Better Off Costumes

Inventory and Online sales platform for Costume shops

**Company/Client Name:** Better Off Production  
**Time Frame:** 10/1/2017 – 2/4/2017  
**Platforms:** Web app and mobile app

# Metadata

#### **Project Summary:**

With this project, costumes shops both professional and amateur will be able to track and monitor inventory as it is rented, create invoices, and make costumes available for rental online.

#### The Problem:

Many costume shops currently do not use an inventory system.  When a customer wants a costume, they go to a rack and choose. The employee writes down a description on a piece of paper and files it under the customer's name in a folder. When the customer brings it back they pull out the piece of paper and match it to the costume.

#### The Solution:

We want to replace this with an app and a QR code attached to the costume. To create the invoice, all the costume shop has to do is scan the QR code to check it out and scan the QR code to check it in.

#### My Role:

User Research with the costume shops that will be beta testing the software. Develop the UX/UI to showcase to different customers.

# Design Stage

## Define

#### The Problem:

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#### Tools:

Sketch, Invision, Adobe Photoshop, Pen and Paper (Storyboarding)

### Business Goals

* Speed up checkout system so that employees can work with more customers in the store. This becomes a priority especially during the busiest times of the year.
* Provide an inventory system in which reports can be created as to what are the most popular costumes and styles rented.
* Bring the inventory of costume shops together in one marketplace in order for any individual to search for desired costumes prior to entering the store. Development of an Exchange or Pinterest style board that can show what costumes are available to rent.
* Online rentals that that can be selected, invoiced, and paid for by Better Off Costumes. The costumes then can be pulled and ready for pickup by the costume shop prior to the customer entering the shop.

### Requirements

* Inventory system of costumes used for rental
* Very fast check out and check in of costumes
* Creation of and ability to print invoices
* Storage of client information for use in future transactions
* Mobile access to client information

## Discovery

### User Testing

* After discussions with employees one of the pain points that they identified was slow frustrating process of checking out each garment.  One customer could occupy 10-20 minutes just in the checkout of costume process.
* After working several hours as a retail clerk renting out costumes and checking them in, I was able to quickly identify with the employees as to the pain points the employees listed.
* I witnessed the issue that the employees were asked complicated questions about costumes and time periods while the employees were writing out the invoice and description of the costumes.
* Placements of buttons so that that phone can be operated with one had is a major issue. Often times the employee will have a costume in one hand and the phone in the other.

### Competitive Research

* I researched other costume companies and what they were using to do inventory.  Most I found out did not do inventory electronically, only on paper. Others use a limited point of sales system that is limited only to the cash register.
* The closest system that I found that addressed at least part of the needs of the costumes shop was a Point of Sales system that used a barcode gun and only put the inventory into the cash register.
* I also discovered through my research that costume rental companies don’t show what they are renting on their websites.  The websites are used just to advertise location and to highlight categories of costumes.

## Design

### Wireframe

* I prefer low fidelity pen and paper wireframes to iterate through many design options in order to design for speed and simplicity.  It allows for quick experimentation in finding the user’s focal point in relationship to objective on each screen.

### Prototypes

* I created prototypes through Sketch and InVision to test the feasibility and speed of the wireframe designs.
* During the prototyping process, we discovered the importance of using colors as feedback. Costume shops can be very bright or very dark but most definitely cluttered. Big, large feedback that a step was completed such as photo taken or QR code was scanned was important.

# Summary

## Learnings

One of the things I learned about this project was how rewarding it is to watch employees take the product and use it. Watching how excited thy got when they saw a major pain point in their work life simplified. It gave them the opportunity to do what they love to do which is work with clients and eliminate the time they have to spend writing descriptions.

During the research process, I was surprised to learn about the lack of inventory tracking that existed for this this business.

The challenge of getting a QR code to iron onto different material.

How it can be effective to split the initial recording of the costumes into two parts. Generally, I have always thought that entering new data about an object had to be done all at once. We split the process into two parts:

1. Taking at least one image of the costume and recording the QR code for that costume. Then giving the option of completing the description and all other fields or.
2. Saving the description other field to be completed later on a computer.

The advantages to system that initial inventory can be taken at the point of sale. Just iron on the QR code take a picture of the outfit and scan QR code. Then later on the main computer fill in the rest of the information. This also provides the opportunity for the employee to type on the computer as opposed to the phone which can be very annoying for some people.

## Project Status

This project is ongoing and has many opportunities for further development.