

Michael Sarcone-Roach



About Me

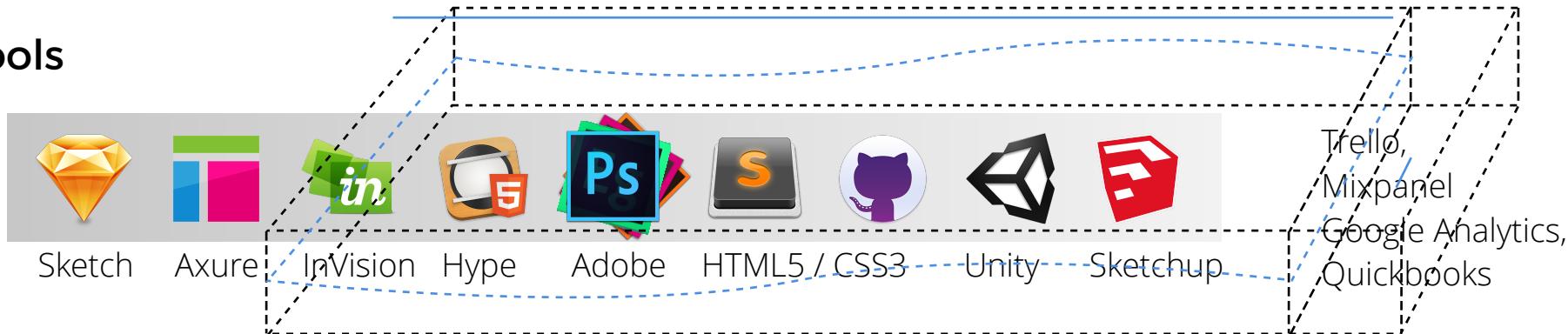
- **Loves to work with people** - giggling professionalism, yoda-level soft skills/lightsaber skills
- **Passionate about UX** - committed to making the world more accessible & usable
- **Hard worker** - if they gave air miles for going the extra mile, I would be in Bali
- **Great listener** - even better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

UX Origin Story

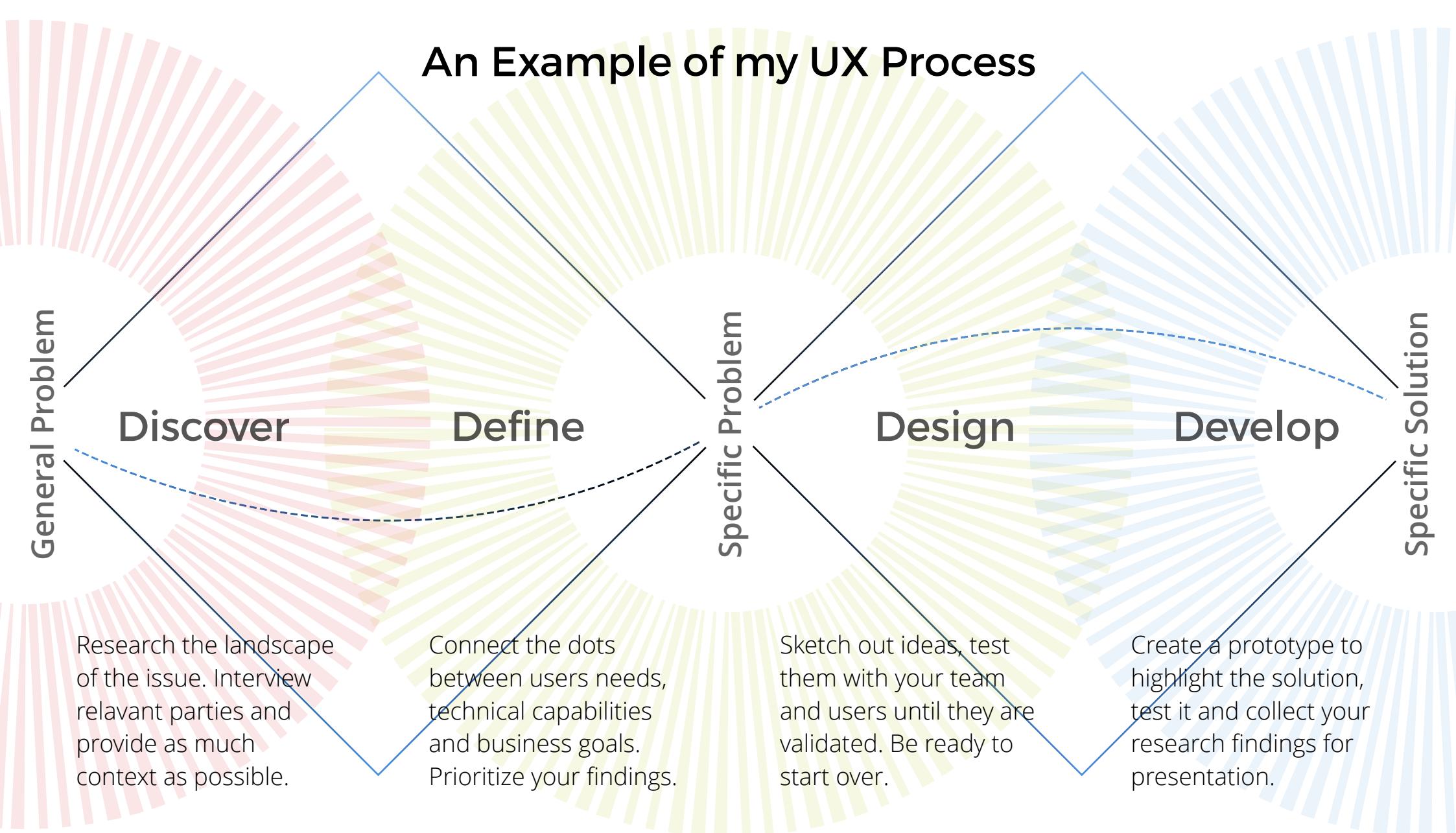
In the past I have worked with a team of three, administrating ~65 employees conducting ~450 daily in-home pet care visits to a community of over 2,000 clients. Responsible for hiring, training, scheduling, marketing, payroll and every facet of client interaction. Our small business office systems were tremendously cumbersome and I spent my days fantasizing about making them more efficient, but never having the time or resources.

Finding user experience design has ignited a great passion and I have never been so fulfilled and satisfied with my work. I packed my bags and moved to New York on a mission to listen, learn and relate.

Tools



An Example of my UX Process



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.

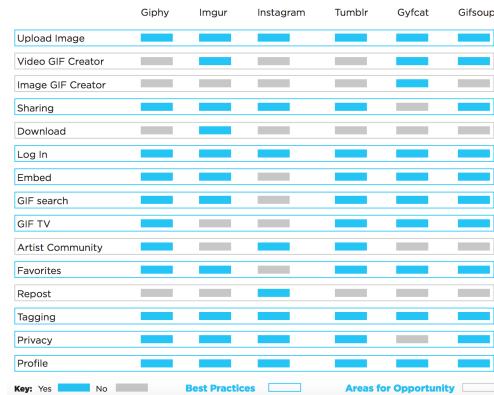
Giphy's business model is focused on having brand partners (such as Disney, GE & Calvin Klein) who have an interest in controlling the nature of viral content that uses their IP. Essentially, Giphy is extorting large brands and has no need for advertisement so long as they control the main-stream usage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

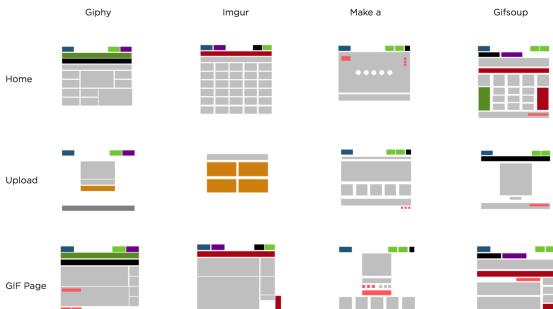
Key findings:

- 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



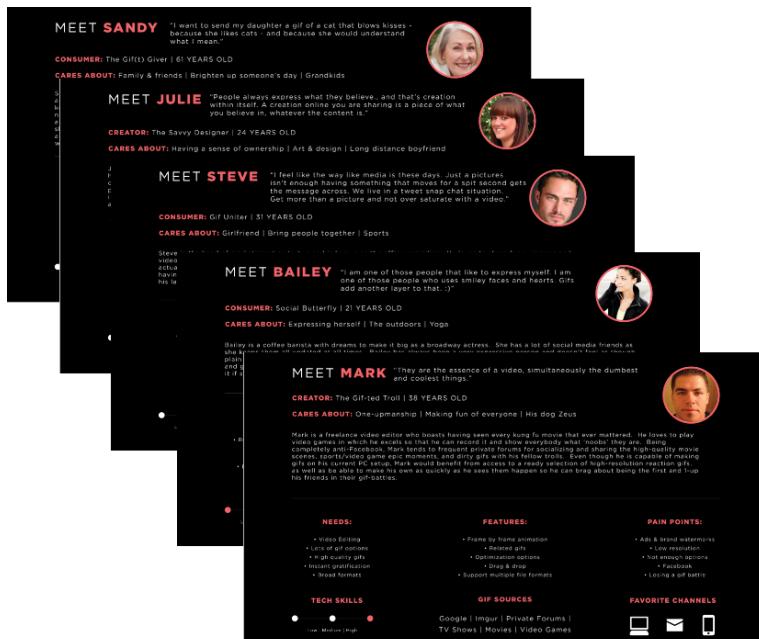
Giphy

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 barks kisses - because she loves cats and because she would understand what I mean."

CONSUMER: The Gift(Giver) | 61 YEARS OLD

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

MEET JULIE "People always express what they believe, and that's creation within itself. A creation online you are sharing is a piece of what you believe in, wherever 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 like media is these days, just a picture isn't enough having something that moves for a split second gets the message across. We live in a tweet snap chat situation. Get more than a picture and not over saturate with video."

CONSUMER: GIF Uniter | 31 YEARS OLD

CARES ABOUT: Girlfriend | Bring 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 | 22 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 | 38 YEARS OLD

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

NEEDS:

- video Editing
- long duration
- high quality gifs
- instant gratification
- broad formats

FEATURES:

- Frame by frame animation
- Long duration
- High quality gifs
- Instant gratification
- Drag & drop
- Support multiple file formats

PAIN POINTS:

- Adds & brand watermarks
- Low resolution
- Not enough options
- Facebook
- Loosing a gif batch

TECH SKILLS:

- use Motion JPEG

GIF SOURCES:

- Google | Imgur | Private forums | TV Shows | Movies | Video Games

FAVORITE CHANNELS:

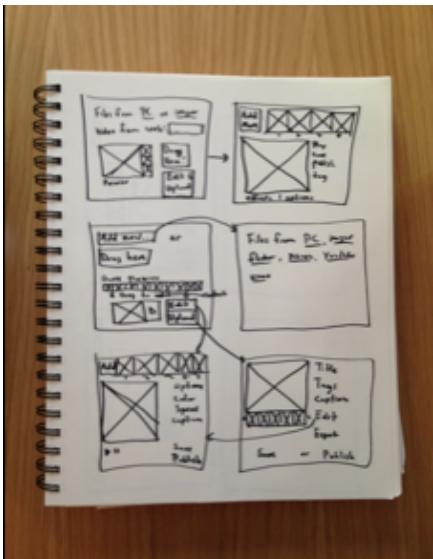
- Twitter | Facebook | Instagram | YouTube



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.

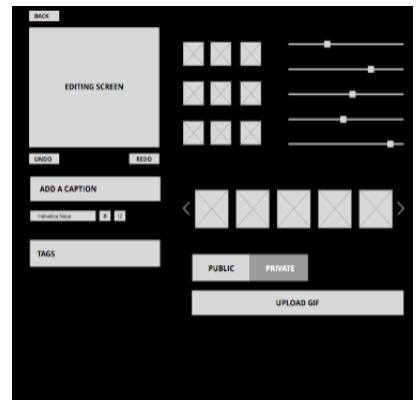
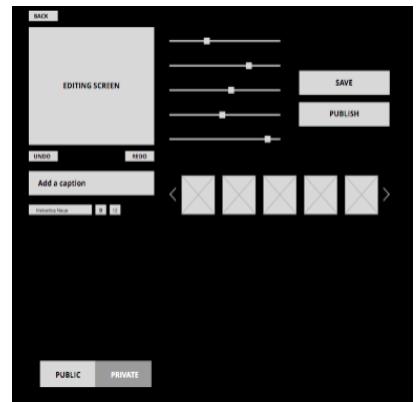
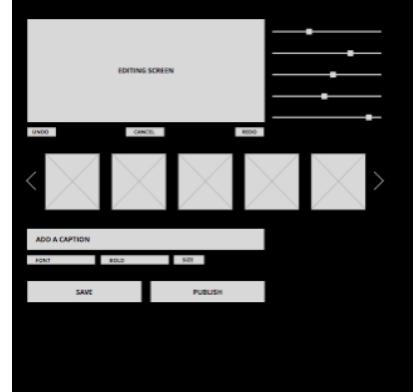
Individual time boxed design studio exersizes



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.

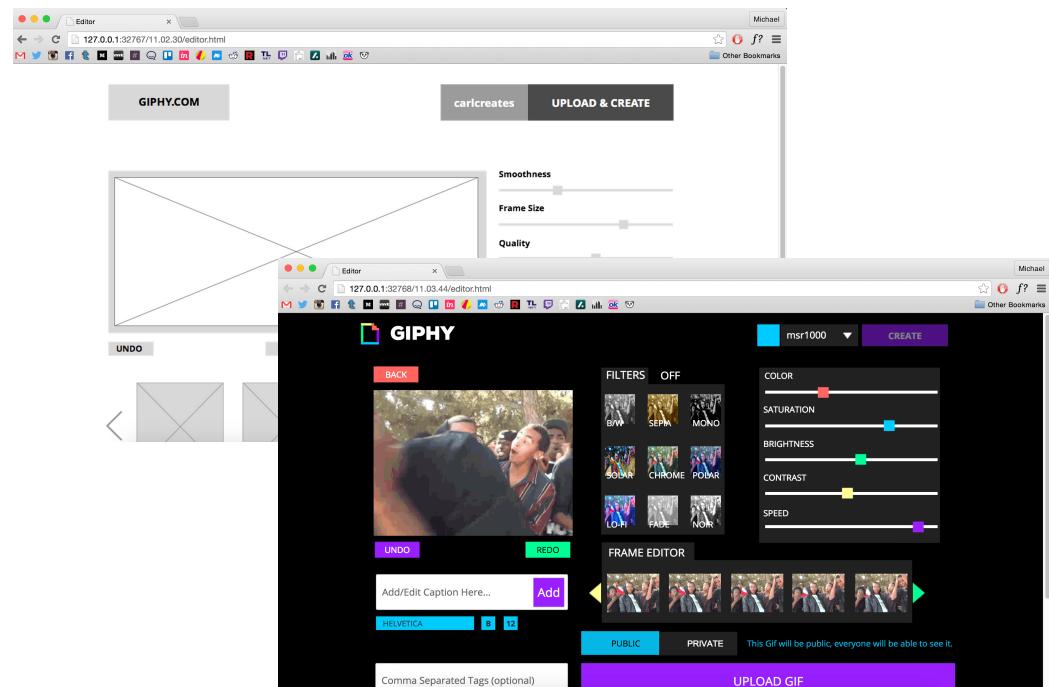
The high fidelity prototype was nearly indistinguishable from the actual Giphy website, which brought us into a different world of user feedback. It was very interesting to see how this played out during testing; users were suddenly demanding much more out of the website and we were able to get to the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

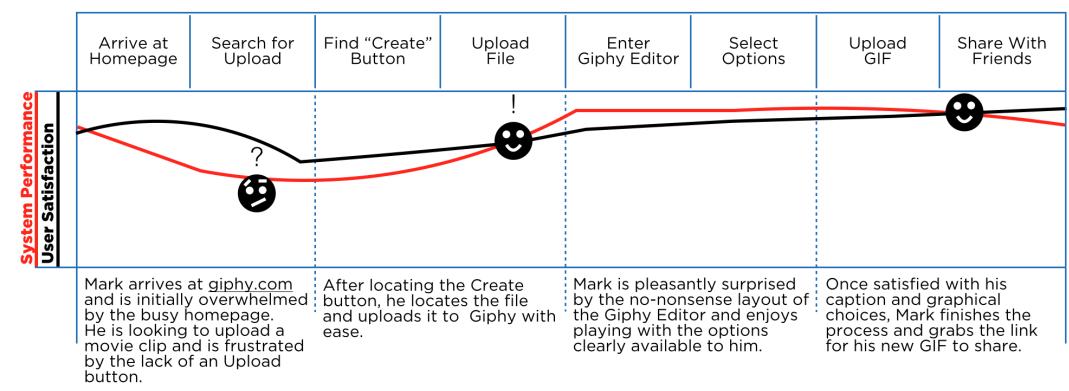
Current Prototype

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

Prototypes



Final User Journey



General Assembly Idea Incubator



Time frame: 2 weeks

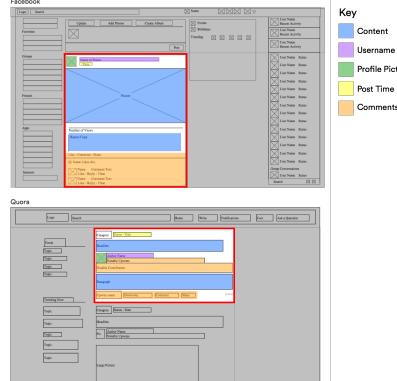
Team: Ola Alsaidy,
Chloe Marten

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.

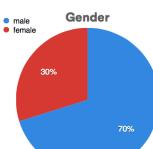
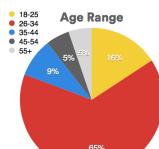
Phase I : Research & Validation

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.

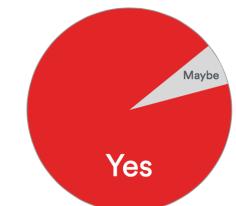
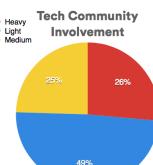
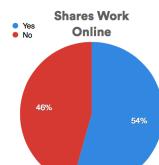


We researched other Q&A services, as well as other startup incubator websites, and found a few notable gaps. The incubators were largely private and focused on teams who already had a business proposal. On the other hand, the Q&A websites were full of misinformation and untrustworthy sources, the price 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.

GA

David

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



“Ideas are a dime a dozen. You don’t have anything until you start building a product.”

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



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UX/UI

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

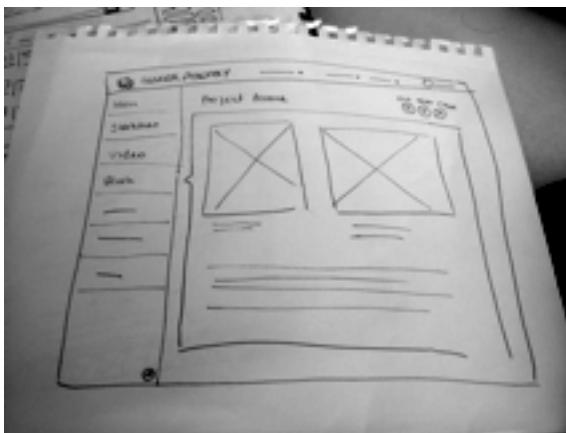


Design

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.



The screenshots illustrate the visual design of the General Assembly Idea Incubator website. The first screenshot shows a feed of questions and discussions, each with a small profile picture, a title, a brief description, and a 'Follow' button. The second screenshot shows a detailed user profile for David Burke, including his photo, title ('User Experience Designer | Idea Maker'), location ('San Francisco, CA'), and a 'Let's Talk' button. The third screenshot shows a 'Your Network' page displaying a grid of user profiles with their names, titles, and small profile pictures.

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 Home Page wireframe shows a header with a search bar and navigation icons. Below is a main content area with a user profile (David Burke) and a post by David Burke asking about the best prototyping tool. Another user, Ally Zang, has posted sketches for a to-do list app. Annotations highlight:

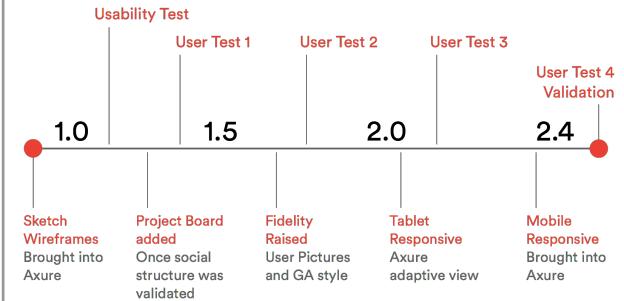
- Primary navigation icons (1)
- Comment voting system (2)
- Reply button (3)
- Connect with person (4)
- User confusion about ask box (5)

Project Board

The Project Board wireframe shows a header with a search bar and navigation icons. Below is a main content area with a post titled "'iCrave' Project Board' showing wireframe sketches. Annotations highlight:

- Navigation and contact issues (1)
- Adding content (2)
- Add folder icon (3)

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

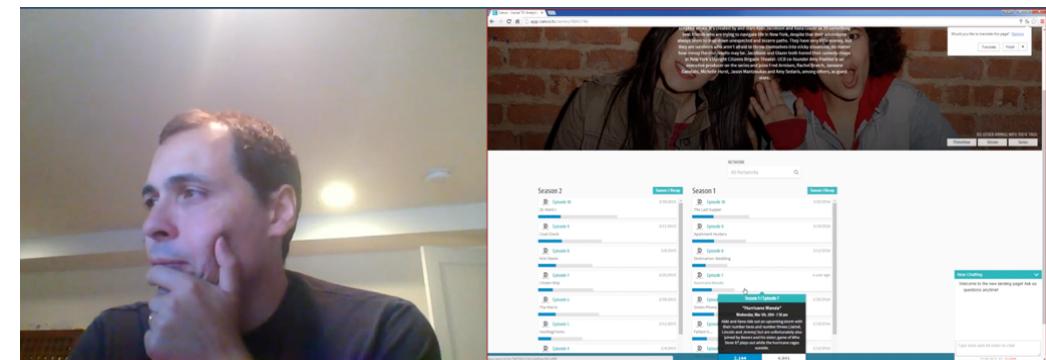
Canvs reached out to us with the goal of streamlining their user interface. Their clients are almost exclusively TV executives and marketing analysts from big companies like Sony and Viacom. This means that there are very few users and they are all grouped into 8-10 organizations.

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.



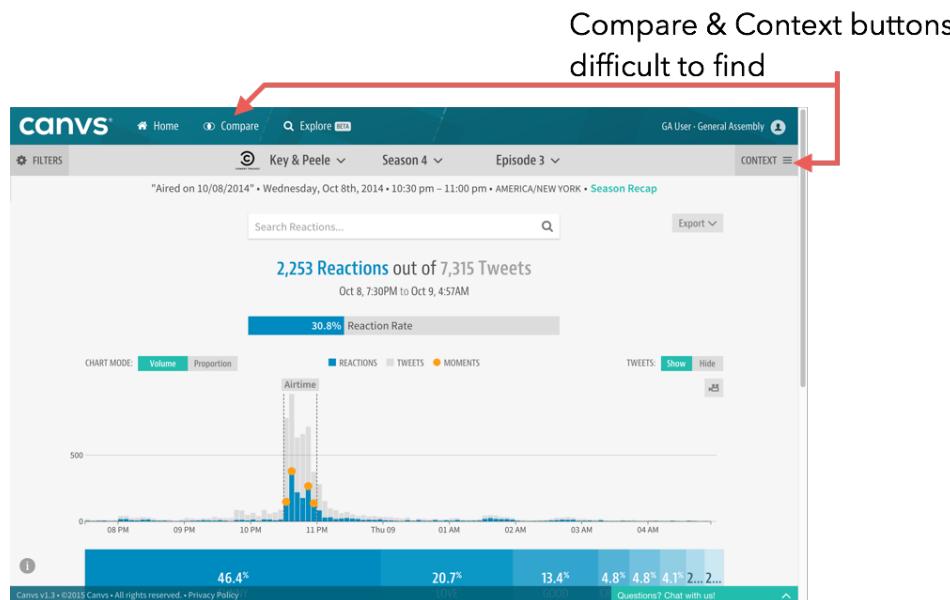
Brian Wieser, senior analyst at Pivotal Research, during remote testing

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

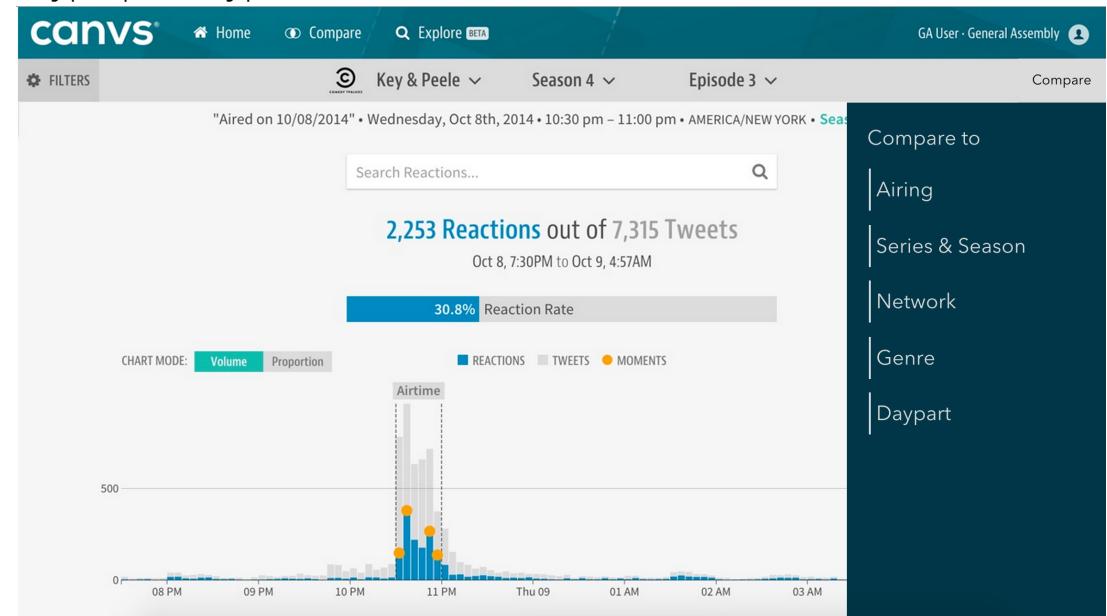


We prioritized redesigning the compare/benchmark features in part due to usability issues, but also because they represented a great value to both user personas.

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

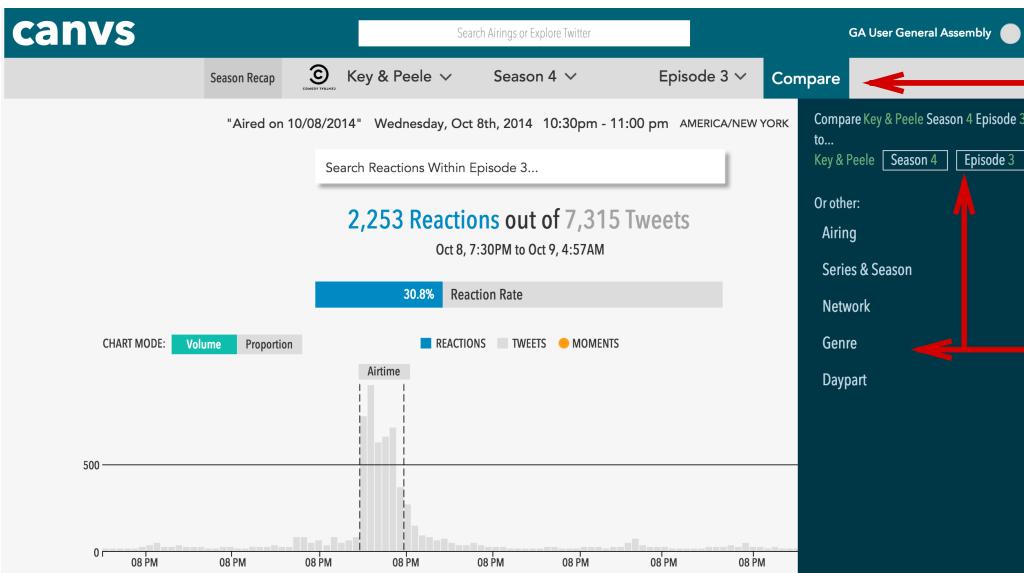


Prototypes & Presentation

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.



Button moved closer to content

Mobile-friendly email design

Compare & Benchmark features unified

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

