Highlights

Learning the Importance of Real-World Tests

Overview

"Get out of the building..."

I learned a lot with this project. I learned that I love the loop of iterating and testing. I learned that it's incredibly gratifying to create something that I know works based on user feedback; but, The biggest lesson is that my final design only worked inside the building; I didn't follow Steve Blank's advice to "get out of the building"to actually test.

Design Process

Interview | Discovery

Usability Test

Prototype based on feedback
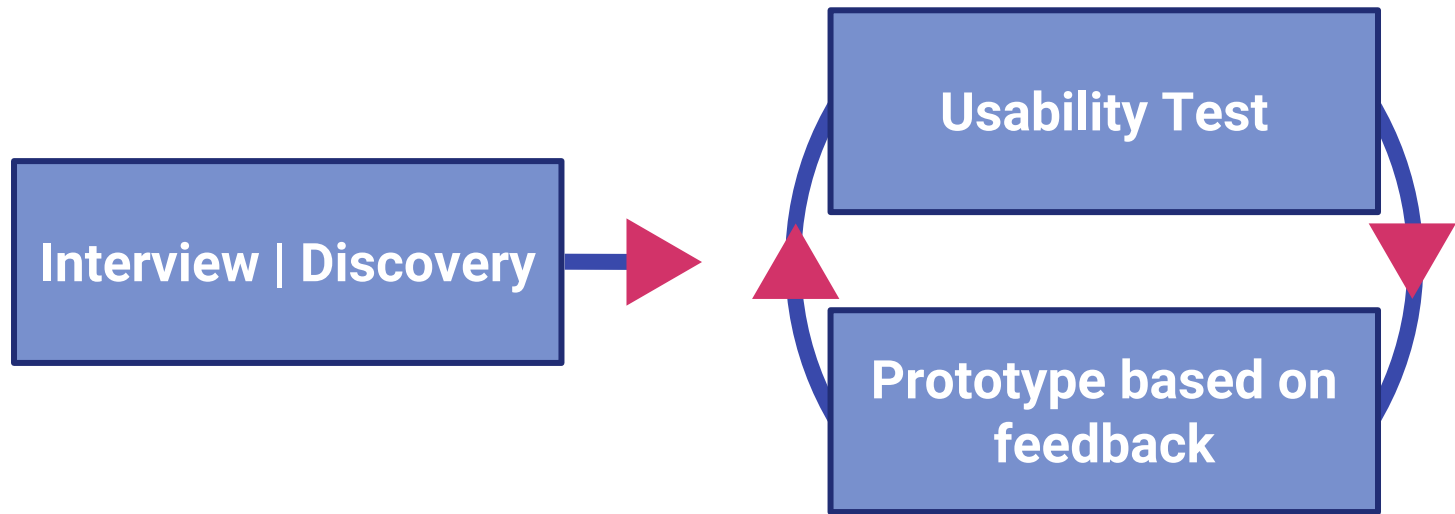
My Design Process. Pretty straightforward, and you can see that loop of iteration and feedback that I enjoyed.

The Brief

Design an interaction flow that allows a user to:
- "Highlight" audio, analogous to highlighting text in a book.
- Take notes on parts of the audiobook you find interesting.
- Share with other people

The brief was really just a set of features. No reasons. No real problem. No users.

The Goal

My initial goal was following the brief. I went head first into sketching out some flows for a tool to allow users to create a hi-light. Now, Tools aren't innately bad, but initially I wasn't even concerned with the why. Why did users need this?

User Scenario

The REAL Goal

With the scenario, I discovered that the REAL reason people want to create a hi-light. It's to share interesting things with their friends in order to have a conversation. Meeting this goal would would create a REAL and compelling solution. Not just a tool.

Outcome
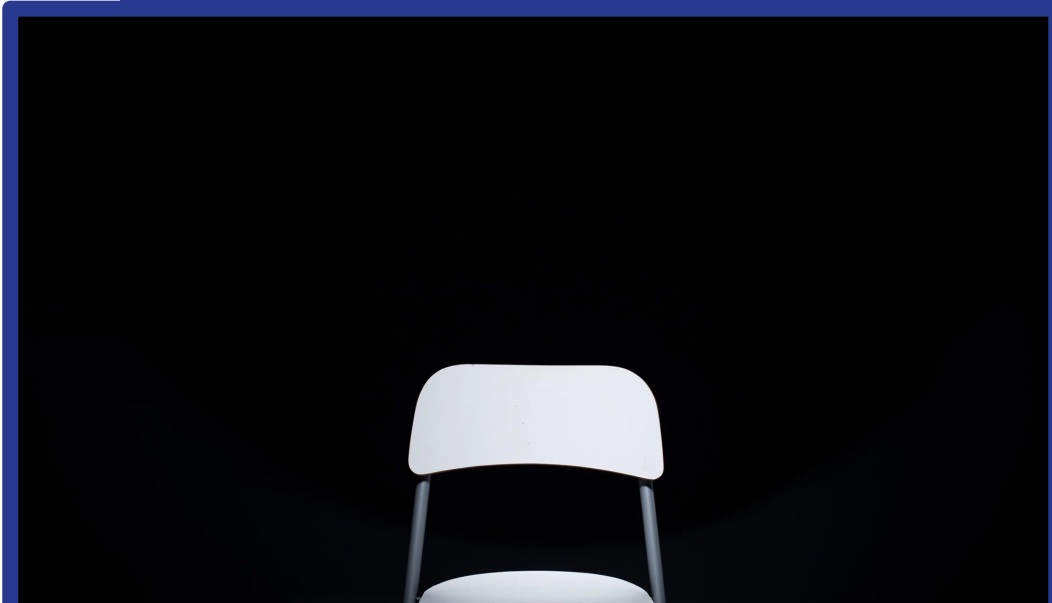
So yes… my final prototype solved the problem, but only in the building. (show the proto) In other words; it worked in a vacuum that is a usability test; you and the user in a room w/a device. But in my research I learned that that isn't how my users actually listen to podcasts. They are usually doing something; exercise, driving, cleaning. The flow I created would require users to stop everything they are doing and walk step by step through my flow in order to achieve their goal. Now, I had a feeling from the beginning that the real way users would need to interact with this app would be with Voice UI, but it seemed like too huge of an undertaking. I was afraid to try something new.

The Process

Discovery

Here are the details of the process. I want to dig into how i got into this realization. Let me walk you through the steps

Interview | Discovery

Usability Test

Prototype based on feedback
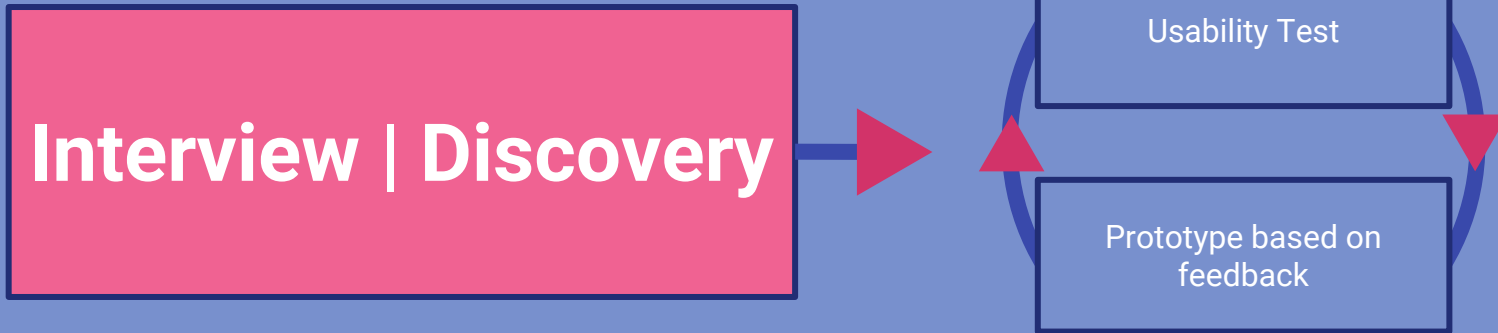
The target users weren't specified in the initial brief, but I knew it had to be people who listened to long form spoken word content. Yes that category is broad, but it served as a criteria for determining who to interview. Once i started interviewing users I realized that all of my users listened to podcast so I then had a more targeted user base. Podcast listeners

Persona   VS   Scenario

I created a user scenario because it gave context to the whole user experience: where they were, what they were doing, when they listen, why they listen and why they want to highlight. The specifics about the user that are generally part of a persona weren't exactly valuable in solving this problem.

Key Quotes

User "K"

"...I'll quote [a podcast] but I'll quote it really poorly...I can't ever remember where I heard it from. I'm not very confident..."

These key quotes informed the REAL goal, the why

Key Quotes

User "A"

"...It was hard for me to articulate exactly what the episode was about... I couldn't do it justice by saying it..."
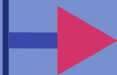
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Problem Scenario

The interviews informed this scenario.

The Process
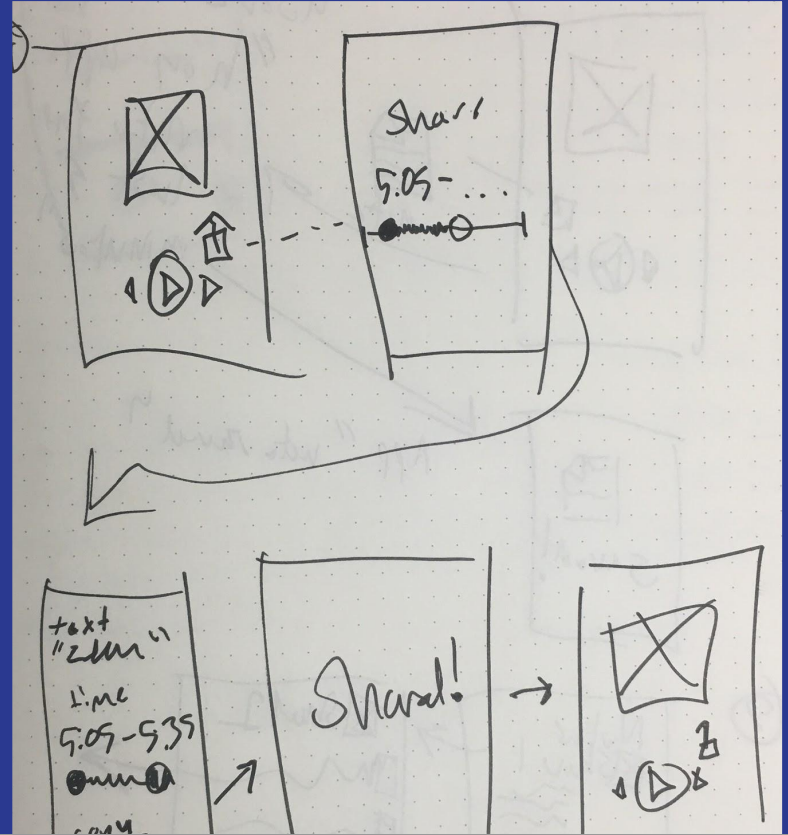
The Loop

Interview | Discovery

Usability Test

Prototype based on feedback

Sketches

Cupcake

This was a sketch thinking out the rough idea of how the app would work. I used the term "Cupcake" to describe this sketch. The idea of a "Cupcake" comes from IBM. This is the metaphor: a cupcake is simple and small, but still delivers on the goods. In that same way this idea was simple and small but still delivers and solves the user's need.
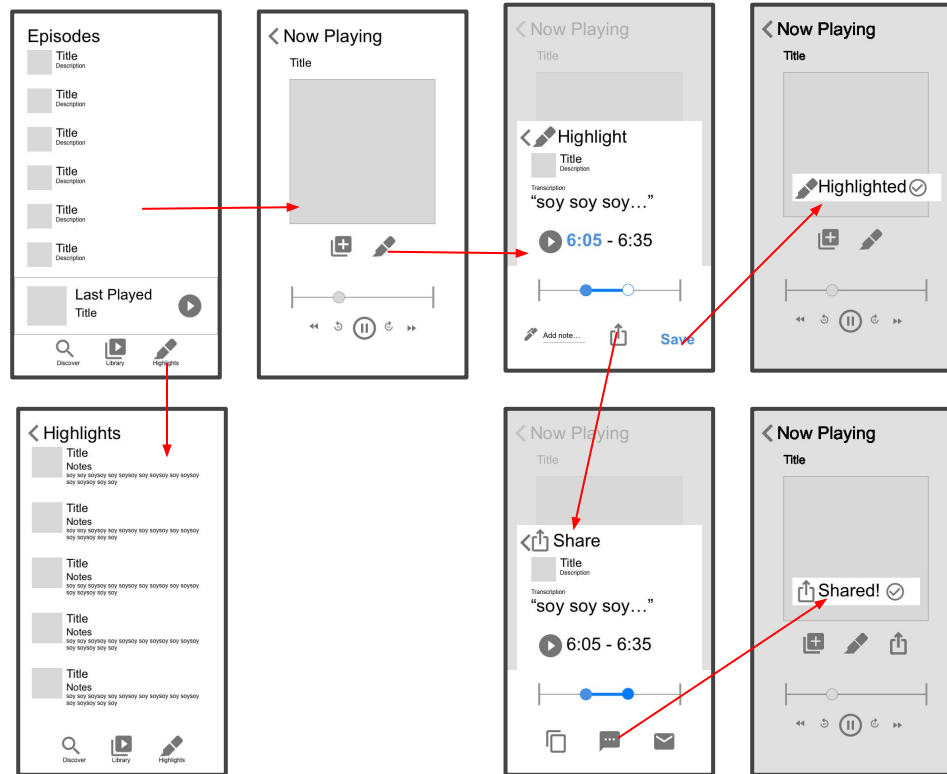
Sketches

Wedding Cake
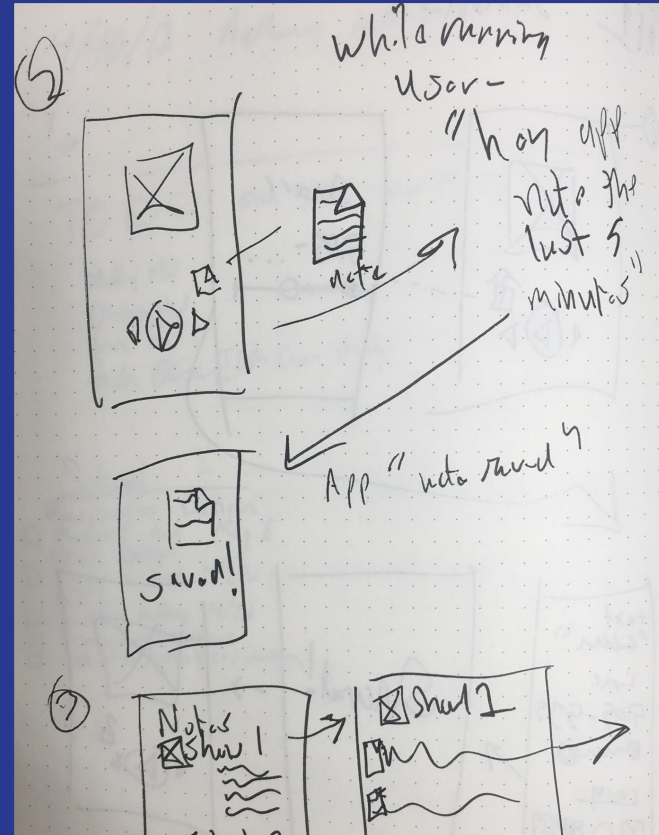
Here was a sketch including using Voice to prompt your app you create a highlight. Now I use the "Cake" metaphor again here. A wedding cake is increasingly more difficult than a cupcake, but also has tremendous value. This VUI flow has tremendous value, but is also a huge undertaking that i was scared at the time to tackle.
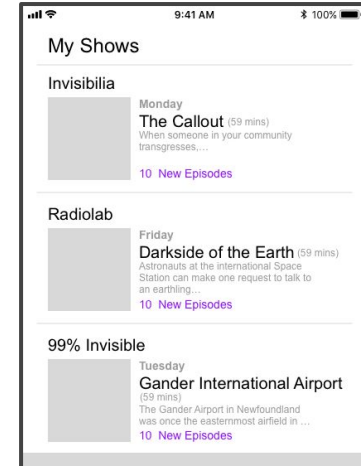
Low-fi Prototype

Fixing P_00

Feedback:

What am I looking at?

Fix:

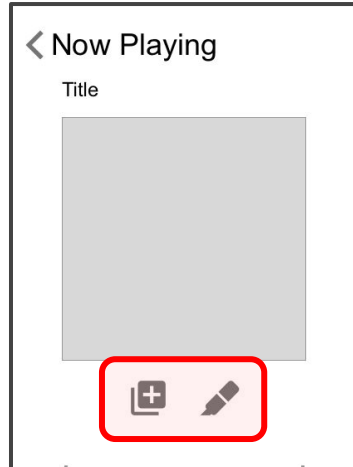The design has more information and more context

Through usability testing I learned some valuable insights. In this image i learned the value of context. (describe first screen) Users had no idea what they were even looking at. (describe fix)
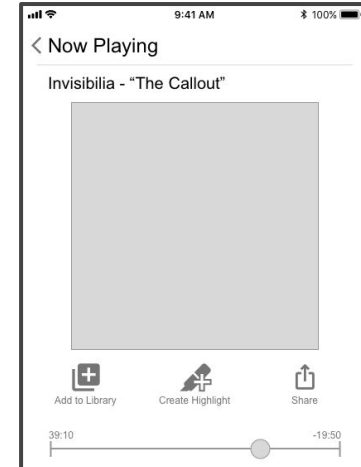
Fixing P_00

Feedback:

I don't know what those icons mean.

Fix:

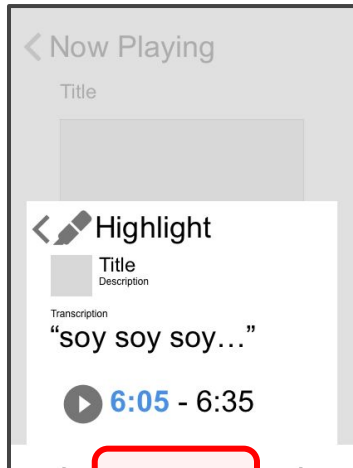Added labels to the icons and added a "+" to the highlight icon to make it more clear

From a Usability perspective the icons i used were new so users didn't know what they meant. (describe first screen) I didn't help that I didn't labeling them. (describe fix)
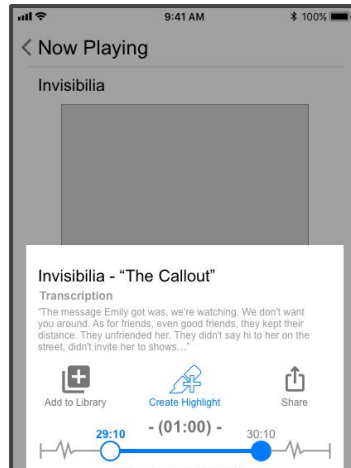
Fixing P_00

Feedback:

What do the circles mean?

Fix:

Added timestamps to the circles to indicate that they represent different time markers

Here I presented my users with a flow and pattern that most weren't familiar. I have some audio editing experience and i designed this screen so I knew what was happening, but the users didn't

Retrospective *Learnings*

Positives

What did i learn?
The faster you can get an idea tested the better
Improve based on feedback, don't feature add
give relevant context. Use actual information and data. Not just placeholders.
be aware of user's knowledge of icons.
be aware of when your asking users to do something they haven't done before
test outside of the building. Go to where your users actually use the product.
Big picture personal positive
It's incredibly gratifying to create something that I know works based on user feedback

Not so Positives

What to do better
DON'T design for yourself
DON'T exclude context in an effort to save time prototyping
DON'T: ignore the better solution because you're afraid to try something new

Next Steps

Sell it?

Sell it to the Apple Podcasts
Ok realistically,
Implement Voice UI Screens
Tighten Up Visual Aspects
User test outside of the building

Thanks! Any Q's, send an Email.

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