

Overview

As a research assistant at Stanford University, I worked alongside Assistant Professor of Computer Science, Dr. Michael Bernstein, and Ph.D Candidate Ali Alkhatib on a project called Upstart. The goal of the project was to understand the potential benefits of collective governance—the idea that a group of workers would democratically decide how to govern themselves. This idea spawned from the increasing popularity of gig economy companies such as Handy, Lyft and Uber and the rise of controversial labor codes and unethical treatment of workers. Thus, we asked ourselves, is there a better way to govern gig workers than the status quo?

Objective

For this project, I was tasked with understanding the user goals associated with gig workers, sketching out the user sign in/on flow and scheduling work flow, and contributing to the code base for building Upstart's platform.

User Goals

Through talks with representatives from the National Relations Labor Board (NRLB), research on the competitive landscape and gig-worker interviews, we narrowed the **user goals** of the gig-worker to the following:

- Be presented with the right signals for choosing work
- Allocate time effectively and efficiently during working hours
- Feel safe and secure in every transaction and job

We did not lay out the user goals for users of Upstart that would be requesting work from the gig-workers because the focus of the project was to figure out the effects of collective governance on the side of gig-workers. If we continue this project and acquire enough users to be a sustainable project, we will begin the same brainstorming process for these users.

User Tasks

Then we laid out **user tasks** that could help fulfill those user goals that would be specific to the sign in/up process and scheduling work flow:

As a user...

- I can easily sync up my current personal and work calendar to show availability
- I can set up and edit my profile to include relevant information for potential clients
- I am given resources to market myself to potential clients

Exploring Upstart Features

After seeing the user tasks and goals, we used a brainstorming session to lay out features that Upstart would provide that satisfy those goals found above.

Profile Setup

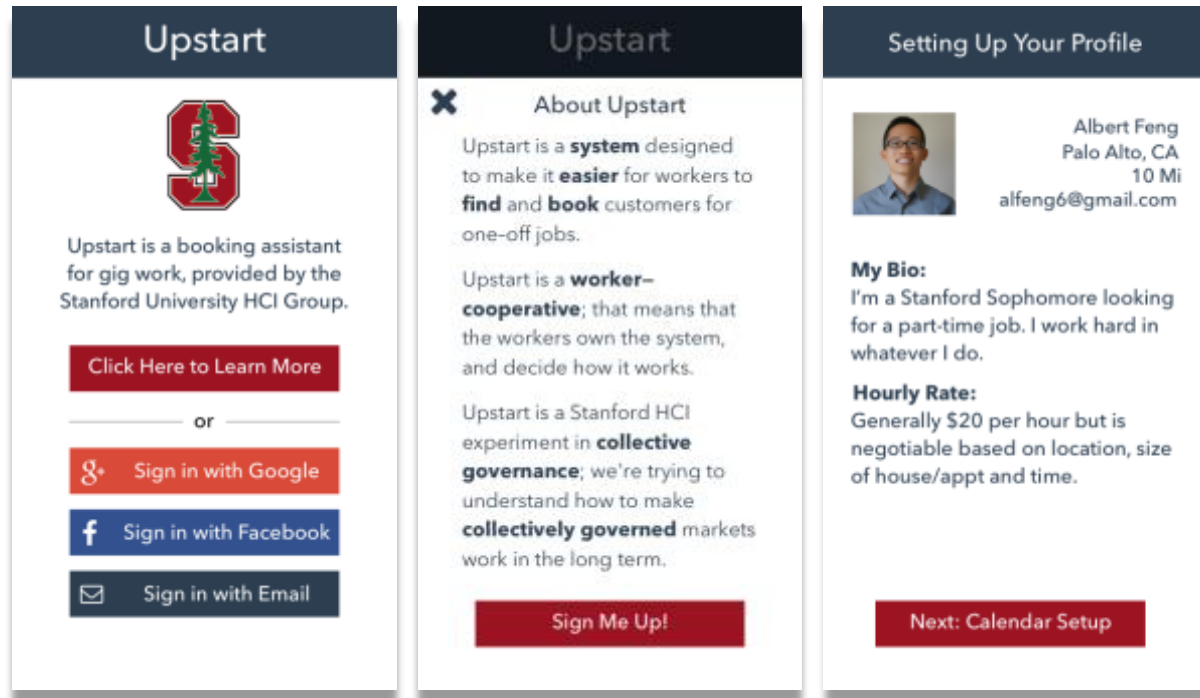
- Include name, location, travel radius and email
- Descriptions for bio and hourly rate
- Google Calendar Sync and manual availability entry

Marketing

- Provide each new user with \$10 of Facebook Ads Credit
- Individualized URL links
- Automatically generated emails for clients to use when selecting work requests

Mockups and UX Flow

Mobile Flow



Setting Up Your Calendar

☒ Available
 ☐ Busy

I'm generally available these days...

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su

At these times...

6am	12pm	6pm
7am	1pm	7pm
8am	2pm	8pm
9am	3pm	9pm
10am	4pm	10pm
11am	5pm	11pm

[Show me my final calendar](#)

or

These times are too general for my schedule! I want to setup more specific availabilities:

[Advanced Setup Features](#)

Setting Up Your Calendar

☒ Available
 ☐ Busy

< January >

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
10	11	12	13	14	15	16

6am	12pm	6pm
7am	1pm	7pm
8am	2pm	8pm
9am	3pm	9pm
10am	4pm	10pm
11am	5pm	11pm

[I'm ready to start working](#)

Advanced Setup

☒ Available
 ☐ Busy

Set availabilities for each day

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su

Pick available times on Mondays

6am	12pm	6pm
7am	1pm	7pm
8am	2pm	8pm
9am	3pm	9pm
10am	4pm	10pm
11am	5pm	11pm

[Show me my final calendar](#)

Albert's Work Profile



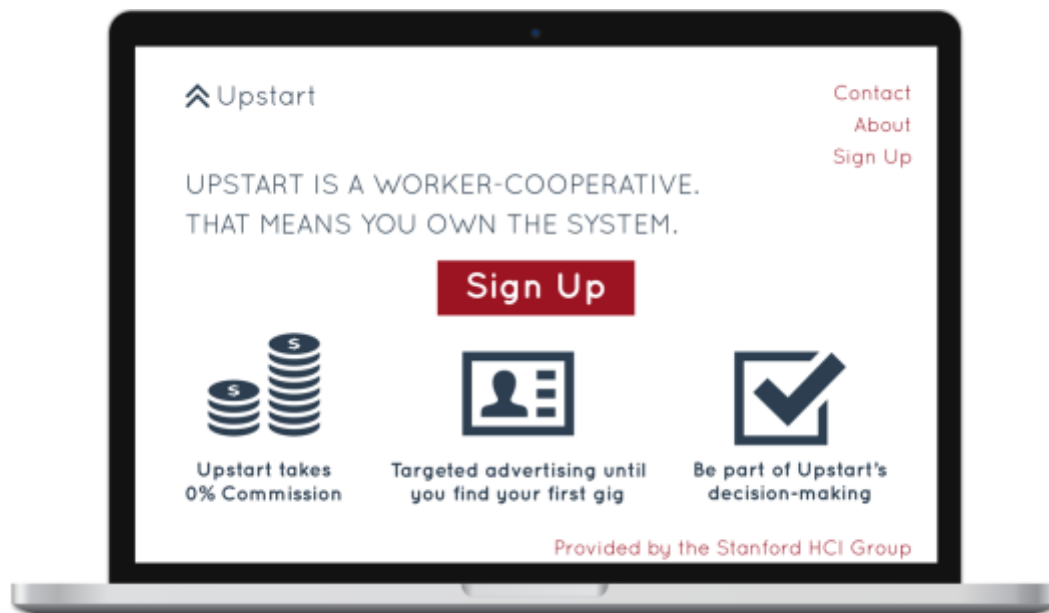
Albert Feng
 Palo Alto, CA
 10 Mi
 alfeng6@gmail.com

My Bio:
I'm a Stanford Sophomore looking for a part-time job. I work hard in whatever I do.

Hourly Rate:
Generally \$20 per hour but is negotiable based on location, size of house/appt and time.

[Check out his calendar](#)


[View more worker profiles](#)



Upstart

Contact
About

Profile Setup:



Name: Albert Feng
Location: Palo Alto, CA
Travel Radius: 10 miles
Email: alfeng6@stanford.edu

Next: Bio and Hourly Rate

Albert's Bio:

I'm a Stanford Sophomore looking for a part-time job. I work hard in whatever I do.

Albert's Hourly Rate:

Generally \$20 per hour but is negotiable based on location, size of house/appt and time.

Next: Calendar Setup

Albert's Working Availability Calendar:

Import from Google — Or — **Manual Calendar Setup**

Manual Calendar Setup: **Available** **Busy**

Quick Setup Options:

☒ No earlier than: 6 am

☒ No later than: 6 pm

☒ Only work on these days:

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
6am							
7am							
8am							
9am							
10am							
11am							
12pm							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							

Finish Upstart Profile Setup

Future Plans

In the 10 weeks I worked on the project, we were able to finish an MVP of the product. In future iterations of the project, once we have more users, we will add on features for gig-workers to communicate with each other and make important Upstart decisions. However, acquiring gig-worker users has proven to be difficult so the project was put on pause. I have thus moved on to other research projects. I am now working on a project called HabitLab under the same professor but a different Ph.D student. Once I complete that project, I will add that to my portfolio.

Additional Objectives

At the same time, I used Express.js, Postgres and Pug/Jade to create the MVP for Upstart and HTML5/CSS3 for the homepage of the website. My contributions can be seen on my Github Page.