

**Michael Sarcone-Roach**



## About Me

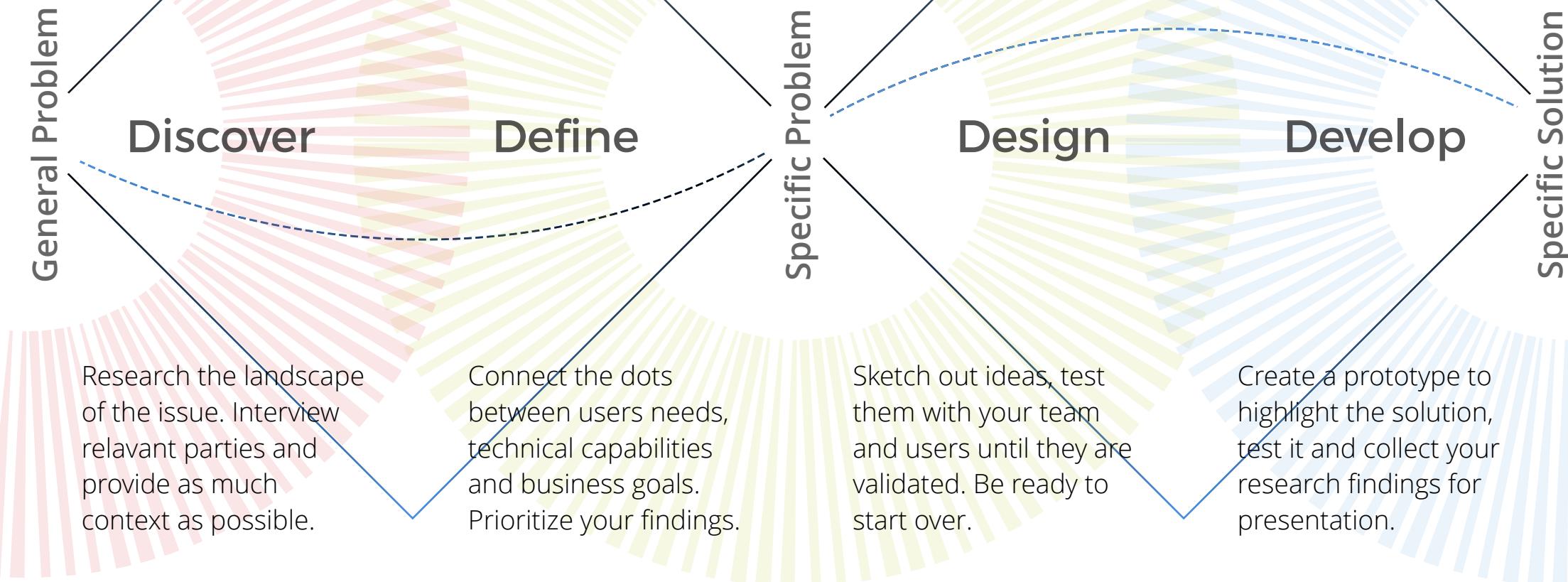
- **Loves to work with people** - giggling professionalism, yoda-level soft skills/lightsaber skills
- **Passionate about UX** - committed to making the world more accessible & usable
- **Hard worker** - if they gave air miles for going the extra mile, I would be in Bali
- **Great listener** - even better observer

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## Tools



# An Example of my UX Process



# Giphy



**Time frame:** 2 weeks

**Team:** Carl Landegger,  
Shalyn Oswald

**Opportunity:** Despite being the GIF kings, Giphy does not yet have a GIF creator function.

## Phase I: Research

We began researching other GIF creation services while simultaneously sending out a survey to collect information about users behavior.

The market for GIF creation services is filled with products and the available options range dramatically in complexity, quality and price. Many services rely on advertising and watermarks, reducing their credibility.

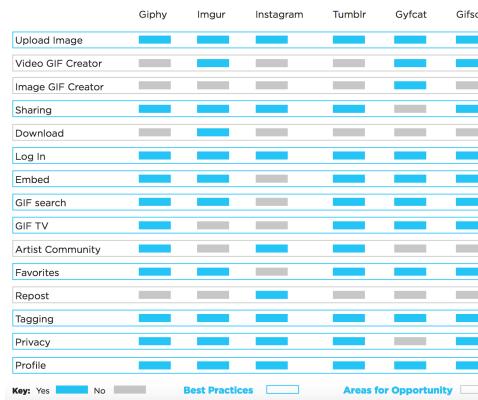
Giphy's business model is focused on having brand partners (such as Disney, GE & Calvin Klein) who have an interest in controlling the nature of viral content that uses their IP. Essentially, Giphy is extorting large brands and has no need for advertisement so long as they control the main-stream usage of GIFs.

**Context:** Giphy is a large repository of viral and meme-ready GIF's that leverages a potent API to spread their animated madness across almost all social media platforms. Users are able to upload GIFs, tag them and access them via the tags.

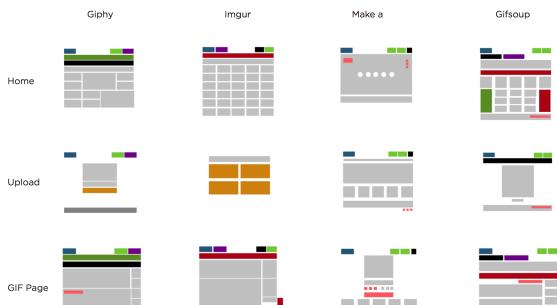
Key findings:

- GIF creation tools are either overly-complex or filled with ads and spy-ware
- The ability to add captions was the most-used feature

## Feature analysis



## Layout analysis

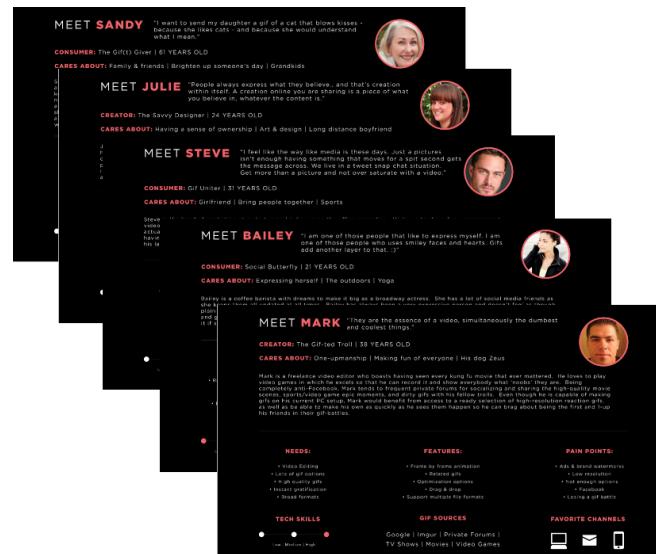


## Phase II : Research & Synthesis

Our survey yielded 57 responses, leading us to conduct interviews with 18 users. From our interview findings we created 5 Personas to guide the design of the GIF creator feature.

Users were most interested in personalizing existing GIF content, without having to learn a new tool or install another app. However, users who created GIFs demanded fully-featured tools so they could properly edit their work.

Through our feature prioritization exercises we determined that having a quick way to add captions was the most valuable functionality for creating GIFs.



**MEET SANDY** "I want to send my daughter a gif of a cat that brows kisses - because she likes cats - and because she would understand what I mean."

**CONSUMER:** The Gift Giver | 61 YEARS OLD

**CARES ABOUT:** Family & friends | Brightens up someone's day | Grandkids



**MEET JULIE** "People always express what they believe, and that's creation within itself. A creation unlike you are sharing is a piece of what you believe in, whatever the content is."

**CREATOR:** The Savvy Designer | 24 YEARS OLD

**CARES ABOUT:** Having a sense of ownership | Art & design | Long distance boyfriend



**MEET STEVE** "I feel like the way media is these days... just a picture isn't enough because something that moves for a split second gets lost in a picture. So I think it's important to have a video. Get more than a picture and not over saturate with a video."

**CONSUMER:** Gif User | 31 YEARS OLD

**CARES ABOUT:** Girlfriend | Brings people together | Sports



**MEET BAILEY** "I am one of those people that like to express myself. I am one of those people who uses smiley faces and hearts. GIFs add another layer to that. :)"

**CONSUMER:** Social Butterfly | 21 YEARS OLD

**CARES ABOUT:** Expressing herself | The outdoors | Yoga



**MEET MARK** "They are the essence of a video, simultaneously the dumbest and coolest things."

**CREATOR:** The Gifted Troll | 39 YEARS OLD

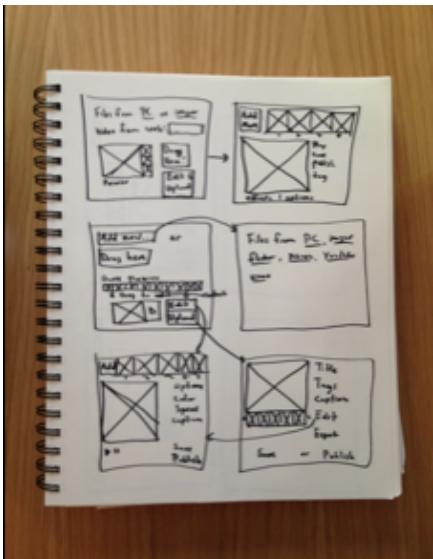
**CARES ABOUT:** One-upmanship | Making fun of everyone | His dog Zeus



## Design Iterations

We wanted to retain the simple upload process for Giphy, while also adding the caption functionality to that basic flow. The full-blown editor was then an optional, second step in the upload process. This allowed us to fill the editor with the robust features that actual GIF makers demand, while also adding value to the basic user without overloading them.

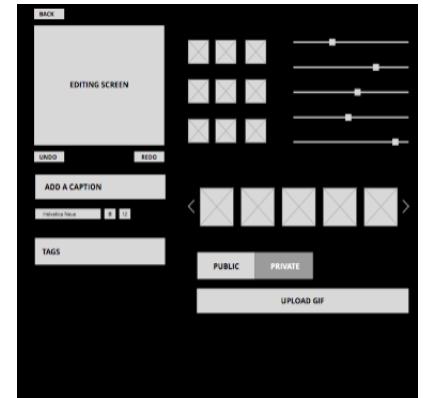
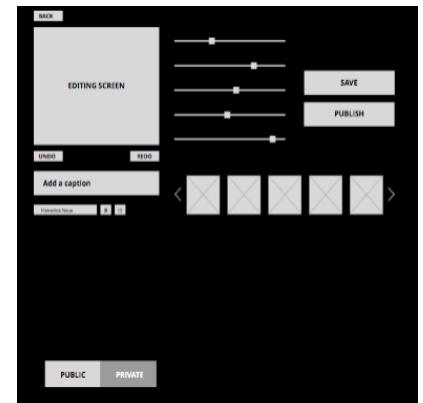
Individual time boxed design studio exersizes



Group design synthesis



Wireframing solutions



# Giphy

## Prototyping & Testing

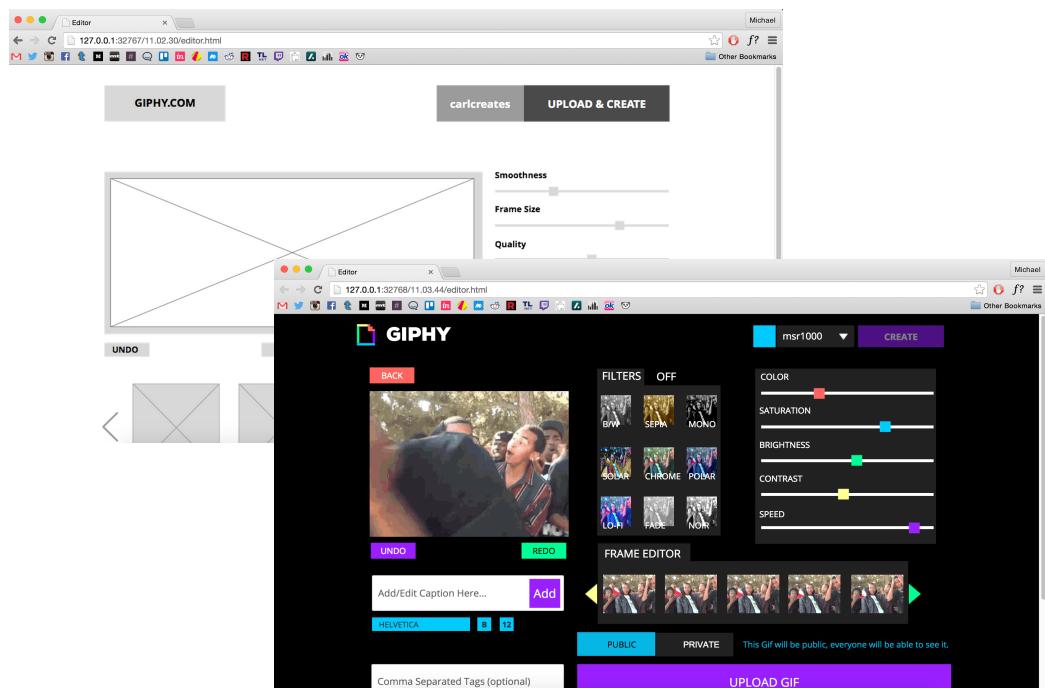
Using Axure we were able to dive into usability testing right away. After five low fidelity iterations we had a solid validation of our userflows and content strategy. To delve deeper into our issues with copy and visual differential we made a high fidelity prototype that would offer more granular customization for testing.

The high fidelity prototype was nearly indistinguishable from the actual Giphy website, which brought us into a different world of user feedback. It was very interesting to see how this played out during testing; users were suddenly demanding much more out of the website and we were able to get to the nitty-gritty details of their behaviors and expectations.

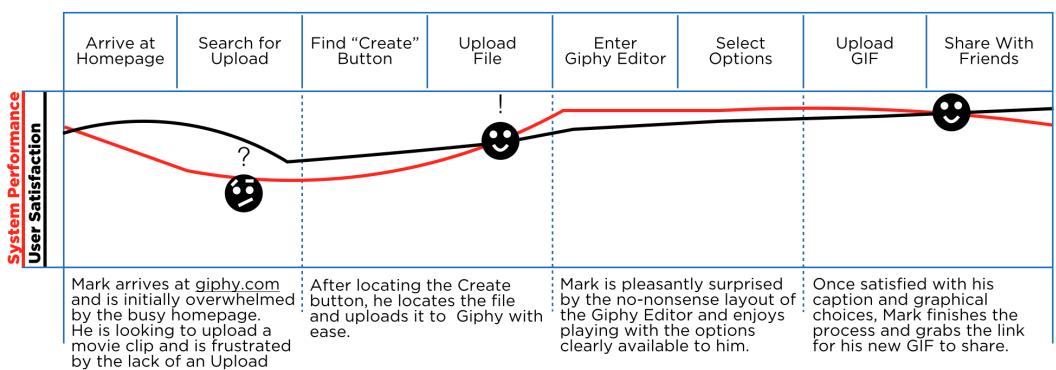
While our greatest opportunity was to enable users to take existing GIFs and add captions quickly, we found that those users who did find their way to the editor were always pleasantly surprised. These later iterations really got to the core of our user research by enabling fast uploading with a caption, while simultaneously encouraging engagement with the editor. In our final rounds of user testing, everyone went into the editor and seemed to enjoy the experience.

**Prototype** <http://9ebt2c.axshare.com/>

## Prototypes



## Final User Journey



# General Assembly Idea Incubator



**Time frame:** 2 weeks

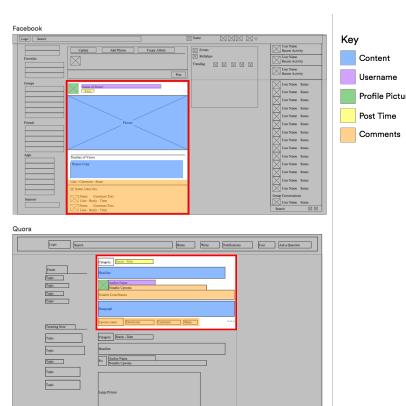
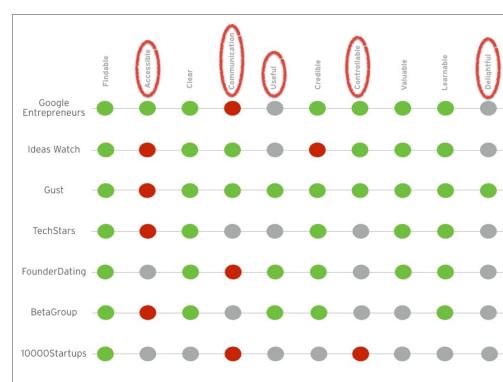
**Team:** Ola Alsaidy,  
Chloe Marten

**Opportunity:** People are seeking a way to gain feedback and build upon their startup ideas from professionals in the tech community.

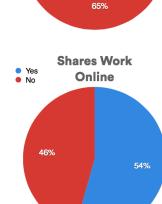
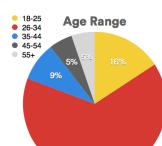
**Context:** We were tasked with finding a brand and creating a new service for them. One of our very first ideas was to create a mentorship network for students/alumni of GA. After a bit of waffling and clarifying we turned this into the General Assembly Idea Incubator.

## Phase I: Research & Validation

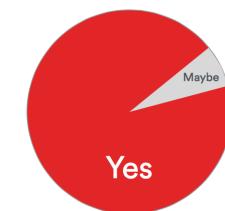
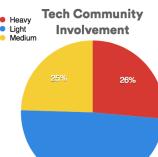
As we began to survey/interview we found that nearly everyone had an idea that they had put on the back burner due to a lack of knowledge or apparent resources. The need for this site was almost palpable from the "idea-maker" side. Most people just needed a place where they could get trusted validation of their idea. Beyond that, the largest needs were for a general outline of next steps, financial advice and a way to connect with interested parties to form a team.



We researched other Q&A services, as well as other startup incubator websites, and found a few notable gaps. The incubators were largely private and focused on teams who already had a business proposal. On the other hand, the Q&A websites were full of misinformation and untrustworthy sources, the price one pays for being public. Since our brand was physically in-house we put out a separate survey for GA personnel and conducted several interviews with product directors and teachers.



Of the 14 respondents, 92% enjoy offering feedback related to their expertise.



GA personnel want to get involved.

# General Assembly Idea Incubator



## Phase II : Personas & Features

We took all of our interview data, broke it down into granular pieces, and created four personas to represent our user base. David, our primary persona, is familiar with the tech industry and already has a proposal for his idea. He is even attending GA to learn the necessary web development skills to develop his idea.

David needs validation for his idea and he is pained by his lack of fluency when communicating with developers. He wants to form a team of local, like-minded people and be able to get rapid feedback.

**David**

**Persona Type:** Idea Maker  
**Age:** 26  
**Occupation:** Creative Producer  
**Location:** San Francisco

**Backstory:**  
David has an idea for a funny new app. He has already put together a business plan and is ready to move forward with creating his product. While he is very familiar with the tech industry, he has no idea about the development needed. He is looking for a developer to partner with, but he often does not know what questions to ask when interviewing them. He is currently taking courses at General Assembly to get a better understanding of web development.

**Technical Empathy:**    
**Social Media:**    
**Comfortable Sharing Online:**

Needs	Pain Points	How Can We Serve
• Validation of his idea • Quick advice from trusted source • Locate people nearby with similar interests	• Unable to communicate with developers • Unable to find collaborative partners • Lack of money	• Tag posts based on topic • Find people based on location • LinkedIn integration • User ratings



We wanted to create a private area where users could share information and collaborate on their ideas with trusted people from their network. This feature spoke to a great many of the privacy and team-building problems that our users have.

To support these Project Boards we needed to prioritize the features that are necessary to its development, such as personal networks, searching for users and validating their knowledge.

- MUST**
- Be able to post questions or ideas
  - Be able to leave comments/feedback
  - Be able to create profile and sign in

- SHOULD**
- Be able to rate comments
  - Be able to add connections
  - Be able to upload and share documents
  - Be able to send direct messages
  - Be able to search by topic
  - Be able to adjust privacy settings

- COULD**
- Receive notifications
  - Track project process
  - Provide project management tools
  - Incorporate GA video tools

- WON'T**
- Be able to connect directly with investors
  - Provide specific project guidelines
  - Be able to upvote/downvote ideas

# General Assembly Idea Incubator

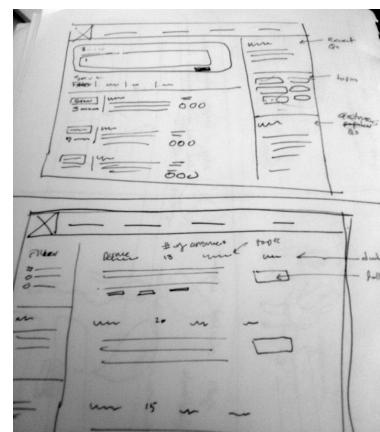
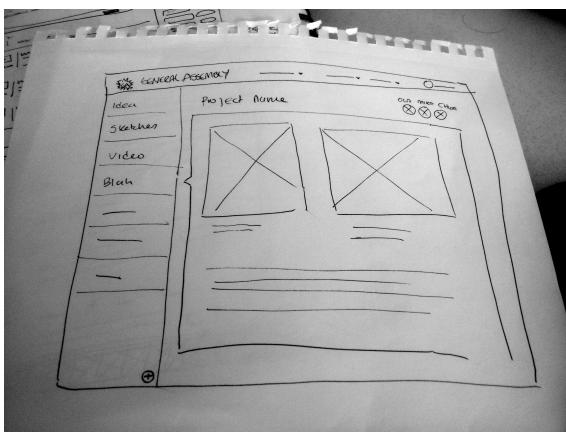


## Design

General Assembly has a relatively distinct visual style but their layouts tend to change drastically from service to service.

We initially ran a design studio focused on the Project Board pages, as they were farther from the GA web design than anything else. As we designed the page more and more questions arose to its functionality. In the interest of time we put the design of this page in the parking lot and focused on the homepage/feed, user profiles and network pages.

We used GA Profiles as a starting point for style and layout and quickly designed and wire framed these pages.



# General Assembly Idea Incubator



## Prototypes & Testing

We built our prototype in Axure and were able to validate our usability quickly. The main problem we encountered initially was the readability of the icons used for the project board and the tools pages. Adding hover text to the icons was our first solution, but we continued to get complaints from users. Eventually we tried changing the main navigation to text links, which was also more in keeping with the GA brand, this seemed to solve the general usability issues.

Once we were satisfied with the usability of the other pages, the Project Board was integrated in a separate test. Using Axure's adaptive views functions we were able to create a fully responsive prototype.

We presented the project with a full set of deliverables, available below.

### Home Page

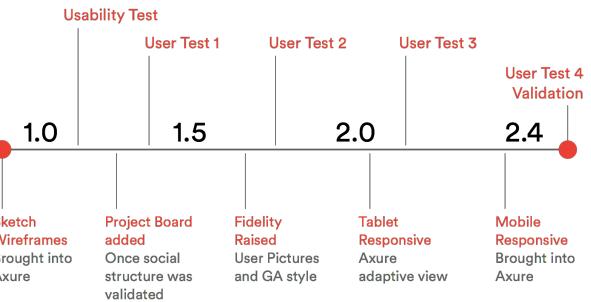
The screenshot shows the homepage of the Idea Incubator. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation bar with icons for profile, inbox, and notifications. Below the search bar, a post by David Burke is displayed: "What's the best prototyping tool for a mobile app?". A reply from Ally Zang is shown below it: "Check out my sketches for my to do list app!". On the right side, there are filter menus for "Recent Posts", "Popular Topics" (Business, Frontend Dev, Design, CSS, Legal), and "Active Posts". A sidebar on the left contains a "Question or Idea" input field, a "Details" section, and a "Comment" section with a reply from David Burke. Red numbered circles (1-5) highlight specific UI elements: 1 points to the navigation icons, 2 points to the reply button, 3 points to the comment box, 4 points to the "connect with a person" link, and 5 points to the ask box in the comment section.

- 1 The function of primary navigation icons was not clear to all users.
- 2 The comment voting system was unclear to some users. Those who were familiar with Reddit mentioned 'voting up'. Our intention was to use the button as a stamp of approval vs a voting system.
- 3 Reply button is difficult to find and inconsistent with the comment box.
- 4 When asked to "connect with a person", users were unclear where to go.
- 5 User was confused about the name being in the ask box: "I feel like I'm asking myself a question."

### Project Board

The screenshot shows the 'iCrave' Project Board. It features a navigation bar with a search bar and icons for profile, inbox, and notifications. Below the bar, a "Project Contributors" section shows a progress bar from SCRATCH to PROTOTYPE. The main area is titled "iCrave' Project Board" and describes it as "The menu item search app, for food lovers". It lists sections: Idea, Sketches, Video, Prototype, and Test Results. Under "Sketches", there are three cards: "Wireframe Sketches" (submitted by David on June 2, 2015), "Navigation Wireframe", and "Brainstorming". A "Group Sketches" section is also visible. Red numbered circles (1-3) highlight specific UI elements: 1 points to the project contributors bar, 2 points to the "Wireframe Sketches" card, and 3 points to the "Group Sketches" section.

### Prototype Timeline



### Project Deliverables

<https://msr1000.github.io/MSRIdealIncubatorDeliverables.pdf>

### Current Prototype

<http://61gjzx.axshare.com/>

**Time frame:** 3 weeks

**Team:** Eric Blattberg

**Opportunity:** Optimize transitions between data view pages, reduce time-to value for Executive and Analyst personas.

**Context:** Canvs is a sentiment analysis tool for television airings. They scan twitter data and assign emotional reactions to the content.

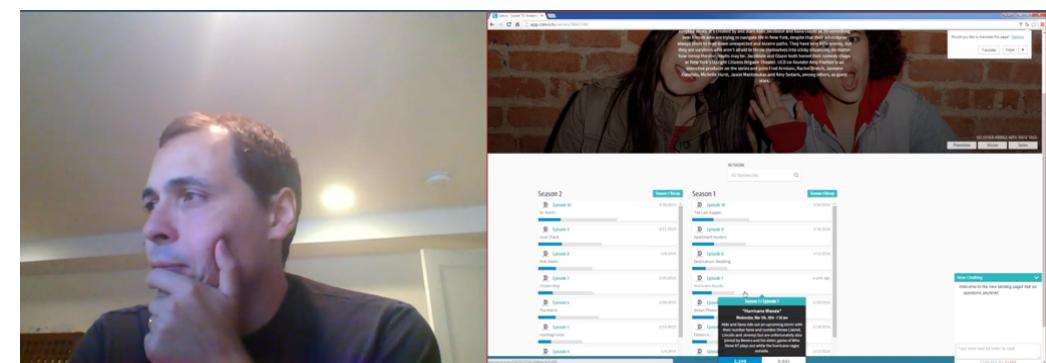
## Phase I: Listening to clients and defining scope

Canvs reached out to us with the goal of streamlining their user interface. Their clients are almost exclusively TV executives and marketing analysts from big companies like Sony and Viacom. This means that there are very few users and they are all grouped into 8-10 organizations.

Notably, these are busy people who Canvs cannot afford to bother with surveys and user testing. Thankfully we were provided with two personas and had great access to Canvs stakeholders and usage statistics from the site.

The only record of prior user behavior we had came from these Mixpanel statistics. This enabled us to see the nitty gritty details of user interactions with the website, but it could not tell us what users wanted and what they understood.

Because we could not access current users, we knew that we would not be able to directly validate any design changes. This meant that our UX process would have to focus on new users and general usability. We reached out to our own contacts in the marketing/analyzing/TV producing world for insight.



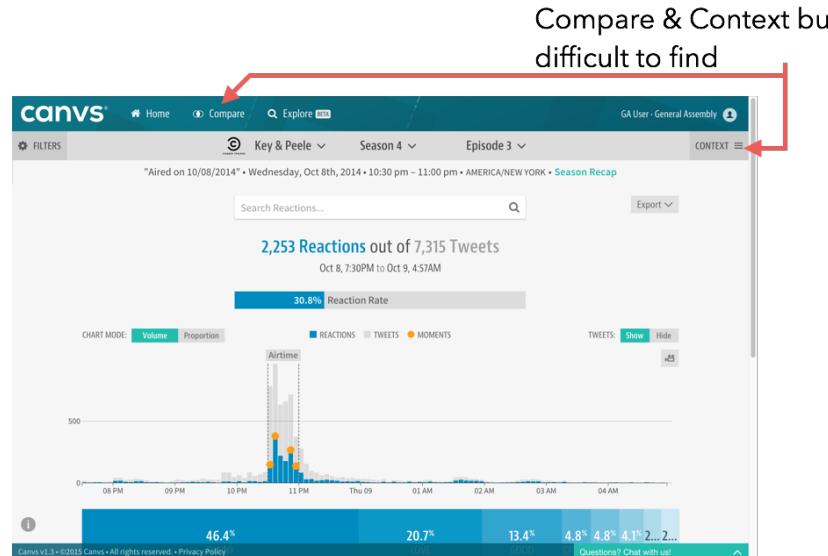
Brian Wieser, senior analyst at Pivotal Research, during remote testing

## Phase II : Interviews & Usability Testing

With our scope defined, we focused on the general usability and conducted many tests of the existing platform. All of our tests were captured on video and passed to the client to keep them in the loop.

Right away we noticed that users had consistent problems when trying to use the two compare features. Users had problems finding either feature and even more problems trying to differentiate between them.

The mental model for comparing information seemed to be disrupted by the navigational/functional differences.



"Benchmarks" are accessed through a "context" panel on the right side of the episode view. These allow users to compare data from a single episode to network, daypart, genre and series averages.

"Comparisons" are accessed through a button on the top-nav, which can only be seen when scrolled to the top of the page. These allow users to compare specific airings, with the capacity to compare up to five at once.

Selecting Benchmark

Benchmark Results

Jan Dawson, chief analyst at Jackdaw Research

*"Not seeing any obvious way to add another show."*

*"Honestly guys, I don't know how to use this."*

Tim Masek, marketing student

Results shown within context panel, alongside menu options

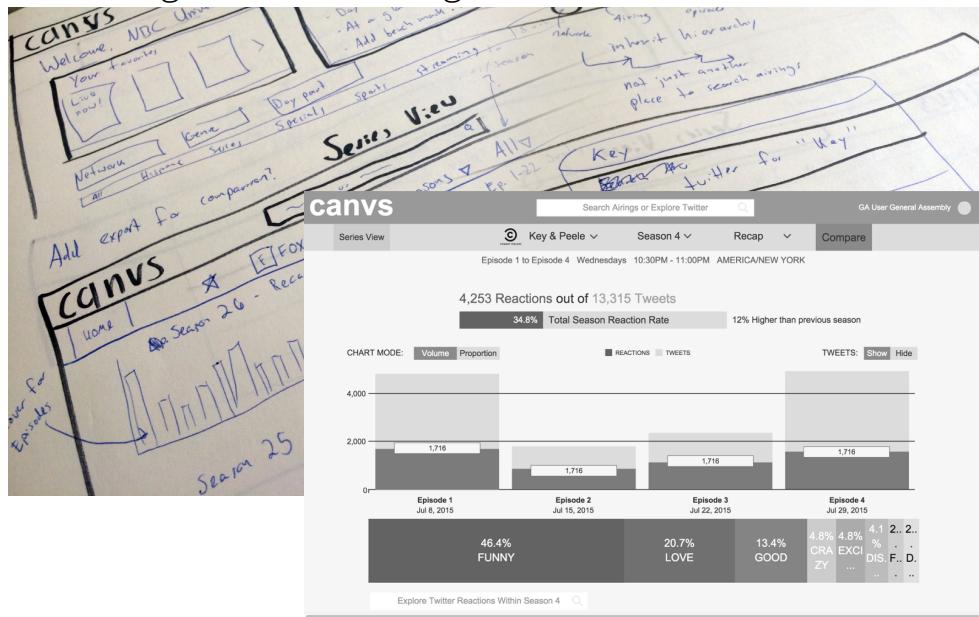
Filter selections and options far apart

## Design

Our goal was to make the interface match the mental model of gathering data to compare. Instead of going to disparate locations to analyze the same data, one would simply find and add data to what they already have displayed.

This new compare panel could also be used from any page on the site that had data, such as a season recap or boolean search results page.

## Sketching and wireframing

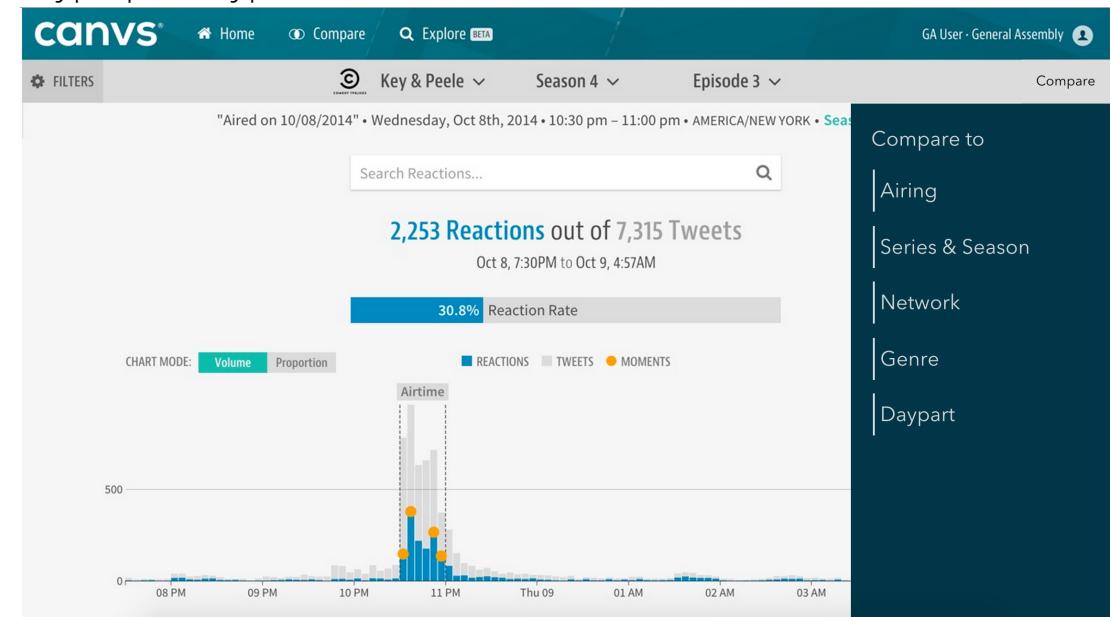


We prioritized redesigning the compare/benchmark features in part due to usability issues, but also because they represented a great value to both user personas.

The executive wants to quickly and easily compare a show to the network average while the analyst wants more options and flexibility.

After a few design studios on paper we decided to make a small prototype in Hype to test the interactions and to display our ideas to the client.

## Hype prototype

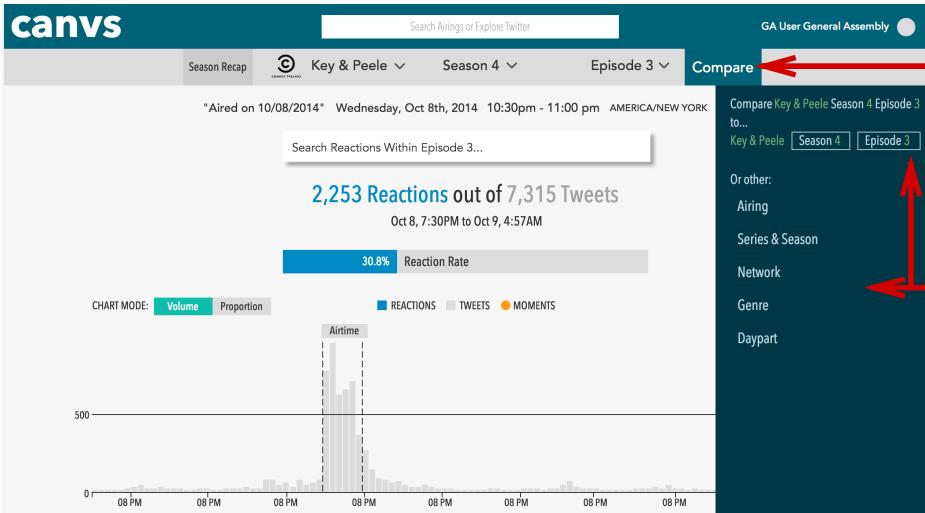


## Prototypes & Presentation

Having validated the potential for the compare menu redesign, we created a high-fidelity prototype for testing. After one iteration we had established strong usability and put it in storage until such a time that we could test it with current Canvs users.

With our remaining time we focused on the other usability issues encountered in our tests and created a handful of mockups and prototypes for potential solutions.

When we presented our final work to the clients they had already gone live with some of the changes we had suggested in our previous meetings.



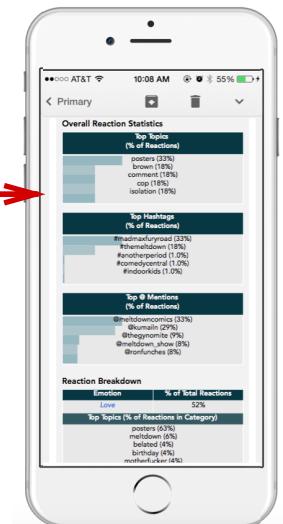
The screenshot shows the redesigned Canvs homepage. At the top is a search bar with 'key' and a magnifying glass icon. To the right is a user profile 'GA User General Assembly'. A red arrow points to the search bar with the text 'Consolidated search bars/cleaned up main nav'. Below the search bar is a section titled 'Explore Twitter Reactions to "key"' with a 'SERIES' dropdown showing 'Key & Peele'. A red arrow points to this section with the text 'Added popular comparisons to homepage'. The main content area shows 'Recent Favorite Airings' with cards for 'At Midnight With Chris Hardwick' (Season 2, Episode 141), 'The Late Show with James Corden' (Season 1, Episode 67), and 'Late Night With Seth Meyers' (Season 2, Episode 143). To the right is a sidebar for 'Comparisons' with a 'Add New Benchmark' button. A red arrow points to this sidebar.

Button moved closer to content

Mobile-friendly email design

Compare & Benchmark features unified

**Current Prototype**  
<http://xdn7ff.axshare.com>



# The Boys' Club of New York



**Time frame:** 3 months

**Team:** Ironpaper, Inc

**Opportunity:** Improve online engagement with parents & alumni while also creating an effective portal for donations.

## Phase I: Listening to clients and defining scope

The Boys' Club of New York came to Ironpaper for a new website. They found their old site was cumbersome to use on mobile devices and made it difficult to find useful information quickly. We began by interviewing staff members, parents and donors to create a clearer picture of how the site was used and what it was missing.

Most staff members simply did not use the old site, updating anything required lots of red tape, consequently they did not trust the information on the site to be up to date and would not share it with members or parents.

Parents did use the site, as it was essential to determining scheduling and choosing programs for their sons. However because the information was usually old, they would almost always resort to calling or speaking in-person.

**Context:** BCNY is an organization that empowers boys and young men by providing effective programs and a supportive community.

The donors for BCNY rarely looked at the site, instead relying heavily on direct mailings and events to get info and to give donations. When they did visit the site, they wanted to see images of the clubhouses and stories of member success.



Original BCNY.org

## Phase II : Interviews & Userflows

The first major issue we discovered was that BCNY has multiple locations (clubhouses) and they all have slightly different operational procedures. Despite the differences, they all use the same terminology. For example at one clubhouse "Junior members" would be 5th-7th graders while at another clubhouse the same terminology would be applied to much younger boys. Each clubhouse has a different schedule and a different set of programs offered to each age group.

To complicate matters, every parent must appear in-person to pickup their son at the end of every day. If a clubhouse has an early closing, due to weather or holidays, these parents need to know right away.

Through our user research we determined that the most universally important uses of the site were :

- 1** Helping parents determine today's schedule
- 2** Offering content about member success
- 3** Illustrating the programs offered and how to register



### Member Parents

#### **Flor (member for 7 years)**

Had a tremendous amount of gratitude for BCNY, thinks of the organization as part of her family/home. Has seen the website in several forms and browses it weekly, visits her clubhouse five days a week. Only browses on desktop, loads too slowly on phone. Difficulty navigating for applications and calendar events. Lack of functionality in the website balanced out by consistent in-person visiting. Mostly browses the site for content from members, handles administrative tasks in-person.

Surprised by DECS, didn't know it existed and had to dig to find info/application. Despite DECS being advertised in the main slider

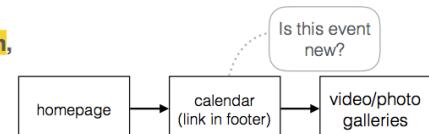
#### **Wants**

To see visual content from BCNY activities and double-check the calendar for events and closures.

When new pictures of members are posted,  
I want to see my son learning and having fun,  
so I can feel connected to him and to BCNY.

#### **Core Usage**

Browsing the site for new content, checking the calendar.



### Interview insights

# The Boys' Club of New York

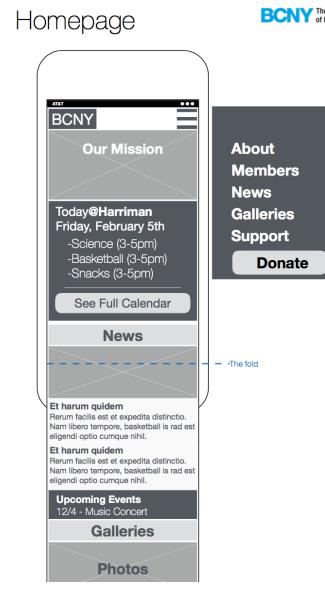
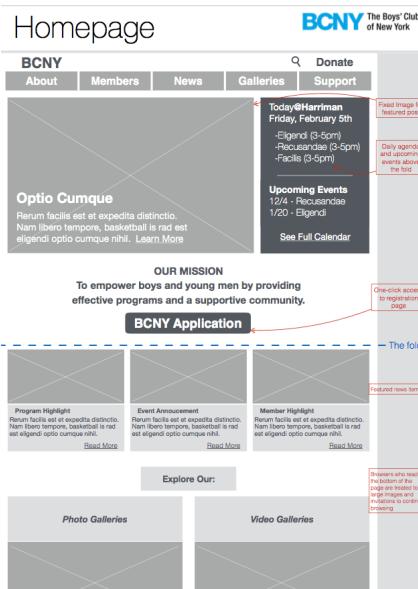


## Design & Development

We prioritized the calendar and worked with parents to make it accessible and highlight the information they needed. This served to help save staff members time, serve parents better and offer donors a lively glimpse into the daily life of a BCNY member.

As we began wireframing the site and creating the information architecture, we also worked with the staff and administration to find an effective internal process for keeping the calendars for each clubhouse up to date.

## Desktop and mobile wireframes



For the second priority, offering content about members and their success, we focused on creating a simple system for staff to post content to be shared on social media. Using wordpress we created an engaging photo page with easy shareability, and a blog for written content.

When the site launched there were few surprises for BCNY staff as we had worked closely with them throughout the process, but the parents were delighted to find the accessible schedule and refined information.

## Final design



<http://www.bcny.org>