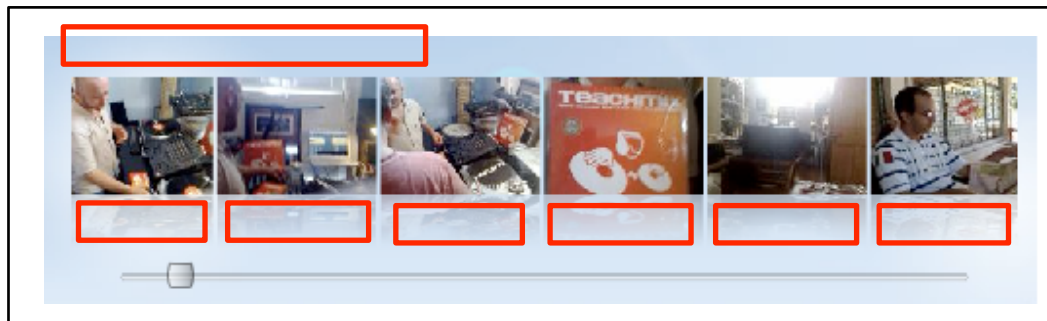
It is important to show as much information about the displayed media as possible. Without this information the items have little value. Below are two types of layouts with a varying degree of information being shown depending on the display type.

Vertical

Video Title
from: Kenny 56 min ago

Horizontal

Video Title
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Cras bibendum felis eget diam. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Ut quis libero iaculis lectus facilisis ornare. Duis aliquam leo suscipit nibhet.... more

Kenny
Kansas City
56 min ago
3 comments

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Page 8
Visual Layout / Consistency

Contact
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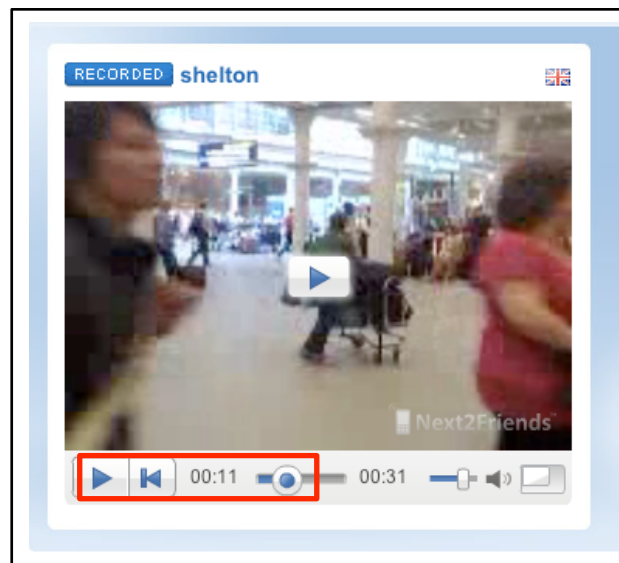
Visual Layout / Consistency:

As a whole, the visual layout is clear and concise. The information hierarchy is presented in such a way that is it relatively easy to understand. There are, however, some visual elements that do not meet industry best practices.

The following are areas of concern:

U

1.   **Automatic Media Stream** - Upon accessing the home page, the user is engaged in a recorded video stream. This does not comply with industry standards. Best practice would be to avoid automatic playback of media once entering the home page. Users should be empowered to take an action to begin playing or viewing media.   This also applies for Live video on the home page. Live video can stream automatically on a campaign page, mini site, or any place where it is known that live video will be shown.

Automatic Live Stream

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Page 9
Visual Layout / Consistency: continued

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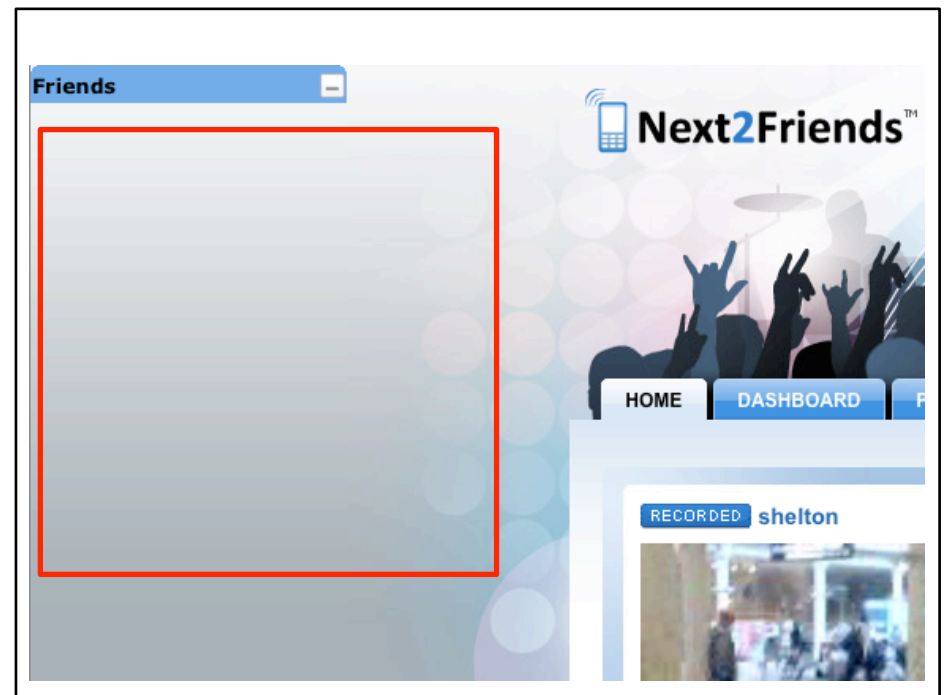
Visual Layout / Consistency: continued

U

2.   **Chat** – Clicking 'chat > windowed' on the top of the page opens a blank pop up window leaving the user with no action or information. Clicking 'chat > integrated' takes the user back to the home page and adds a tabbed graphic titled "friends", adding no value to this function.

Chat > Windowed

Chat > Integrated

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Page 10
Visual Layout / Consistency: continued (2)

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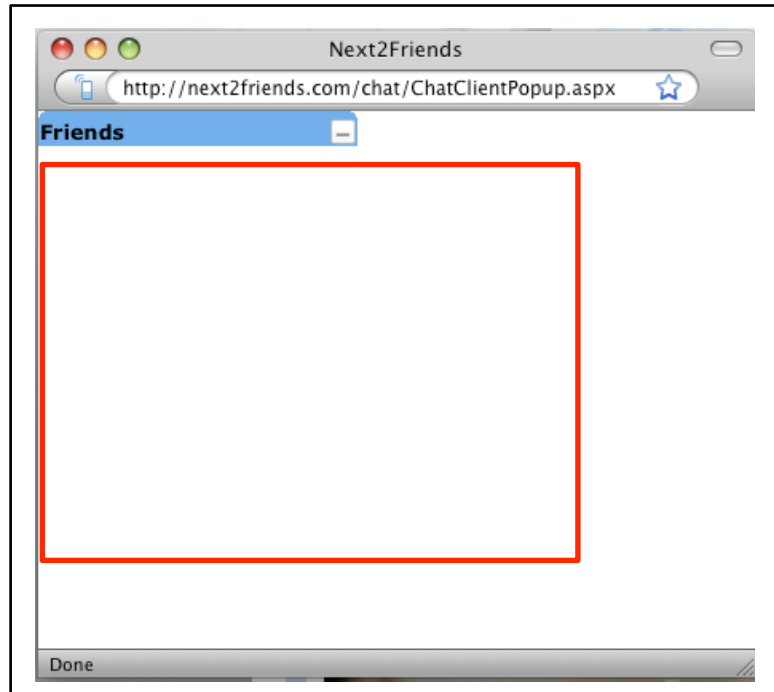
Visual Layout / Consistency: continued (2)

Chat Continued -

In order to engage users in a live chat we advise making it more relevant and inviting. In order to accomplish this we're recommending adding a chat session to Live videos. The chat session would allow users to comment live while the video / event was going on. It would enable related conversation about what's happening now and in certain situations give feedback for the host of the video.

Chat concept

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Page 11
Visual Layout / Consistency: continued (3)

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Visual Layout / Consistency: continued (3)

U
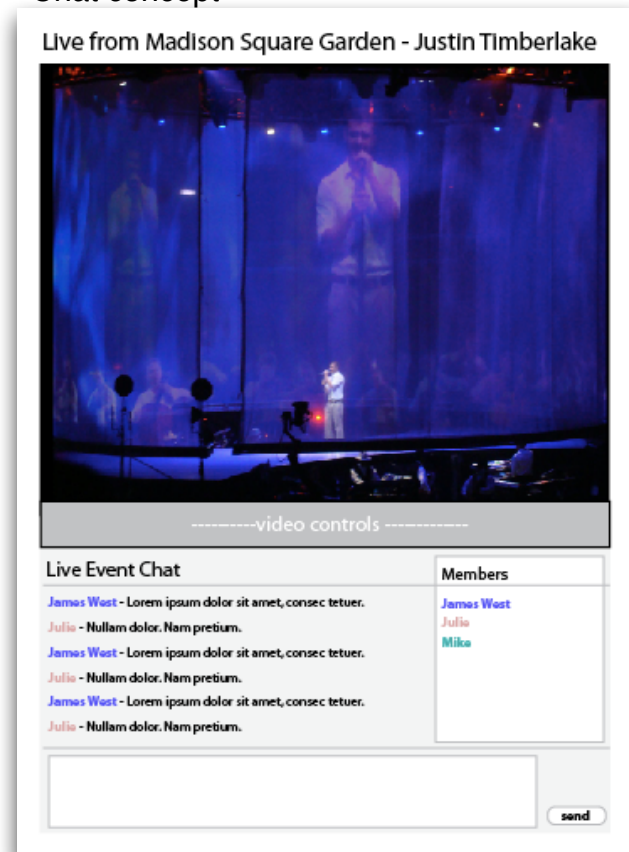
3.   **Help Section / FAQ** – The website offers a variety of technologies and features that both advanced and novice users will need additional explanation to use.   Best practice suggests that both a Help and FAQ section are made accessible on all pages.

U

4.   **Download Instructions** – The lack of instructions on how to download and use the Next2Friends video application is unacceptable. When introducing a new technology such as live mobile video streaming, it is of utmost importance that the download and application instructions are available and easy to locate.

Adding help sections to all 3 navigation items should provide sufficient target paths for any user looking for help, more information, or instructions. **Help** is located in the header navigation on all pages for logged in users and guests. Under **Mobile** in the main navigation are links to **Download**, **Install Instructions**, **Help**, and **FAQ.** These pages should display clear and concise information for both novice and experienced users.

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Page 12
Visual Layout / Consistency: continued (4)

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Visual Layout / Consistency: continued (4)

U

5.　　**Navigation Change** – Within the user profile the "tagging profile" link causes the site to switch from profile to community. This action is unclear and confusing.

Navigation Change

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Mobile Experience

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Mobile Experience: Nokia N95

To complete the Next2Friends experience, it is vital that all mobile components are easy to use and have a seamless integration with the website. New technologies, such as Live Mobile Streaming, are being introduced on mobile devices every day. In order to remain current and innovative, Next2Friends must adapt to the ever-changing and evolving market. To accomplish this, VML tested the N2F mobile component in the following areas:

Downloading: Download process
Live: Mobile video streaming
Live Wireframes: Recommendation / Conceptive wireframes
Secondary Applications: Ask, Tag, & Snapup

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Page 14
Mobile: Downloading

Contact
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Mobile: Downloading

Downloading N2F applications is one of the most important components. It is critical for this experience to gain trust with the user by engaging in a seamless process that is enjoyable and easy to use.

Areas for improvement include:

1. **Download call to action -** From the home page there is no clear path to download the application. As mentioned in Language section (pg.6), the instructions on the home page were not clickable, nor were they very descriptive.

Under the Mobile tab, the download instructions are still unclear. The first major call to action is "Next >" located under the main paragraph which takes the user to a description of Snapup.

The wording on the application / download bar is suggestive and unclear. There is no call to action, just a download button that gives no clear direction or instructions. Only after the download button is clicked do we begin to see the instructions for downloading the application onto the phone.
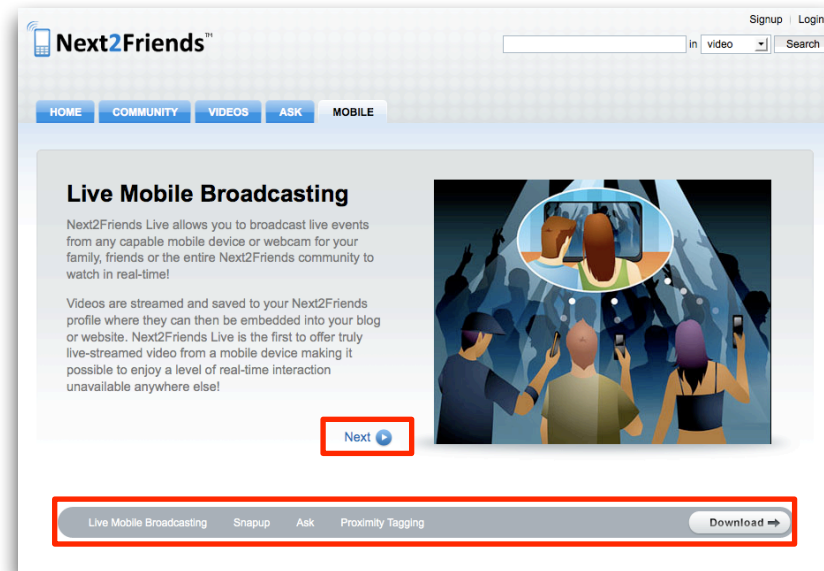
Adding download instructions to major navigation items should provide sufficient target paths for any user looking to download N2F applications. As seen in the Navigation (pg. 4) we have placed these items under **Mobile** in both the main navigation and within the footer allowing access throughout the site. It is also reccomended to have a strong call to action for first time users as they enter the site. See Wireframes section 1 **Guest Home Page** (pg. 19).

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Page 15
Mobile: Downloading continued

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Mobile: Downloading continued

S

2. **Download process** - After clicking Download, the process and instructions become clear. Each step of the process is outlined and there is no guesswork as to what happens next.   The user enters their phone and the download process is laid out showing three download options.

If a user does not own a phone listed on this page it is important to give them alternative options for participating in the site, such as uploading recorded video, web cam streaming, etc.. Body copy needs to be added explaining why their phone is not listed and a link showing other ways they can add content.

A clear path to Help and FAQ is also important during this process. As recommended in the wireframes (pg .18) a video tutorial for downloading and mobile streaming would be valuable for novice users.

The titles (Download Live, etc…) are acceptable, however supporting copy is needed to help clear up any confusion a user might have as to exactly what they are downloading.

QR codes are a new technology that few people are familiar with. In order for this to be a viable option for users, clear instructions, descriptive copy, and possibly a link to more information about QR codes and what they are used for must be provided.

Once applications are downloaded, the user is left with no further instructions. Adding mobile instructions on how to use each application is important. Included in the wireframe concepts under **Mobile** are sections dedicated to making this happen.

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Page 16
Mobile: Live

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Mobile: Live

S

The current process for streaming live media requires several steps that hinder a quick and easy path for streaming media in the moment. It is ideal that users have a quick and easy way to start streaming without interruption. The current process for streaming media takes up to four clicks. By combining steps, saving information, and eliminating unnecessary clicks, we can reduce the process down to 2 clicks (see **Recommended Live Flow**).

Current Process:
1. Open Application
2. Options
3. Connect
4. Select Access

Recommended Live Flow:

Recommended Process:
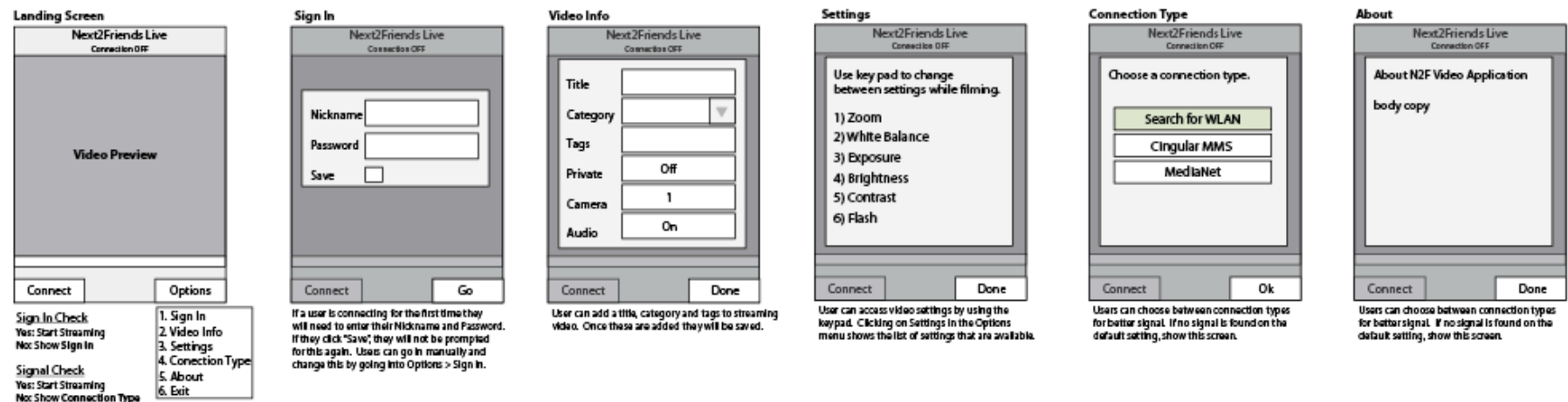1. Open Application
2. Connect
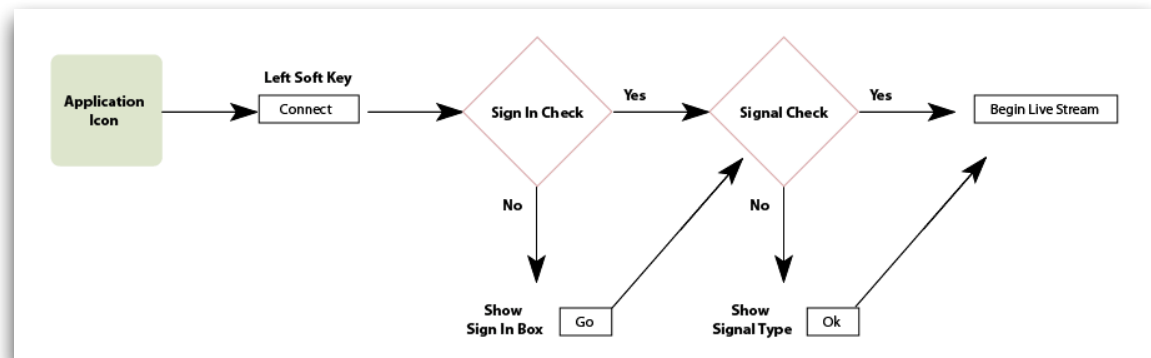
Note: The recommended process assumes that you are signed in and have a good connection. If you are not signed in, you will need to complete this process. If the phone is unable to connect, it should prompt to select a connection type.

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Page 17
Mobile: Life Wireframes

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Mobile: Live Wireframes

In order to streamline the Live process, some changes need to be made. Upon entering the application, the user is now presented with two options. **Connect** and **Options.** Selecting Connect opts in two verification checks. The first is a signed-in check and the other, a signal check. Streaming will begin after both checks have been verified. The user can also see what options are available by selecting Options. The Options menu has been streamlined to eliminate confusion and present the user with options that are relevant to the application.

Conceptive rework of the mobile application with attention to user flow and navigation.

Landing Screen

Next2Friends Live
Connection OFF

Video Preview

Connect | Options

Sign In Check
Yes: Start Streaming
No: Show Sign In

Signal Check
Yes: Start Streaming
No: Show Connection Type

1. Sign In
2. Video Info
3. Settings
4. Conection Type
5. About
6. Exit

Sign In

Next2Friends Live
Connection OFF

Nickname
Password
Save ☐

Connect | Go

If a user is connecting for the first time they will need to enter their Nickname and Password. If they click "Save", they will not be prompted for this again. Users can go in manually and change this by going into Options > Sign in.

Video Info

Next2Friends Live
Connection OFF

Title
Category ▼
Tags
Private   Off
Camera   1
Audio   On

Connect | Done

User can add a title, category and tags to streaming video. Once these are added they will be saved.

Settings

Next2Friends Live
Connection OFF

Use key pad to change between settings while filming.

1) Zoom
2) White Balance
3) Exposure
4) Brightness
5) Contrast
6) Flash

Connect | Done

User can access video settings by using the keypad. Clicking on Settings in the Options menu shows the list of settings that are available.

Connection Type

Next2Friends Live
Connection OFF

Choose a connection type.

Search for WLAN
Cingular MMS
MediaNet

Connect | Ok

Users can choose between connection types for better signal. If no signal is found on the default setting, show this screen.

About

Next2Friends Live
Connection OFF

About N2F Video Application

body copy

Connect | Done

Users can choose between connection types for better signal. If no signal is found on the default setting, show this screen.

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Page 18
Recommendations

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Recommendations

It is our recommendation that Next2Friends.com adopt a branding strategy focused on the "Real Connections" positioning. This combines social networking with an emphasis on advanced technologies such as mobile video broadcasting as means to let people connect.

The site should be focused on immediately engaging the user with major calls to action to:
- Join the site (the more we a user completes their profile, the more relevant the content offerings or finding friends or groups)
- Participate (download the applications and/or upload your own content through the website)
- Browse and explore (find content, friends, or learn about the applications)

Both advanced and novice users should be able to use the website and it's technologies with ease, excitement and without confusion or useless actions. The user should feel free to explore, learn, share, and most importantly connect with other users on a common global level.

User generated content will be viewed from within user profiles, through exploration and groups, enticing discovery and active participation to occur naturally. Exploration should allow for limitless possibilities to connect with other users by viewing videos, images, events, friends, blogs, rating, and engaging in conversation through chat, and comments.

Specific special features include scheduling live events that will broadcast from your mobile phone, and allowing people worldwide to schedule and join in. Users will be able to create and manage their own social networking groups. Within these groups, users will be able to engage in group discussions and share related videos as well as other types of related content.

The following conceptive wireframes use our recommendation and illustrate how Next2Friends.com can fully engage the user in this unique social platform.

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Page 19
Wireframes: Guest home page

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Wireframes: Guest home page

Guest home page is designed to engage new users into the Next2Friends experience. The top level navigation is a call to action as well as a place for new users to explore and learn about N2F.

What's Live, **What's Next**, and **Groups** give new users a snapshot into what is happening right now within the site. Showing these components allow users to engage and use the features on the site before signing up.

The right hand column is designed to teach people about N2F, the community, and the technologies within. Clear call to actions are important throughout this learning experience.

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Page 20
Wireframes: Logged-in home page

Contact
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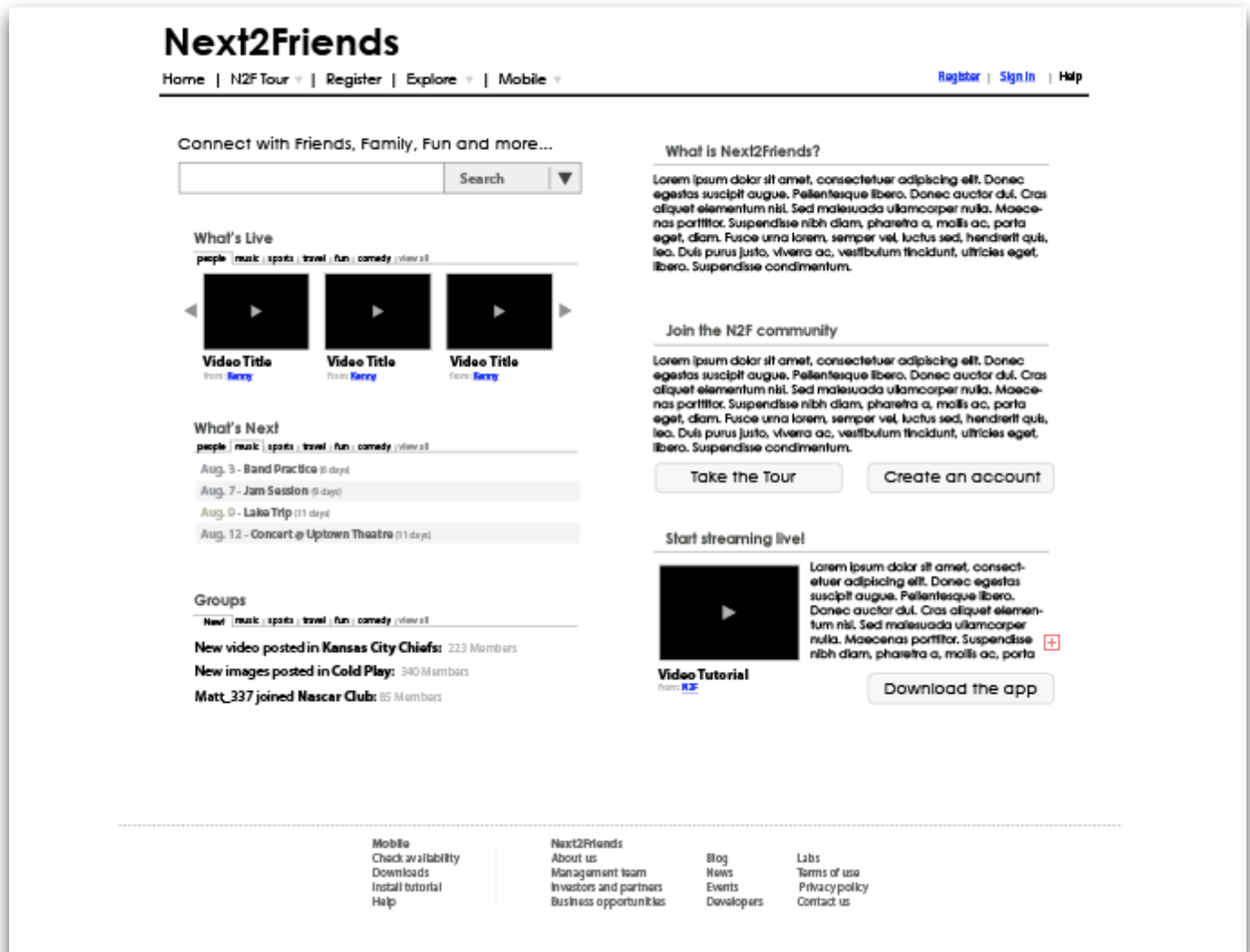
## **Wireframes:** Logged-in home page

The home page for logged-in users is a high level overview into all of your media as well as your profile, friend's media, groups, events, and featured items from N2F.

The right hand column is designated for previewing content. These modules are scrollable allowing you to search through content without leaving the page. Each module contains tabs allowing even more exploration on the home page.

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Page 21
Wireframes: Profile view

Contact
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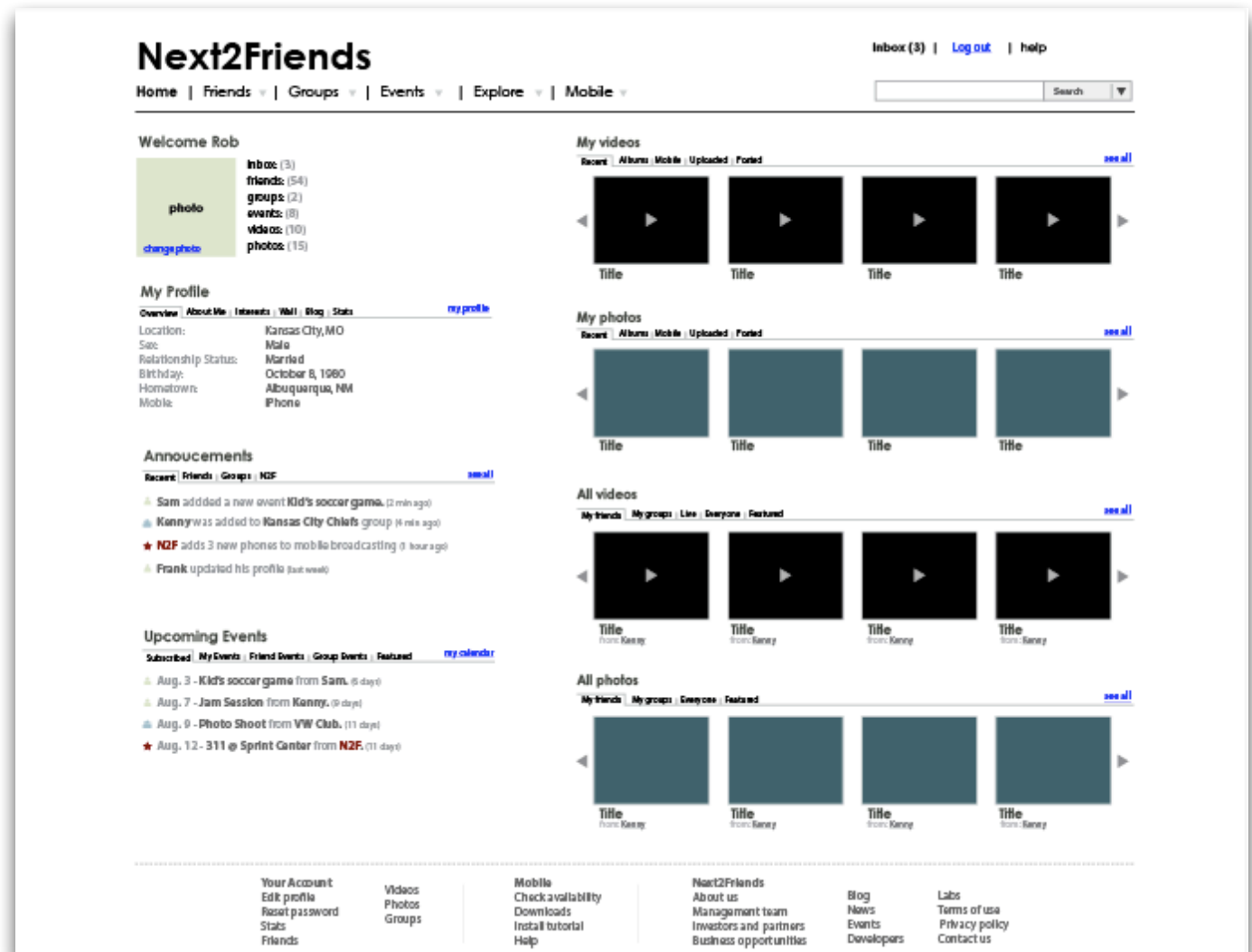
Wireframes: Profile view

Viewing one's profile gives you an overview into the user's content. Preview modules for video, photo and friends are tabbed and scrollable keeping you on the page while searching through this person's profile.

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Page 22
Recommendation Summary

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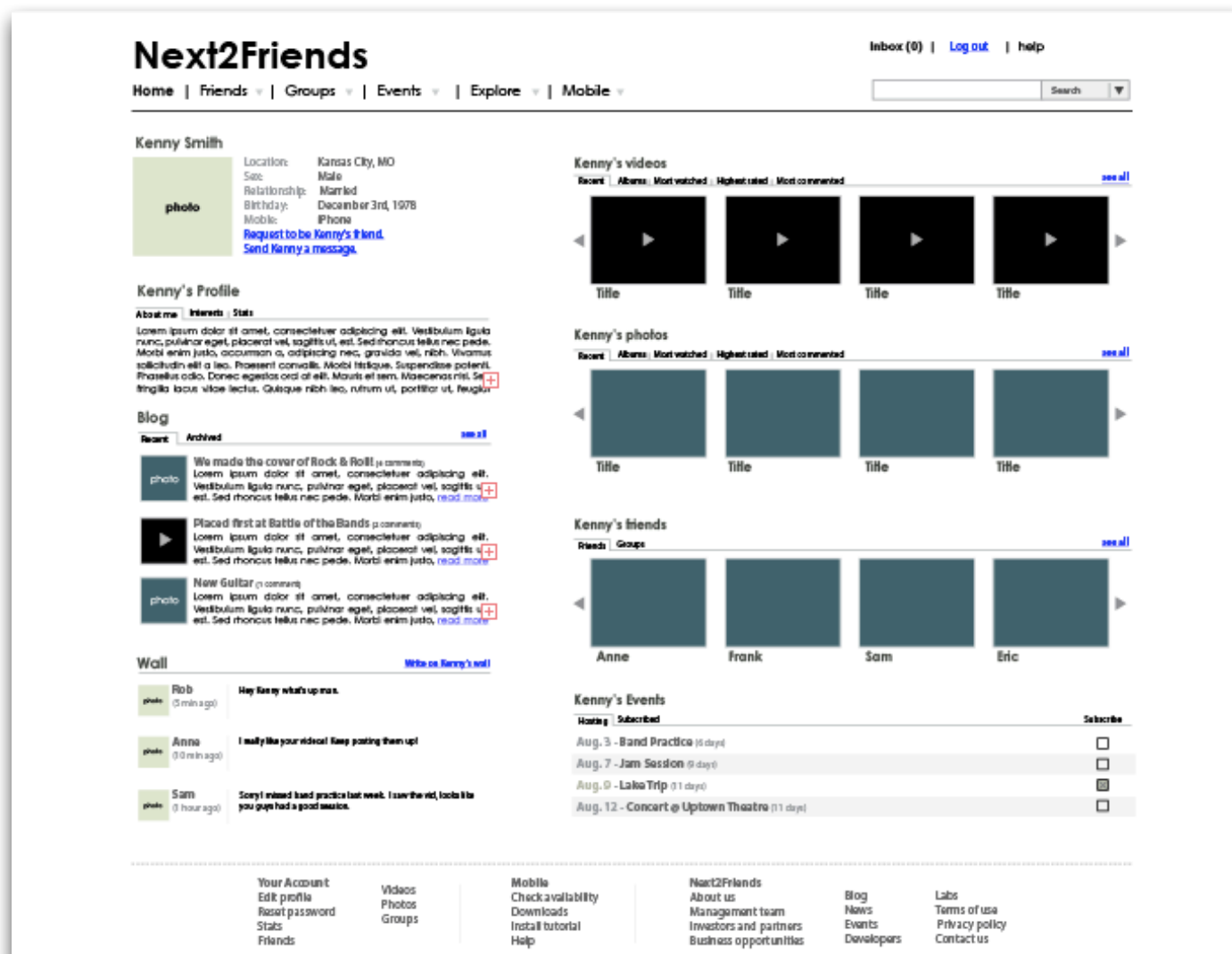
Recommendation Summary: (not prioritized)

UxP/IA changes
• Alternate page structure
• Alternate navigation and nomenclature

Introductory/Help Videos
• Explain the N2F concept using emotional stories to illustrate the power and energy of real connections between friends and family
• Provide more help and guidance for people to start to engage and participate – both on the site and the mobile applications (improved help and FAQ content)

Group Functionality
• Add/Manage Groups for related content or from groups of friends
• Invite others, request to join/participate
• Shared events and content publication

Event Functionality
• Scheduling future events for others to view/join (move beyond current listing of N2F-specific events and allow users to create and schedule)
• Alerts/notifications (reminders to the broadcaster and the viewers via preferred means – email or SMS or within the site and application)
• Event pages that allow multiple user video views
• Event-based commentary
• Chat modification to connect to events
   Turn on or off to watch/participate inline during live event
   Option to view chat with video playback at later time

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Page 23
Recommendation Summary continued

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Recommendation Summary: continued

User Personalization
• More differentiation for a personalized logged-in view
• Increased relevance of content when users have identified favorites, friends, groups, location etc.

More robust content tagging
• Improved ease during capture of video from a mobile phone (beyond just title)
• After mobile video upload, Improved ability/prompt to edit/modify tags upon next visit to the site,
e.g. "recent/new videos to tag or categorize"

Content Categorization
• Allow "browsers" to find relevant content in a variety of ways via topic categories
• Move beyond tag clouds to allow browsing by category

Mobile Application
• Streamline the video recording process (open and click to start)
• Ideal would be one streamlined application (live, ask, snap-up, tagging)
• Increased access to help/instructions
• Scheduling alerts/reminders