THOM SHEVA / PORTFOLIO

Hi, I am Thom,
a User Experience professional.

14+ years of expertise in crafting exceptional user experiences,
informing product strategy with research, building and leading teams, and delivering
designs that not only enhance aesthetics but also yield tangible business results.

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DESIGN + BUSINESS

"You can find out what your executives are already convinced of. If they are any good at what they do, they likely have something they want to **improve**.

It's likely to be related to improving **revenues**, reducing **costs**, increasing the number of **new customers**, increasing the **sales** from existing customers, or increasing shareholder **value**.

Good UX can help with each of those things."

—Jared Spool

PHILOSOPHY

munity understand that design must convey the essence of a device's operation; the way it works; the possible actions that can be taken; and, through feedback, just what it is doing at any particular moment. Design is really an act of communication, which means having a deep understanding of the person with whom the designer is communicating.

Donald A. Norman

EXPERTISE

I help businesses grow, increase revenues, decrease costs, and communicate business values by ensuring the customers have a great experience at every interaction with the product.

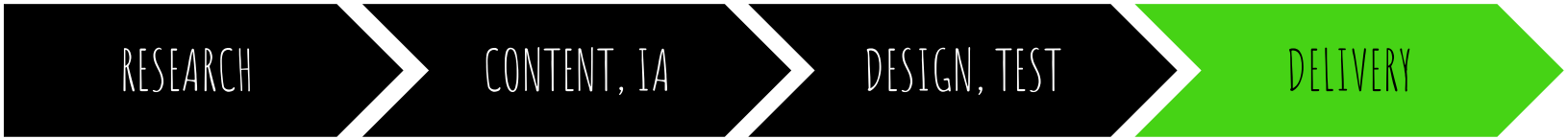
My hands-on proficiency spans the full range of user experience design practices, from comprehensive research, insights-driven decision-making, content and functional requirements synthesis, information architecture development, and iterative prototyping through to final design delivery.

I insert myself into the user's context to understand what users do and why. I study people, contexts and products.

I employ user journey maps, wireframes, prototypes, etc. Feedback is instrumental in my work - I involve other team members, as well as test with users.

I facilitate collaboration, knowledge and idea-sharing inside a team, as well as across disciplines.

My expertise extends to product performance measurement and continuous optimization, ensuring alignment with strategic goals.



- Strategy
- User research
- Product research
- Competition analysis

- Information structure
- Content strategy
- Differentiation
- Tone of voice
- Functionality requirements
- User journey map
- Navigation

- Wireframes
- Prototypes
- User testing
- Review, audits
- Iterations

- Final designs
- Assets and Specs
- Implementation overview
- Measuring and learning

DESIGN THINKING

I integrate Design Thinking into the business by following a structured process.

Beginning with empathizing with users, I dive deep into understanding their needs, motivations, context and pain points, which informs the definition of clear design challenges.

This clarity enables effective ideation, where a wide range of solutions are generated through collaborative brainstorming sessions.

Rapid prototyping follows, allowing for quick testing and iteration based on user feedback. This iterative process ensures that solutions are continuously refined to meet user needs effectively.

By embedding Design Thinking principles into the business, I foster a culture of innovation, collaboration, and user-centricity, driving impactful outcomes across the organization.

I initiate regular design talks and presentations of user research findings and design rationale, educating company teams about users' perspective of the product, enhancing a sense of ownership and emphasizing bigger context.

By encouraging cross-functional collaboration, I create opportunities for diverse perspectives to contribute to the ideation and solution-generation process.

Additionally, I establish feedback mechanisms and channels for continuous iteration, ensuring that user insights are integrated into decision-making at every stage. Promoting a user-centric mindset, I champion the prioritization of user needs and preferences in all discussions across the organization.

Lastly, I lead by example, consistently applying Design Thinking principles in my work and advocating for their adoption in all aspects of the business.

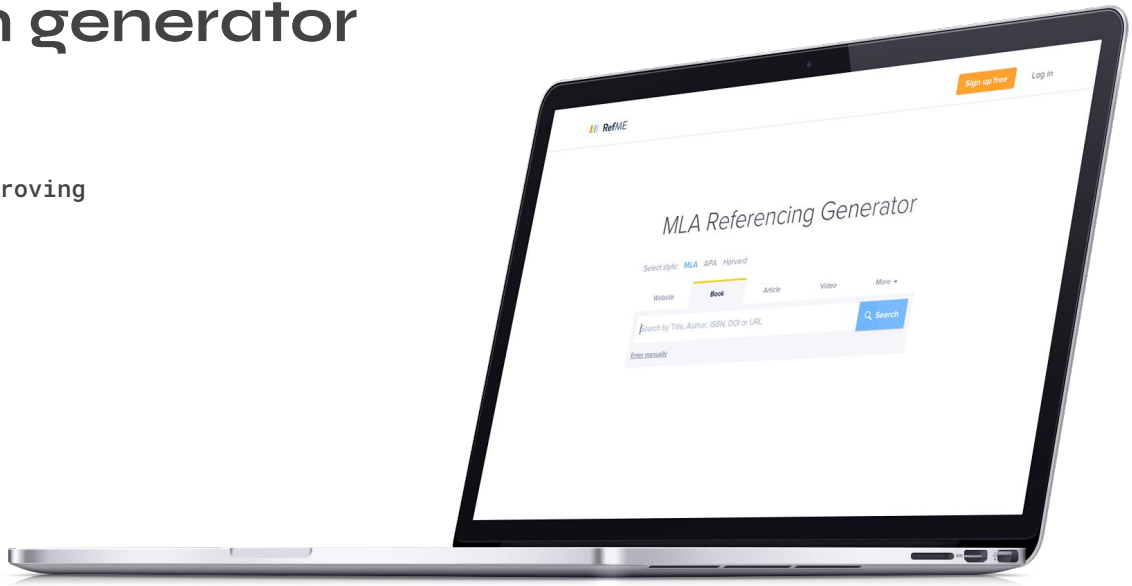
Case study 1

Utility → User growth

Desktop | Mobile

The best citation generator in the world

Exponentially growing user base by improving product's usability and utility.



Strategy,
Research,
IA,
Scenarios,
Wireframes,
User flows,
Prototypes,
User testing,
Final UI,
Implementation overview.

BUSINESS GOAL:

Collect data on referencing patterns to analyze and use for future B2B products.

MY ROLE:

I led the project team of three software engineers, a UI designer and a referencing specialist (SME).

I conducted research, interviews, task analysis, user profiling, journey mapping, wireframing, prototyping, user testing, oversaw delivery, and set up and analysed metrics after launch.

USER NEED:

Get the essay’s bibliography done in a specific style.

CONTEXT:

The business goal was derived from insights acquired during user research. Drawing from six months of research data comprising interviews, task analysis, user-context profiles, and journey maps, we were well-informed when the decision was made to enhance data collection efforts for future synthesis and productization for B2B customers.

USER RESEARCH FINDINGS:

There were two distinctive segments in our target audience. One type was postgraduate students and academic researchers.

Their research was large and complex, they needed a tool to gather and organize their bibliographies. Consequently, they expected the need to create an account before accessing the service. Moreover, they were well-informed about various service providers on the market (our competitors), highlighting the significance of branding.

The other demographic consisted of undergraduate students. Their primary task involved referencing sources in their essays to avoid penalization. They were instructed on proper source referencing and sought to demonstrate their proficiency in this area.

Essentially, they viewed it as an inconvenience – a problem they aimed to resolve swiftly to return to more enjoyable things in their lives. Additionally, most of them treated each essay as a separate assignment, rarely reusing sources.

Consequently, they didn't prioritize saving their bibliographies for future use and promptly forgot about them once the essay was submitted. When the need arose to generate their bibliographies, they simply searched for a "citation generator" online, selected one from the top results, utilized it, copied the generated citations, and inserted them into their texts.

They repeated this process for each new essay, often forgetting the service they had previously used. The perceived effort of creating an account outweighed the perceived benefits for this demographic.

The company's primary product seamlessly integrated with the workflow of the former demographic, the researchers. However, the latter group, the students, perceived our product as overly complicated, with features deemed unnecessary. As a result, we had been failing to capture a significant portion of this audience.

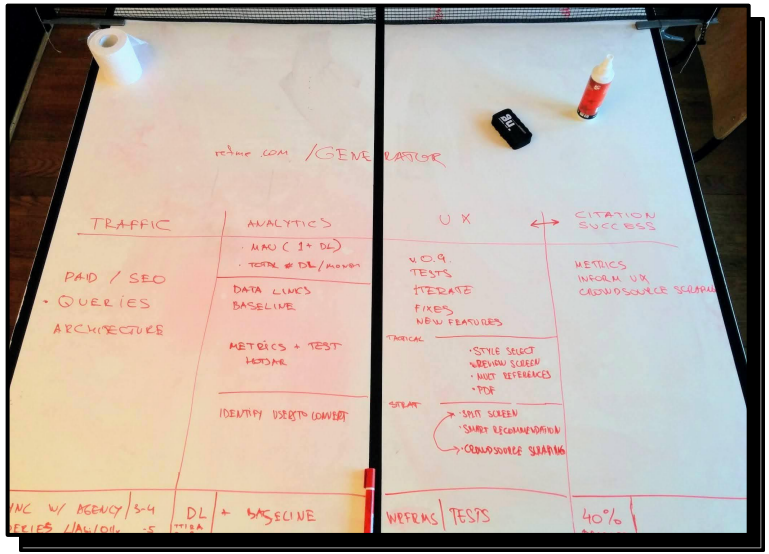
Our team's objective was to develop and create an additional web service that provided functionality akin to the main product but in a simplified and accessible version, specifically tailored for undergraduate users.

PROCESS:

As previously mentioned, I leveraged six months of research findings to inform my approach. This included competitive analysis and resulted in the creation of a strategic plan. Additionally, I facilitated a brainstorming session with stakeholders to establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for the project.

While I focused on developing wireframes and user flows, the engineering team commenced work on the backend infrastructure.

Formal wireframe testing was omitted because we had tested competitors' services with users before, and already had insights into what worked for users.



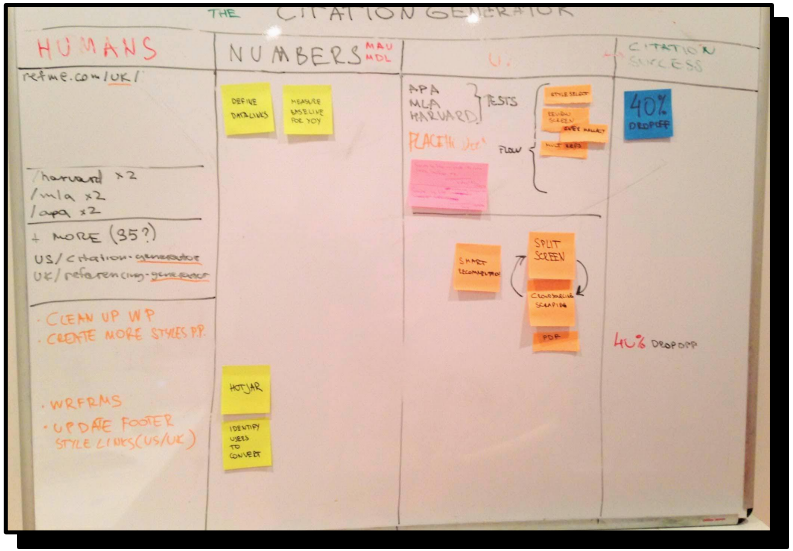
We collaborated with the UI designer to translate wireframes into polished designs.

I created quick click-through prototypes to get the feel of the new interface and also to evaluate with the developers and get their feedback.

While the back-end team advanced, I worked closely with our in-house referencing specialist to ensure the accuracy of the newly developed engine.

Given the peak season for essay writing (November) was approaching, there was a sense of urgency. Quick and efficient collaboration and execution from all team members was necessary.

We partnered with the front-end developer, expediting the process and allowing us to fix bugs on the fly. Meanwhile, the back-end got finished and automated tests for the engine started.



By the time the engineers were putting the finishing touches, I had already begun sharing videos of the first customers using the product. Everybody was quite happy to see the positive reception of their work from users.

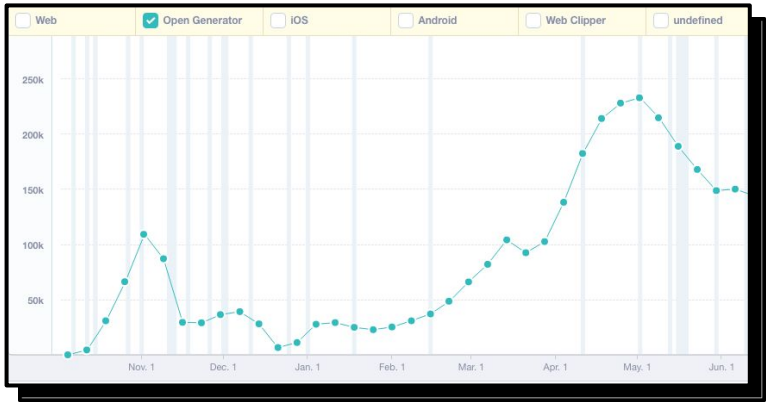
RESULTS:

We did a soft launch at the beginning of October.

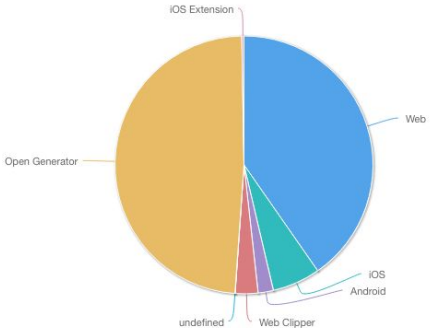
I set up an analytics dashboard so we could see the usage stats.

The numbers were dropping a bit during the weekends but overall grew steadily.

By the next peak season, the numbers doubled and continued to grow.



By the summer, the Citation Generator became the company's most used platform.



In the summer demand was understandably low. By the autumn, our SEO optimization brought results: Citation Generator became #1 in Google, and around its first birthday the product started to break the company's all-time records.

LEARNINGS:

I enjoyed working on this project a lot. We worked as a small cross-functional unit, and that allowed us to communicate better and move faster.

This project was a success, but it wasn't a surprise: we built on solid knowledge and understanding; the strategy and decisions were well informed by the research; we tested before we started and we evaluated every step; we collaborated; we had all the skills that we needed on our team; we had a deadline that we could not afford to miss.

I learnt a lot about managing a team, about keeping people focused and giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility, about motivating and giving feedback.

This experience proved to be very useful later when the company's design team grew and I was working on formalizing Research and Design processes, as well as structuring collaboration with the Engineering department, Marketing and Sales.

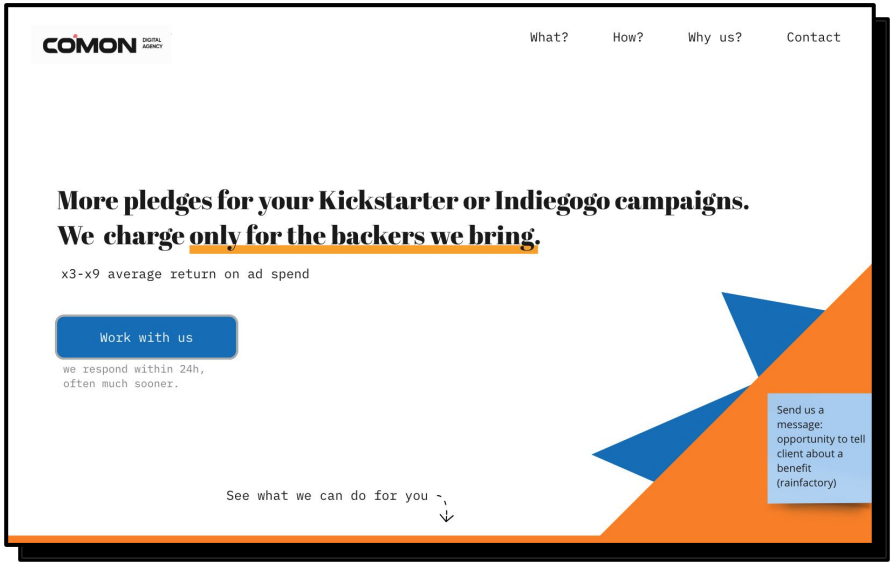
Case study 2

0 → 1

Desktop | Mobile

A landing page from scratch

A new page to communicate a new value proposition.



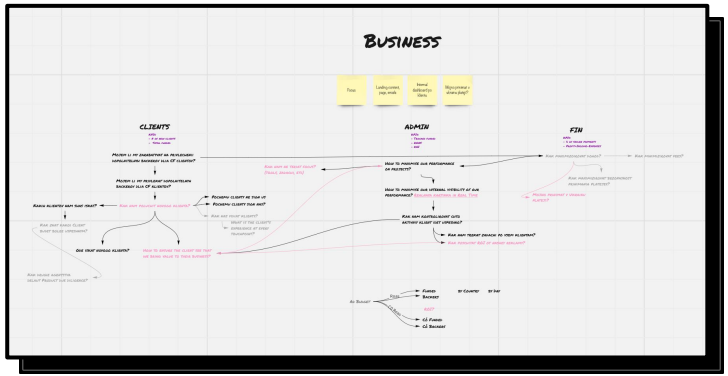
Strategy,
Research,
IA, Content,
Scenarios,
Wireframes,
User flows,
Prototypes,
User testing.

THE CHALLENGE:

The challenge was to design a landing page from scratch for a new marketing tool aimed at helping customers maximize pledges for their Kickstarter and Indiegogo campaigns. The goal was to create a visually appealing and user-friendly landing page that effectively communicated the value proposition of the product and encouraged visitors to sign up and get into the acquisition funnel.

BUSINESS:

The new product was a marketing solution for crowdfunding campaigns, offering features such as targeted advertising, social media promotion, and email marketing to drive traffic and increase pledges.



MY ROLE:

I led the end-to-end design process, including research, ideation, wireframing, prototyping, and visual design.

My responsibilities included understanding user needs, defining the product vision, and creating a compelling and intuitive landing page design that resonated with the target audience, entrepreneurs, startups, and creators looking to launch successful crowdfunding campaigns on platforms like Kickstarter and Indiegogo.

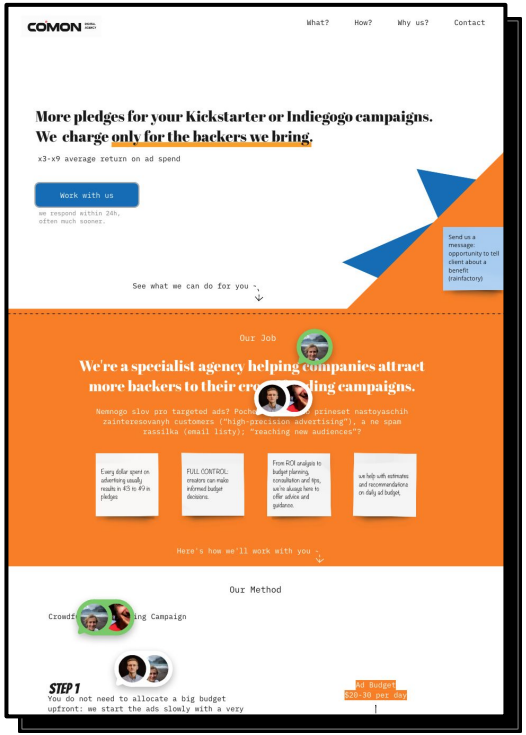
PROCESS:

I began by conducting market research to understand the competitive landscape and identify user considerations and preferences. I also analyzed existing landing pages of similar marketing tools to gather insights into industry best practices.

Based on the research findings and insights from SMEs, I created user scenarios to map out the user journey and to identify what user expectations and needs were at the key touchpoints.

The content and the layout of the wireframes focused on communicating what the product was, the competitive advantages and on user benefits.

Low-fidelity wireframes outlined the layout and structure of the landing page. I iterated on the wireframes based on feedback from stakeholders and created real-looking prototypes to run usability tests with users.



Once the mock-ups were finalized, I moved on to the visual design phase, incorporating branding elements, colour schemes, and typography to create a clean and modern design.

OUTCOME:

The final landing page design showcased the product's value proposition and communicated its features and benefits to visitors.

LESSONS LEARNED:

During the project, several challenges arose that provided valuable learning opportunities.

At times, the project faced scope creep as additional features and functionalities were suggested by stakeholders. This resulted in delays and diverted focus from the primary objectives.

Looking back, I realise I should have been more clear with setting the stakeholders' expectations from the beginning; at the same time, given the project's small team size, we were able to leverage our flexibility and adopt an agile approach to accommodate changes as needed.

Certain technical limitations emerged during the implementation phase, impacting the feasibility of certain interactions as envisioned during the design process.

Of course, it is crucial to have a solid understanding of technical limitations early in the design process, but we were moving quite fast and some technical decisions were taken after the design process commenced. While this created certain challenges and limitations, the advantages ultimately outweighed them.

CONCLUSION:

Through research, user-centred design, and iterative refinement, we successfully designed a landing page from scratch for the new marketing tool.

After going live with the new designs, we continuously run A/B tests to evaluate different design variations and optimize the conversion of the landing page.

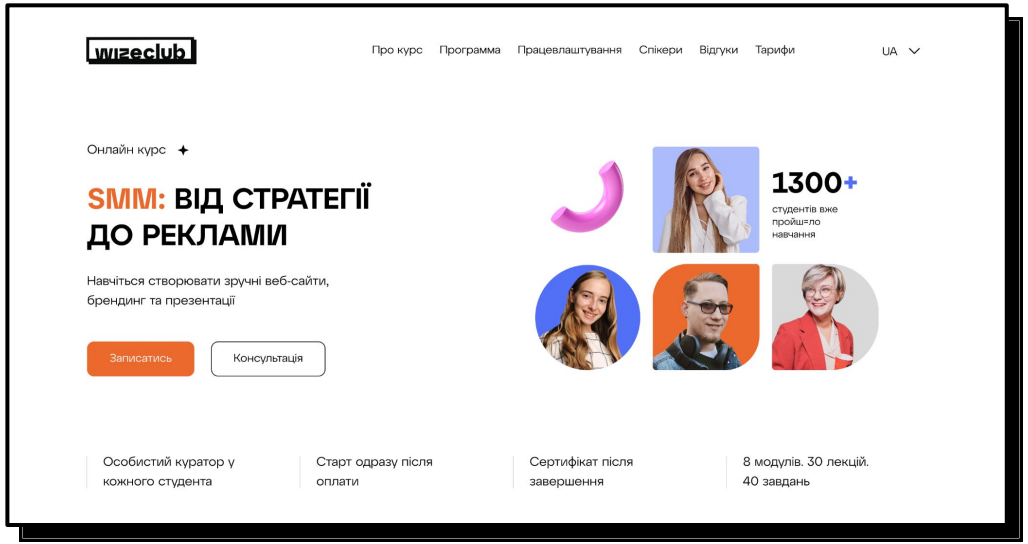
Case study 3

Conversion → Revenue

Desktop | Mobile

User activation and retention

Increasing revenue by maximizing conversion funnel.



Strategy,
Research,
IA, Content,
Scenarios,
Wireframes,
User flows,
Prototypes,
User testing,
Implementation overview.

BUSINESS GOAL:

Increase revenue by maximizing the conversion funnel for the online marketing course, improving the transition from new user acquisition to course enrollment and payment.

MY ROLE:

UX Lead, research and discovery, data analysis, user journey, wireframes and prototyping, testing and iteration, implementation overview, measurement and analysis.

USER NEED:

Understand if the course was what they were looking for and if yes - gather more information and, ultimately, enrol to gain new knowledge.

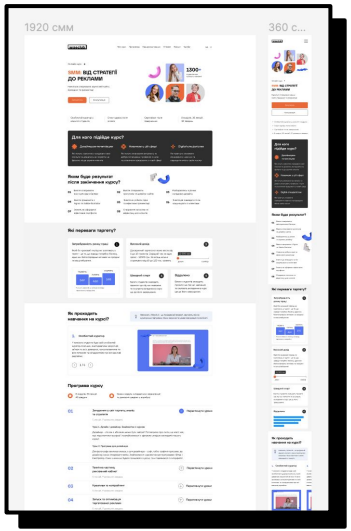
CONTEXT:

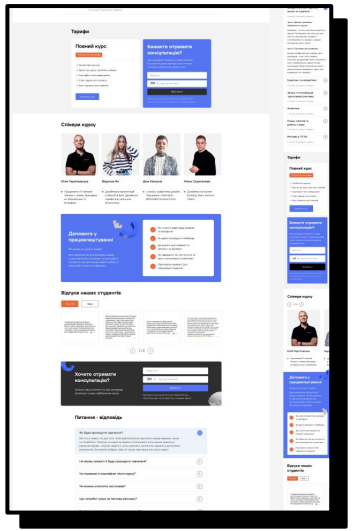
The existing design failed to effectively convert new users into paying customers. Despite generating significant traffic, the conversion rates remained below expectations. The challenge was to identify and address the obstacles preventing users from completing the enrollment process and to identify and include additional content to better inform potential customers about the product.

PROCESS:

To gain insights into user behaviour and identify pain points in the conversion funnel, we conducted thorough research, including user interviews, usability testing, and analysis of user data. Key findings revealed issues such as confusing navigation, unclear value proposition, and friction in the enrollment process.

Based on our research findings, we redesigned IA for the course information pages, re-arranged and added content, put together user flows and created four different prototypes, which we took to test with students at a university. Based on the feedback, we made changes and went through several iterations before arriving at two final options, which we A/B tested on the website.





OUTCOME:

Both options A and B resulted in significant improvements in user activation rates, we noticed that more new customers proceeded further into the flow. Cross-channel analytics showed a notable increase in the conversion rate, with a higher percentage of new users successfully completing the enrollment process and signing up for the online course.

LESSONS LEARNED:

While we did conduct usability testing and gathered feedback from users for the existing designs, I wish we involved users earlier in the process of designing the revised solutions. As a result, some design decisions did not fully align with user expectations and preferences, leading to more iterations and loss of time.

Once again, we learned the value of continuous user involvement throughout the design process. By engaging users early and often, and soliciting feedback at each stage of development, we can evaluate design decisions, uncover overlooked issues, and ensure that the final product does meet user needs and expectations.

CONCLUSION:

Through a research-driven approach and iterative design process, we successfully addressed the challenge of low conversion rates and improved an important part of the product user experience. By optimizing the conversion funnel on both web and mobile platforms, we achieved significant improvements in user activation, driving revenue growth.

Case study 4

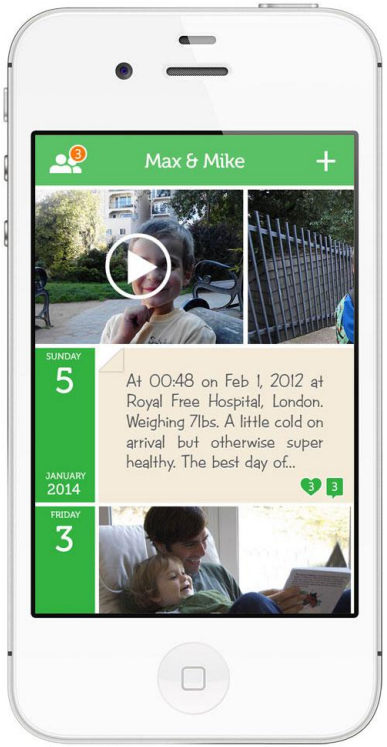
Onboarding → Activation

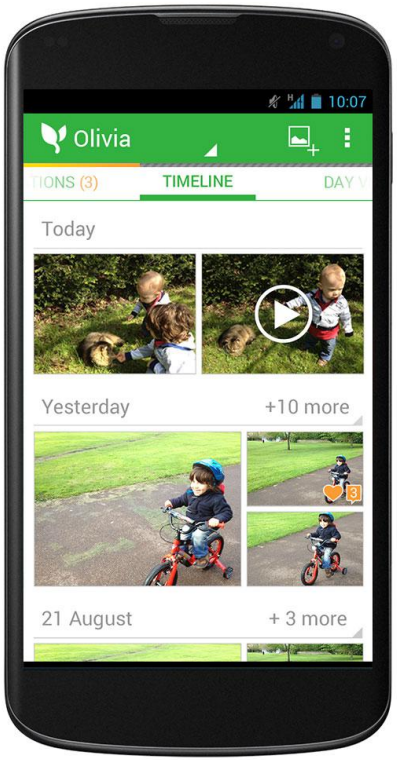
iPhone | iPad | Android

Onboarding optimization

Increasing user activation by improving mobile apps onboarding.

Requirements,
Research,
IA,
Scenarios,
Wireframes,
Prototypes,
User testing,
Final UI,
Documentation.





BUSINESS GOAL:

Improve user conversion and engagement in the company's mobile apps.

MY ROLE:

Requirements gathering, research, scenarios, journey mapping, IA, wireframes, prototypes, user testing, final UI, documentation, implementation overview, and analytics.

USER NEED:

Privately share photos and videos of children with family and friends.

PROCESS:

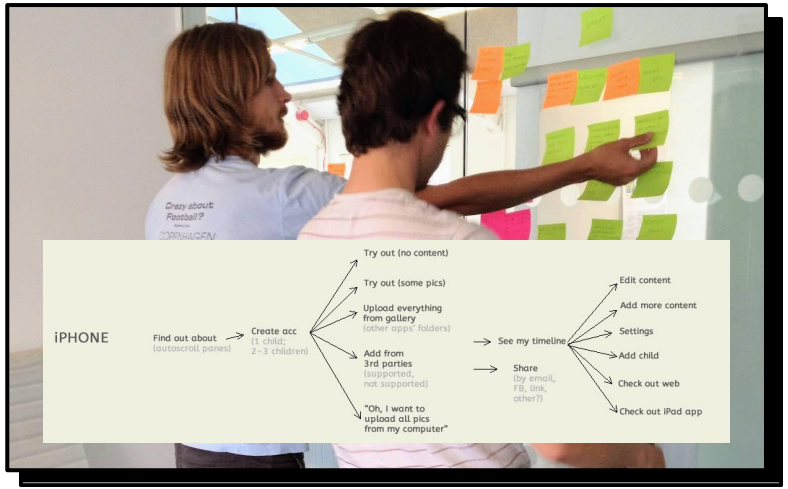
The native iPhone app is the company's flagship, the major user-acquisition channel and the primary live test ground for new features. The UI has been tweaked and changed several times, getting a step closer to the ideal every time.

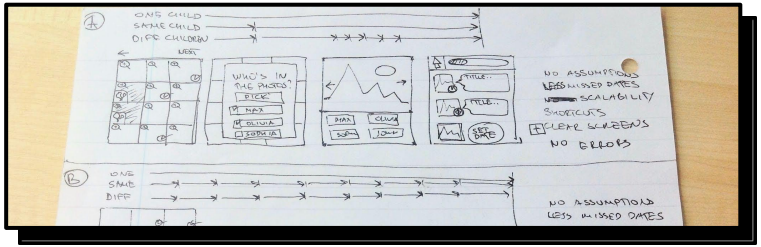
Users can perform a few actions on the Lifecake iPhone app: view their content *actively* - scrolling the timeline, leaving and responding to comments, favouriting or editing moments, or *passively* - just sitting back and enjoying a nice journey through time via built-in time machine, invite family and friends, manage their contacts, add new children, connect to friends' accounts, catch up on the news in the activity centre, create and share new moments.

I have completed many challenging tasks and projects aimed at improving the app's user experience. One of the most difficult was to optimize onboarding.

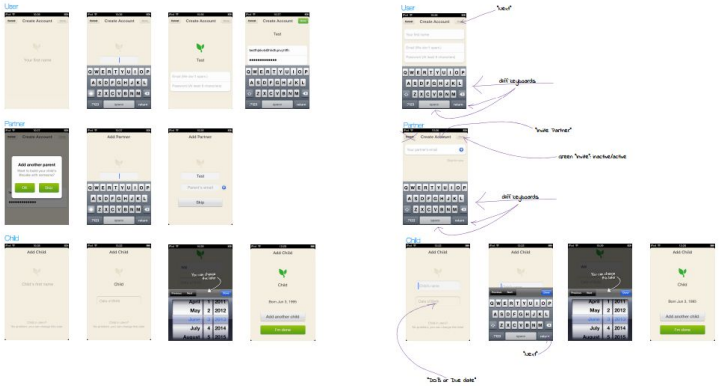
The data showed that once a newly registered user invited their family to share a child's timeline the retention rate of that user was much higher. So we had to find a way to encourage users to invite family as soon as they created an account.

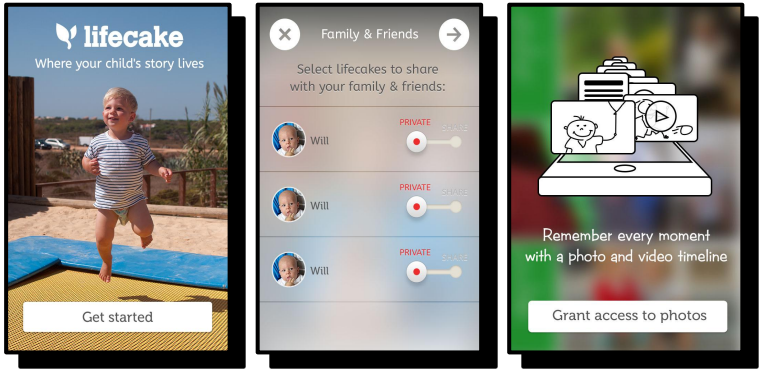
The existing onboarding flow was already quite long (initially it was as long as 9-10 steps with lots of forms to fill) and those who completed it were not motivated to fill in more forms in order to invite the family.





We have built and tested different approaches. First, I tried to trim down the amount of forms prioritizing the information we collected. We tried moving screens around and adding more explanatory information and/or graphics. We changed the onboarding flow to reflect Apple's principle of only asking what you need when you need it. We A/B tested every new tweak with new users.





Finally, we tested the app builds with intro flows as short as one to three screens, asking only for permission to access the phone's gallery. That instantaneous onboarding proved to be the right way to go, making the team very happy.

RESULT:

We combined what we had learnt with the patterns we knew were working well, to build the onboarding flow with our record highest conversion rates.

Case study 5

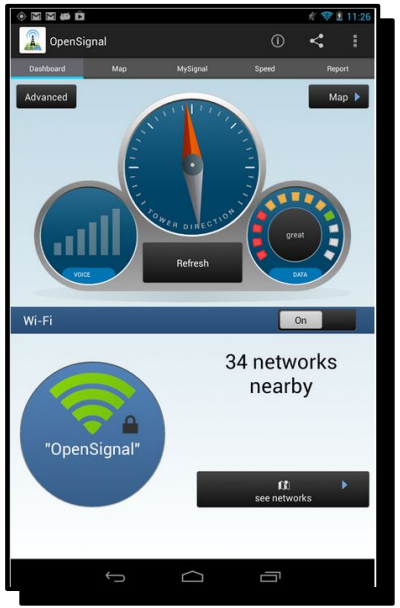
Better UX → Engagement

Android

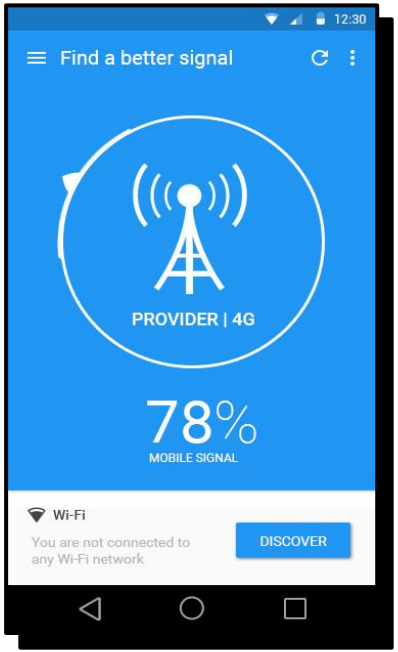
Mobile app UI optimization

Increasing user engagement by improving the interface.

Research,
Scenarios,
Wireframes,
Prototypes,
User testing.



BEFORE



AFTER

BUSINESS:

OpenSignal is the world's largest crowdsourced mobile sensor network. With over 10m downloads, and 1.5m active users. It provides wireless market insights to major customers such as McKinsey, Opera, Telefonica and China Mobile.

MY ROLE:

Research, scenarios, wireframes, prototypes, usability testing.

BUSINESS GOAL:

To increase user engagement within the OpenSignal application.

USER NEED

Users needed a reliable tool to help them identify strong mobile or Wi-Fi signal connections.

PROCESS:

I began by analyzing the current in-app dashboard experience. User feedback indicated that the existing screen was overwhelming and unclear in its functionality.

Based on the findings, I focused on simplifying the UI and streamlining the user experience to prioritize the primary functionality.

I created wireframes and prototypes to visualize and iterate on design solutions, incorporating user feedback at each stage of the process.

The new screen design emphasized clarity and simplicity, removing unnecessary distractions and presenting users with clear directions towards better signal options.

Through iterative testing and refinement, I ensured that the final design met the needs and expectations of users while aligning with the business objectives.

OUTCOME:

The redesigned screen for finding better signal connections received positive feedback from users during usability testing sessions.

The simplified UI and clear instructions significantly improved user comprehension and engagement with the app.

CONCLUSION:

By focusing on user needs and streamlining the user experience, I was able to contribute to the achievement of the business goal of increasing user engagement for the OpenSignal application.

Overall, my experience on the OpenSignal project reinforced the importance of user-centred design principles, iterative testing and refinement in creating successful digital experiences.

These lessons have since guided my approach to subsequent projects, helping me deliver impactful and user-centric design solutions.

Thank you. Get in touch.

thomsheva.design@gmail.com

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