

Time Management App: UX Research Case Study

Role: UX Researcher

Timeline: January 2025 - April 2025 (3 months)

Methods: Focus Groups, Online Survey, Diary Study

Team: Group research with individual contributions

The Challenge

Design a time management app that aligns with user expectations and actual usage patterns. The project needed to understand what **features** users truly need versus what they think they need, and how these tools fit into their daily routines.

Research Question

Which time management tools, features, and strategies do individuals who are good at managing their time use?

Hypothesis

Users are more likely to use a time management app with features customizable to their preferences.

My Approach

I designed and executed a three-phase mixed-methods research study to understand user behavior from multiple angles:

Phase 1: Focus Group (Exploratory)

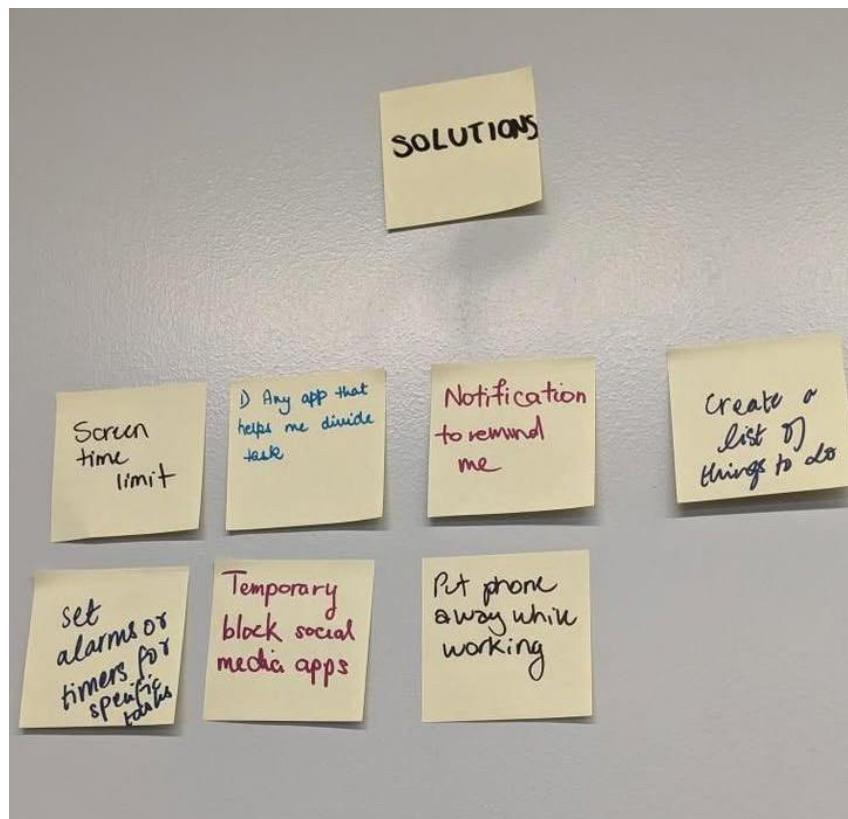
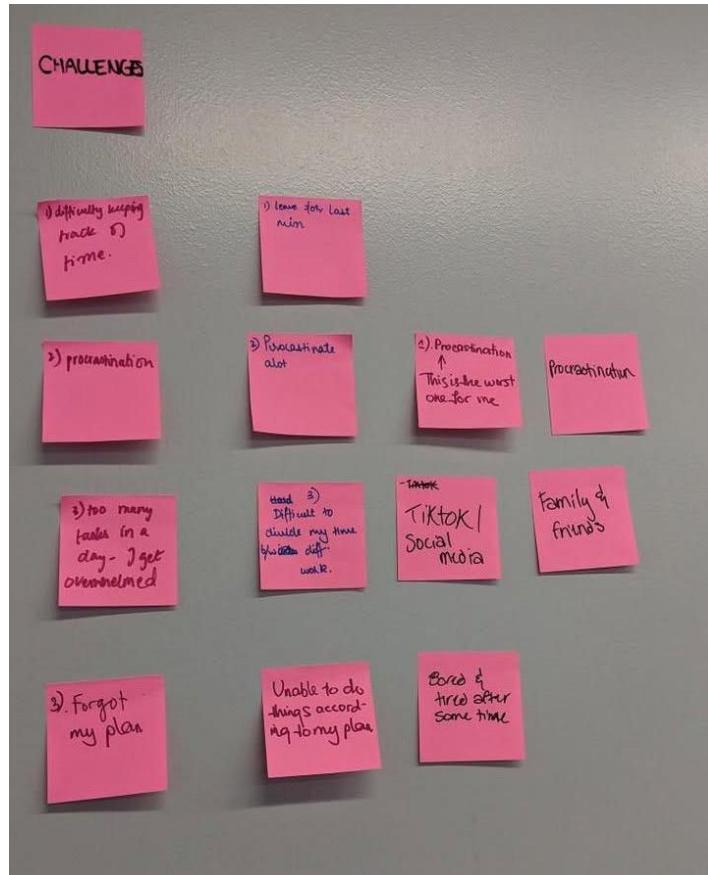
Goal: Identify **user needs**, **preferences**, and **feature priorities**

- Conducted & moderated group discussion with targeted participants
- Explored user feelings, motivations, and pain points
- Created discussion guide with activities to uncover behavioral patterns

Role: Collaborated on research plan, screener, and KWHL analysis

Research Artifacts

K	W	H	L
What do I know?	What do I want to know?	How will I learn what I want to know?	What do I hope to learn?
Many people struggle with time management	What are the most effective strategies or tools for time management?	Conducting a focus group	The behaviours and habits that influence time management
Deadlines help people stay accountable	How do people organize their day or track deadlines?	Survey to collect data	Preferred tools and features for time management across different people
Time management improves productivity	What features do users expect in a time management tool?	Perform diary study	The main challenges people face in managing their time and solutions they use
People often use tools like calendar, reminder, apps to manage time	What challenges do people face with managing their time?		Insights into how people can improve their time management
People have multiple responsibilities to balance	Which tools or apps do people prefer, and why?		



\$100 TEST

Instructions:

- You have \$100 to spend on several features that could be part of a potential product or app. Each feature has a price.
- Allocate your \$100 across the features you think are most valuable or important. You cannot exceed \$100.
- For each feature, write down your reasoning in a few brief keywords or phrases. Focus on your thought process rather than long explanations.

Feature Menu:

Feature	Price	Feature	Price
- Add Task	\$10.00	- Widget	\$5.00
- Add Event	\$10.00	- Notifications	\$10.00
- Monthly View	\$15.00	- Project Tracking	\$20.00
- Daily View	\$15.00	- Analytics	\$15.00
- Weekly View	\$15.00	- Collaboration	\$10.00
- Habit Tracker	\$10.00	- Device Sharing	\$5.00
- To Do List	\$20.00	- Customize	\$20.00
- Date And Time	\$10.00	interface	
- Pickers		- Habit	
- Priority Labels	\$5.00	Accomplishments	\$5.00
- Repeat Options	\$5.00	Streak	

Feature Name **Price** **Reasoning**

Add Task	10	basic feature tasks
Todolist	20	To see how many
Streak	5	Encouragement
Notifications	10	Reminder
Weekly View	15	Sync
Widget	5	Customization + encouragement
Tracker	10	Easier to use
Repeat	5	Pick a date
Date & Time	10	
Add Event	10	
Total		\$100.00

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Feature Name **Price** **Reasoning**

Widget	\$5	Its on my screen so helps me look at it
Add Event	\$10	Its like a motivation to look forward to
Weekly View	\$15	like to manage things weekly
Notification	\$10	It would take a reminder
Analytics	\$15	visual things makes it easy to look at things
Priority Labels	\$5	helps me know what to do first
To Do List	\$20	To know my task
Total		\$100.00

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+ Weekly View	\$15.00 ✓	+ Collaboration	\$10.00
+ Habit Tracker	\$10.00	Option	
+ To Do List	\$20.00 ✓	+ Device Sharing	\$5.00
+ Date And Time Pickers	\$10.00	+ Customized Interface	\$20.00 ✓
+ Priority Labels	\$5.00	+ Habit	
+ Repeat Options	\$5.00	Accomplishments	\$5.00

Feature Name	Price	Reasoning
Notification	\$10.00	Help account for time progress in chart visual form.
Analytics	\$15.00	see the week without being overwhelmed like monthly
Weekly view	\$15.00	can see what needs to be done
To do list	\$20.00	so you can see what you need to do
Add task	\$10.00	each point toward what's coming up
Add event	\$10.00	can help me things I've done less stress if I made it
Customize interface	\$20.00	can be an headache not enough app
Widget	\$5.00	bring priority to it
Priority labels	\$5.00	
Total	\$100.00	

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+ Priority Labels	\$5.00	+ Habit	
+ Repeat Options	\$5.00	Accomplishments	\$5.00

Feature Name	Price	Reasoning
Monthly view	\$15.00	concrete look at everything.
Priority labels	5¢	prioritize tasks are simp.
Notifications	10¢	reminders !!!
Accomplishments	5¢	keep me going more motivation!
Collaboration	10¢	keeps track of my bad habits
Habit tracker	10¢	daily look & prepare me for the day
Daily view	10¢	basic feature
Add task	10¢	
Total	\$100.00	

Phase 2: Online Survey (Validation)

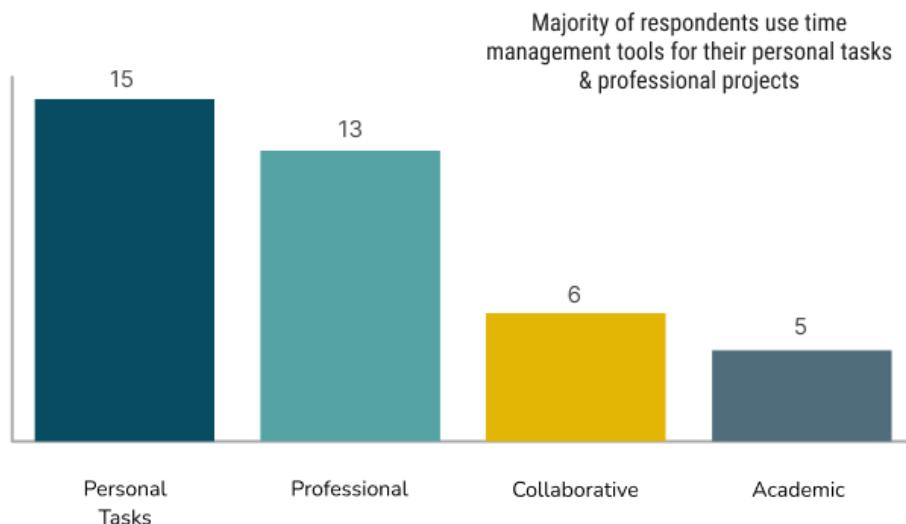
Goal: Gather quantitative data from a larger sample to validate qualitative insights

- Recruited 17 participants who self-identified as good at time management
- Designed 12-question survey via JotForm focusing on:
 - Tool usage frequency and types of tasks managed
 - Current challenges and desired improvements
 - Feature usage patterns and anti-procrastination strategies
- Incorporated screener to filter suitable candidates

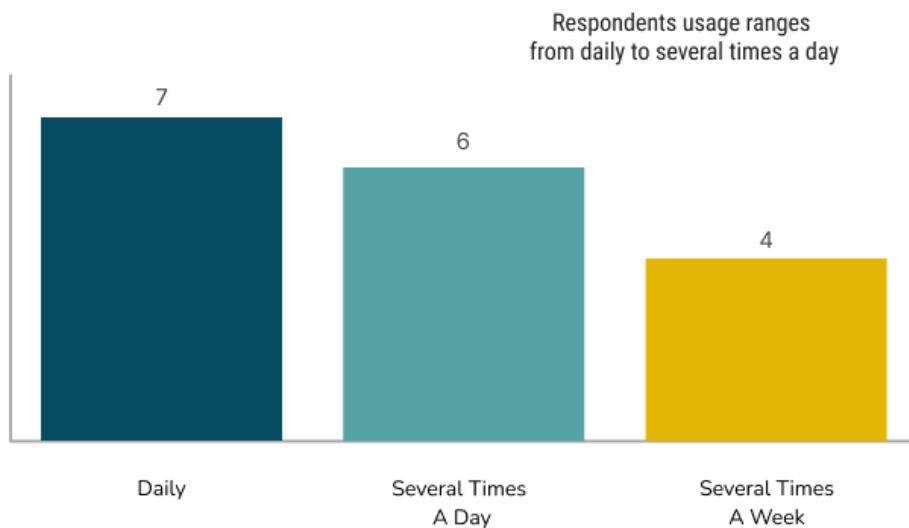
Role: Solo researcher - designed study, recruited participants, analyzed data

Research Artifacts

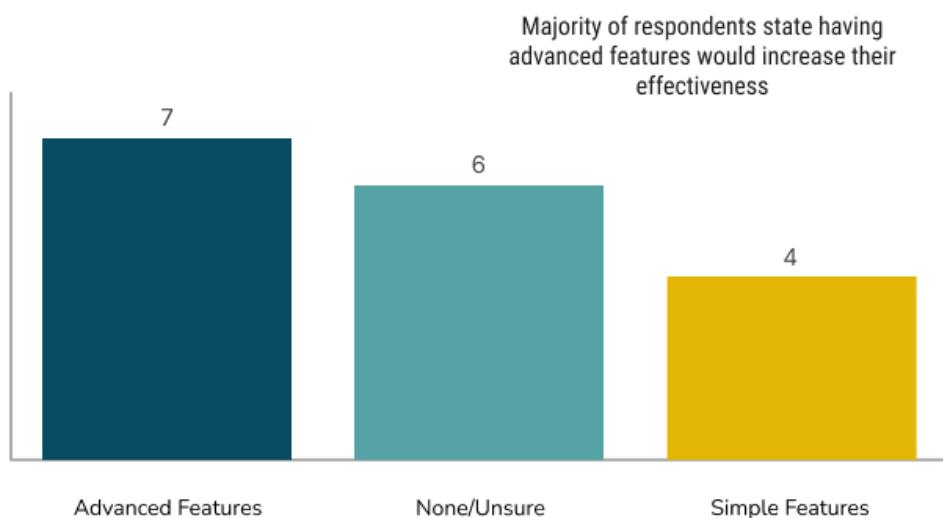
Q1: What type of tasks do you most often manage with these tools?



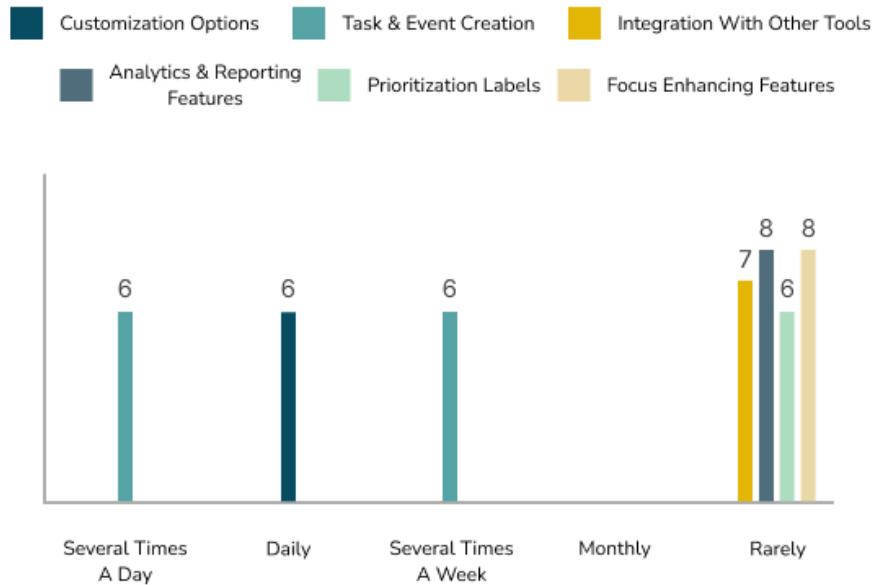
Q2: How often do you use time management tools?



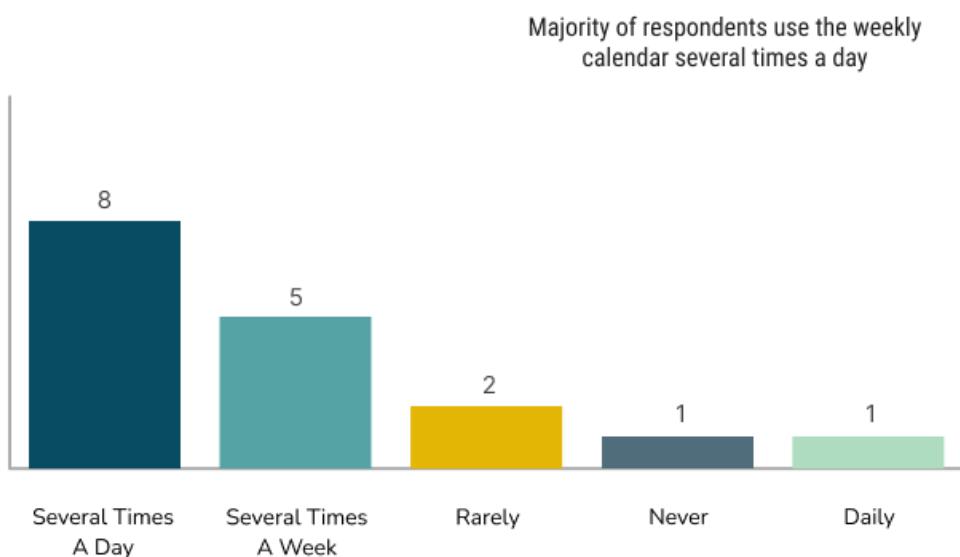
Q4: What feature or improvement would make a time management tool more effective for you?



Q5: How frequently do you use the following features?

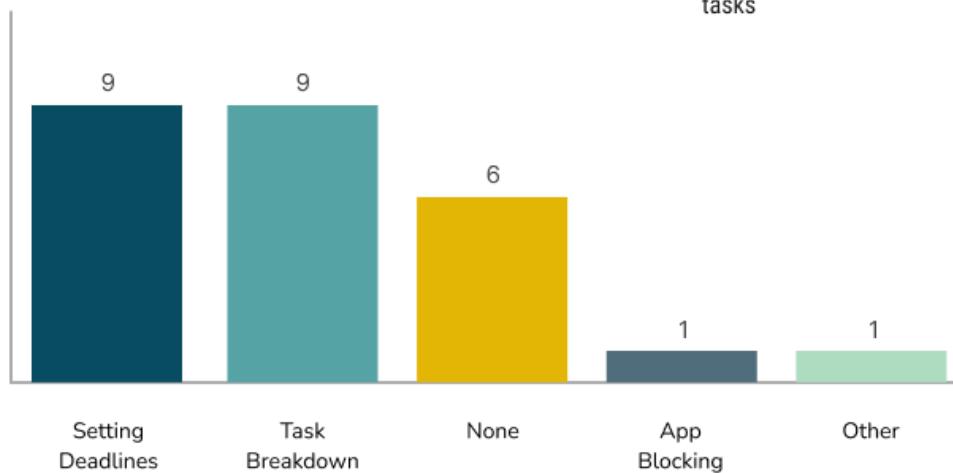


Q6: How frequently do you use the tool's weekly calendar?



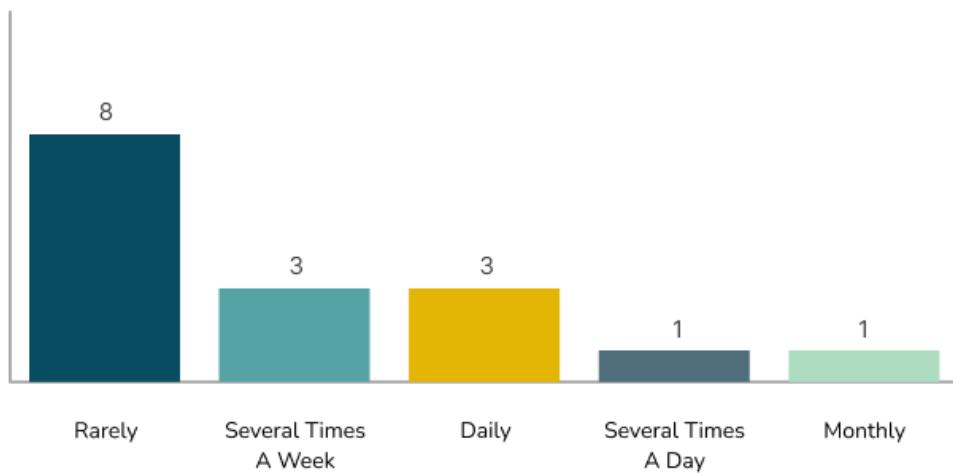
Q7: What strategy do you use within time management tools to avoid procrastination?

The strategies respondents use the most are setting deadlines and breaking down tasks



Q8: How often do you customize or personalize features?

Majority of respondents rarely customize features



Objective	Construct	Question	Options
8) Understanding patterns of use	Frequency of use	How frequently you use the following features?	Question Table Customization options Task/event creation Integration with other tools Analytics/ reporting features Prioritization Focus Enhancing Features Other (Please Specify): - Several times a day - Daily - Several times a week - Monthly - Rarely - Never
9) Understanding patterns of use	Frequency of use	How frequently do you use the tool's weekly calendar view to plan upcoming tasks or events?	- Several times a day - Daily - Several times a week - Monthly - Rarely - Never
10) Understanding respondent behaviour	Habits	What strategies/features do you use within time management tools to avoid procrastination?	Setting deadlines Breaking tasks into smaller steps Using focus enhancing features Blocking distracting apps/websites Other (Please specify):
11) Understanding patterns of use	Frequency of use	How often do you customize or personalize features in your time management tool?	- Several times a day - Daily - Several times a week - Monthly - Rarely - Never
12) Gather satisfaction	Expertise	What feature or improvement would make a time management tool more effective for you?	(open text)

Phase 3: Diary Study (In-Context Observation)

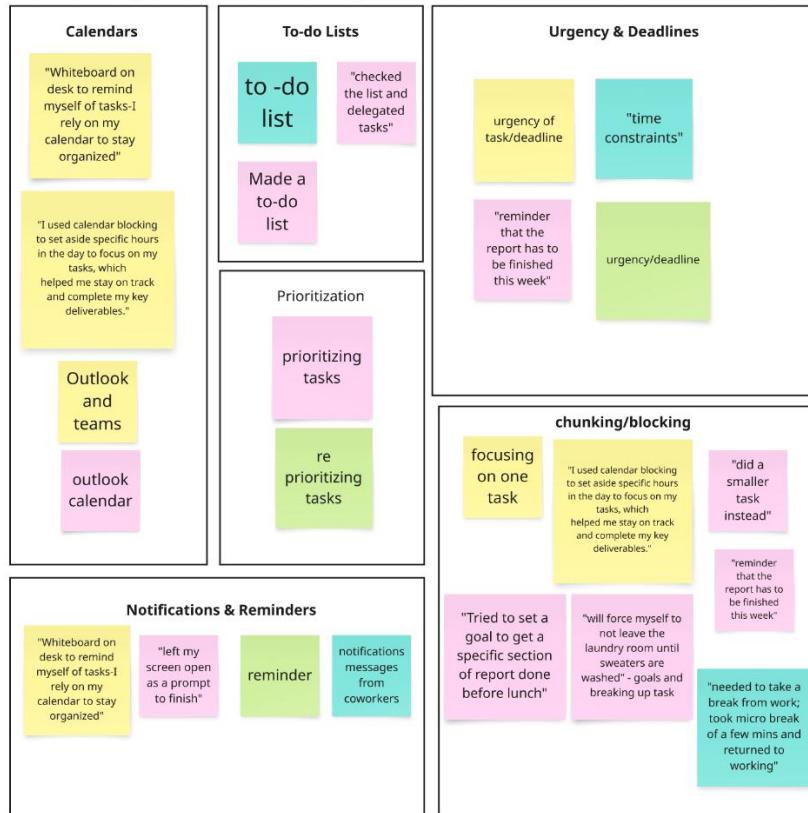
Goal: Observe real-world behavior and tool interactions over time

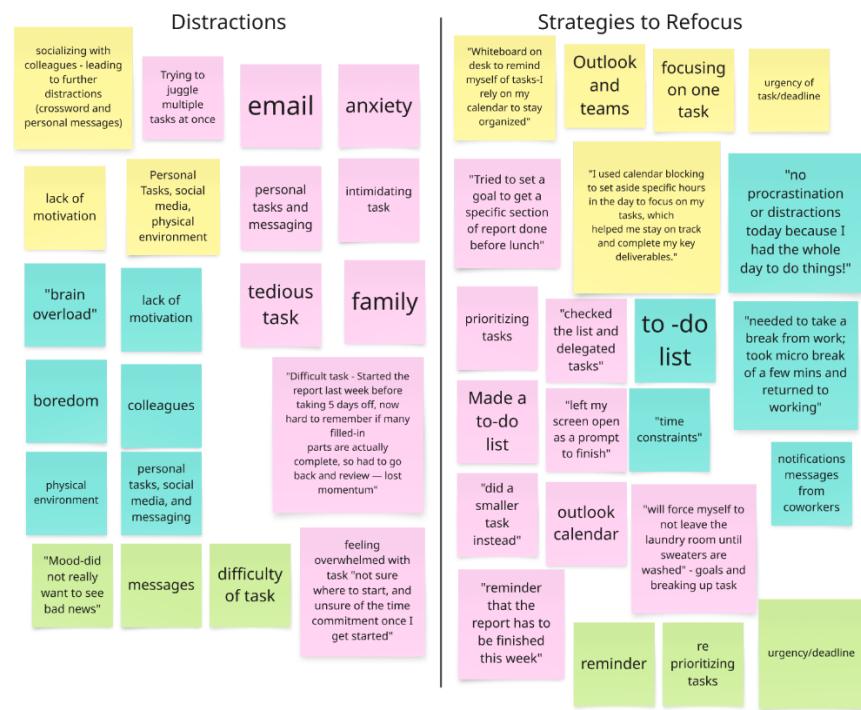
- Recruited 4 participants for 10-day digital diary study
- Designed three versions of daily questionnaires:
 - Day 1: Baseline assessment of current tools and habits
 - Days 2-9: Daily productivity tracking and strategy documentation
 - Day 10: Reflective assessment and self-discovery
- Participants journaled about distractions in real-time

Role: Solo researcher - created research plan, question tables, conducted study, analyzed findings

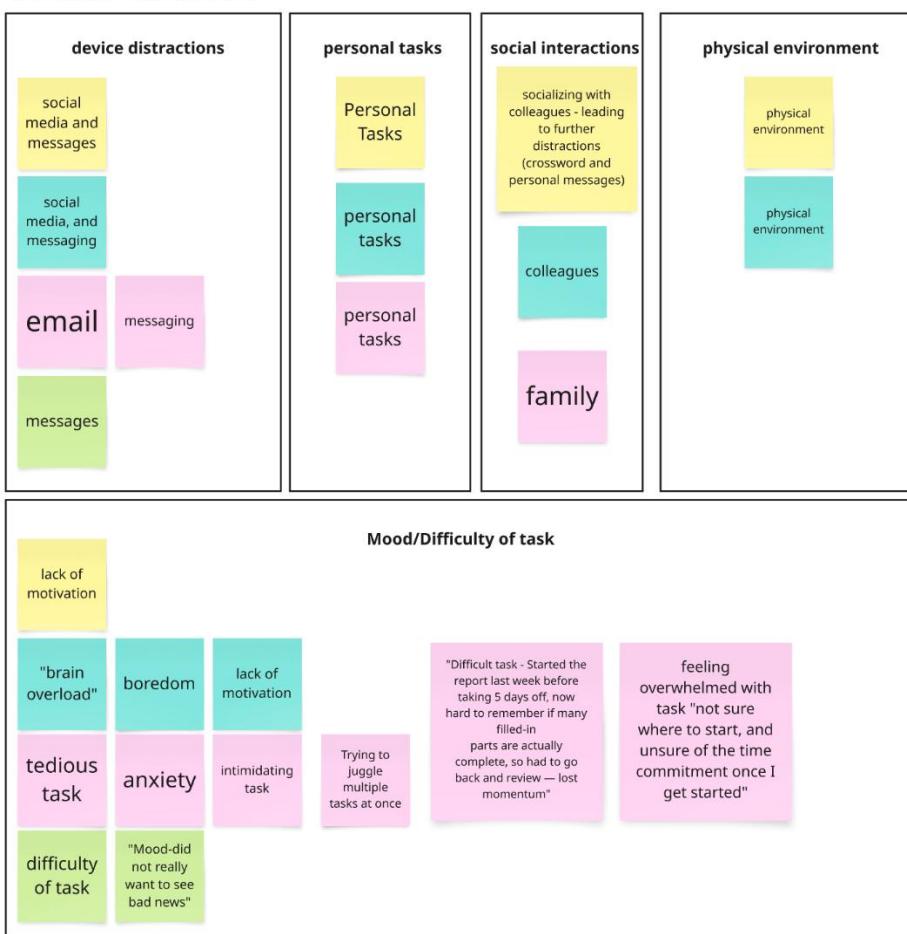
Research Artifacts

Time management Tools & Strategies





Common Distractions



Key Findings

1. Frequency Drives Engagement

Users who successfully manage their time use tools multiple times daily, not just once per day. This constant touchpoint keeps them organized and on track.

"I use a whiteboard on my desk to remind myself of tasks. Otherwise, I rely on my calendar to stay organized." - Participant

2. Mood Significantly Impacts Productivity

Low mood or motivation dramatically increased procrastination, particularly for complex tasks. Users need motivators and task breakdown strategies to maintain momentum.

3. Interruptions Derail Focus

Common distractions included:

- Social interactions: Colleagues, family, friends
- Digital interruptions: Emails, notifications, social media
- Task switching: Personal errands interrupting work tasks

Users struggled to refocus after interruptions, indicating a need for focus protection features.

4. The Customization Paradox

While users rarely customized features in existing tools, they expressed strong desire for flexibility. The insight: users want smart defaults with easy customization options, not blank slates requiring setup.

5. Breaking Tasks is Key to Completion

The most effective anti-procrastination strategies were:

- Setting specific deadlines
- Breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- Time-boxing work into focused chunks

6. Weekly Calendar is Essential

Majority of productive users accessed their weekly calendar view several times daily, making it the most critical feature for planning and awareness.



User Persona
Alex Lee
32 M

Goals

- Reduce the amount of time wasted on distractions
- Avoid procrastinating on non-urgent tasks
- Complete all tasks set for the week

Needs

- Assistance in managing his work & personal life without using multiple time management tools
- Assistance in keeping motivated when tasks are non-urgent

Tools & Strategies

- Calendar Blocking
- Using his whiteboard to write reminders & tasks to complete
- Prioritizing tasks by urgency
- Taking small breaks

Type of Distractions

Digital	Environmental
Texts & Messages Emails Mobile Games Social Media	Socializing with colleagues

Pain Points

- Task Switching**
Frequently interrupted by coworkers questions
- Low Motivation**
Procrastinates on repetitive and non-urgent work tasks
- Multiple Tools**
Using multiple time management tools for his work & personal life is overwhelming

Daily Journey Insights

USER JOURNEY MAP: Time Management App					
	Alex Lee		Scenario	Expectations	
PHASE	MORNING	MID-MORNING	AFTERNOON	LATE AFTERNOON	EVENING
TASKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking emails • Reviewing calendar • Planning day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on assigned tasks • Attending meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing work • Attending more meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finishing up his last work task for the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running personal errands • Participating in leisure activities
MINDSET	He is prepared after reviewing his calendar and seeing all his tasks and meetings planned for the day.	He is engaged but does get distracted.	His motivation and focus is waning, he allows himself to check his phone and shifts to personal tasks around the house.	Regaining his focus to finish the last work task for the day. But he is extremely tired and ready to clock out.	He is relaxed but feels guilty if there are unfinished work tasks.
EMOTIONS	 Productive & Motivated	 Productive But Getting Bored	 Losing Focus	 Regaining Focus	  Happy or Guilty
PAIN POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations with his colleagues & family keep interrupting his flow • Temptation to check his phone after hearing notifications <p>"I use a whiteboard on my desk to remind myself of tasks. Otherwise, I rely on my calendar to stay organized."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone notifications and emails kept interrupting his focus • Wants to procrastinate on the complex task he is working on <p>"Since I was working from home, I also felt the urge to clean my home which pulled away from my work tasks."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps shifting to personal tasks instead of work • Distracted by social media and messages • Questions from colleagues keep interrupting flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tired from working • Low motivation because the work day is ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spends a lot of time on his phone, checking messages, and spending time on social media
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task & event reminders • Smart calendar • Scheduled work mode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Mode • To-do Lists <p>"Silencing my phone has helped me focus on tasks that take a lot of concentration."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritization & Deadlines • Time Blocking or Chunking • Break Prompts <p>"Setting small goals within a short time frame (completing a section of a report in the next 30 minutes.)"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentle Nudges <p>"Went back to working due to messages on Teams."</p>	

Morning (Start of Day)

- Mindset:** Productive and motivated

- **Pain Points:** Reviewing full calendar feels overwhelming; interruptions from colleagues and family
- **Opportunity:** Smart calendar widget for at-a-glance planning

Mid-Morning

- **Mindset:** Engaged but susceptible to distraction
- **Pain Points:** Procrastinates on complex tasks; digital notifications break concentration
- **Opportunity:** Focus mode and task breakdown features

Afternoon

- **Mindset:** Low motivation, easily distracted
- **Pain Points:** Shifting to personal tasks; social media temptation
- **Opportunity:** Prioritization labels and time blocking

Late Afternoon

- **Mindset:** Racing against deadlines or losing steam
- **Pain Points:** Tired, difficulty maintaining focus
- **Opportunity:** Gentle nudges for unfinished tasks

Evening

- **Mindset:** Relaxed but potentially guilty about incomplete work
- **Reflection:** Reviews day and plans ahead

Design Recommendations

Based on research findings, I recommend prioritizing these features:

1. Smart Calendar with Quick Access

- Weekly view as default (most-used feature)
- Widget for at-a-glance planning
- Drag-and-drop rescheduling
- Fixed upcoming reminder banner in app

2. Intelligent Task Management

- To-do lists with subtasks/checklists for breaking down complex work
- Prioritization labels based on deadline, task complexity, and time required
- Automatic task reorganization by urgency and priority

3. Focus Protection Features

- Do Not Disturb mode when creating tasks or via toggle
- Silence notifications during focused work
- Visual indicator when in focus mode

4. Time Blocking & Chunking

- Built-in Pomodoro timer
- Guided break prompts to prevent burnout
- Time-box task suggestions ("What can you complete in 10 minutes?")

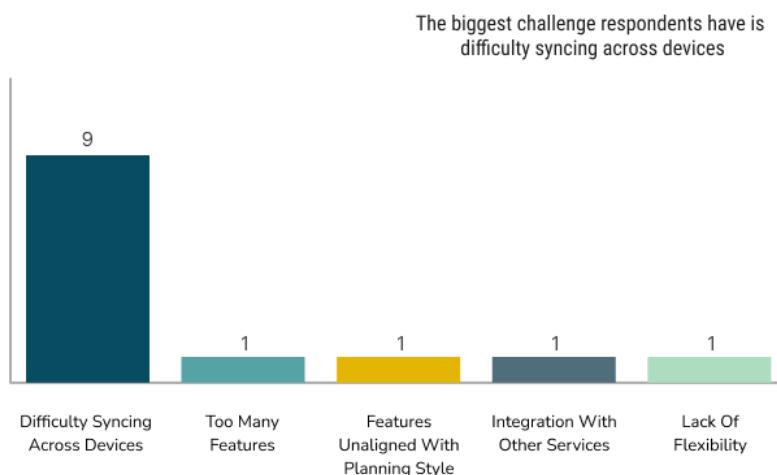
5. Gentle Nudges & Reminders

- Push notifications for unfinished tasks
- End-of-day incomplete item review
- Motivational prompts during low-energy periods

6. Cross-Device Syncing

Survey respondents identified syncing across devices as their **biggest challenge** with current tools—making this a critical feature for adoption.

Q3: What is the current biggest challenge you face when using time management tools?



7. Task Replication

Allow users to duplicate recurring tasks easily, reducing setup friction.

Research Impact

Validated Hypothesis

Yes, with a caveat. Users want customization, but they need smart defaults first. The ideal app learns from user behavior and offers suggestions while allowing flexibility.

Design Principles Uncovered

1. Reduce cognitive load - Smart defaults over blank slates
2. Protect focus time - Active interruption management

3. **Breaks** - Make complex tasks feel manageable
4. **Maintain visibility** - Calendar view as central hub
5. **Adapt to mood** - Recognize when users need extra support

Business Value

- Clear feature prioritization based on actual usage patterns, not assumptions
 - Reduced development risk by validating demand before development
 - Competitive differentiation through focus mode and smart prioritization
 - Higher retention potential by addressing the #1 pain point (device syncing)
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Methodology Highlights

What Worked Well

- Mixed methods approach provided both breadth (survey) and depth (diary study)
- Recruiting productive users as participants gave insights into successful patterns rather than just pain points
- Real-time journaling in diary study captured authentic moments of distraction
- Three-phase progression allowed each study to inform the next

Challenges & Solutions

- Challenge: Low survey response rate (17 vs. goal of 25)
 - Solution: Recruited previous survey respondents for diary study, ensuring highly engaged participants
- Challenge: Participants forgetting diary entries

- **Solution:** Daily check-ins and gentle reminders, maintained consistency
- **Challenge:** Balancing feature requests with observed behavior
 - **Solution:** Journey mapping revealed gaps between stated preferences and actual usage patterns

What I'd Do Differently

- Extend diary study to 14 days to capture full work weeks
 - Include participants who struggle with time management for comparison
 - Add observational component to see actual tool usage vs. self-reported
-

Skills Demonstrated

- **Research Design:** Created comprehensive study plans across three methodologies
 - **Mixed Methods:** Combined qualitative and quantitative approaches for holistic insights
 - **Participant Management:** Recruited, screened, and maintained engagement across 10-day study
 - **Data Analysis:** Synthesized findings from 17 survey responses and 40 diary entries
 - **Synthesis:** Created user personas and journey maps from raw data
 - **Stakeholder Communication:** Delivered actionable recommendations tied to business goals
 - **Ethics:** Ensured participant privacy, consent, and data security throughout
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Next Steps

1. **Usability Testing:** Create low-fidelity prototypes of recommended features for validation
 2. **Competitive Analysis:** Audit existing time management apps to identify implementation gaps
 3. **A/B Testing Framework:** Design experiments to test smart prioritization accuracy
 4. **Expanded Diary Study:** Include users who struggle with time management to understand barriers
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Deliverables

- Research plans and screeners for all three studies
 - Survey question table and data analysis
 - Diary study question tables and journaling prompts
 - Affinity diagrams and thematic analysis
 - User persona and journey map
 - Final research report with actionable recommendations
 - Stakeholder presentation materials
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This case study demonstrates my ability to design and execute rigorous UX research, synthesize complex data into clear insights, and deliver recommendations that balance user needs with business objectives.