Studio Theme

‘Sound’ Feedback

POV

Social expectation and pressures in the work environemnt have been a definitive part of human motivation throughout time. Extracting these motivators can encourage focus in any environment.

Experience Prototypes

For my “app”, I wish to design a deep focus session experience where users will be equipped with a variety of user-tested tools that will enhance any work environment. The task revolves around a study session equipped with customizable sound feedback options. Exploration of what sounds users choose to incorporate in their studying experience can lead to additional research into optimal sounds that truly simulate the ideal work environment. The first experience prototype involved a socially distanced study session between me and V.C (Initials of my user 1). The goal of this first prototype is to simulate the societal pressures and expectations we as humans feel in our everyday work environments. COVID has displayed a loss of motivation among many students I know due to the lack of intensity in the atmosphere at one’s desk at home versus the desk at one’s college library. Adhering to the goals of the POV, I created a Paper Prototype that consisted of three sound effect notecards to select from as well as an A4 paper that was used as a user interface. Using paper prototypes in combination with the concept of *Wizard of Oz Prototyping*, I attempted to create a simulated work environment based on how the user set up said environment with the options presented via paper. The three sound effect notecards consisted of a standard ping/chime found on many mobile devices, a playable phrase via a computer generated voice, and a playable phrase via my own voice recording. As well, the A4 paper consisted of two drop down menus with minute interval options and a large start button in the middle. The user opted to select a playable phrase via my own voice recording; a phrase of “How’s your work coming along?” was recorded and the study session began. V.C selected a 30 minute study session, so my role as the wizard and facilitator was to display the functionality of my “app” through myself and my low fidelity paper prototypes. I spoke aloud every 5 minutes the phrase my user selected, and she’d reply with brief statements of her work progress. Due to the nature of my prototype, I opted for *Retrospective* feedback as opposed to thinking aloud feedback as I did not want to disrupt the focus session. The feedback I received was that my engagement with the

participant simulated a study group feeling that motivated her to stay focused on her work as opposed to tabbing out or scrolling through her phone. However, I personally noted that my presence could be further intensifying the social expectancy my “app” is attempting to emulate, this is popularly known as the Observer Expectancy Effect. Though V.C is well known for being diligent and studious, I had made adjustments with my second user.

In my second prototype, I improved on the low fidelity tools that I utilized in my first prototype. I created a progress bar that fills up as the user continues through their deep focus session. In order to combat the Observer Expectancy Effect, I opted to remain in another room during the session and only interject come time to perform Sound feedback for the user and to fill up the progress bar. Aside from these two changes, prototype 2’s session will be very similar to prototype 1’s. I engaged in a socially distanced study session with my user P.T, and we went through setting up her deep focus session. This user opted for the voice recorded sound feedback as well, but opted for a one hour study session as they needed to fill out a study guide for a midterm. I remained outside the room, and came in every 15 minutes to fill in the progress bar and to state the phrase “ Nice work on the study guide.”. At the 45th minute mark, I saw the user on their phone and as I simulated the “apps” sound feedback the user immediately went back to work. The second prototype yielded good results, as the lengthier time frame allowed for progression to be measured more easily. The first 30 minutes yielded the bulk of the progress, but the rate of work dropped off as time went on. However, the user stated that they’d key in on their work for a couple minutes after I interjected with sound feedback which resulted in them completing a study guide in an hour rather than their usual 2-3 hour timeframe. Maybe future researchers can use this feedback to keep track of a dataset that shows the relationship between the audio stimulation and the user’s rate of progress.

Prototype Instructions

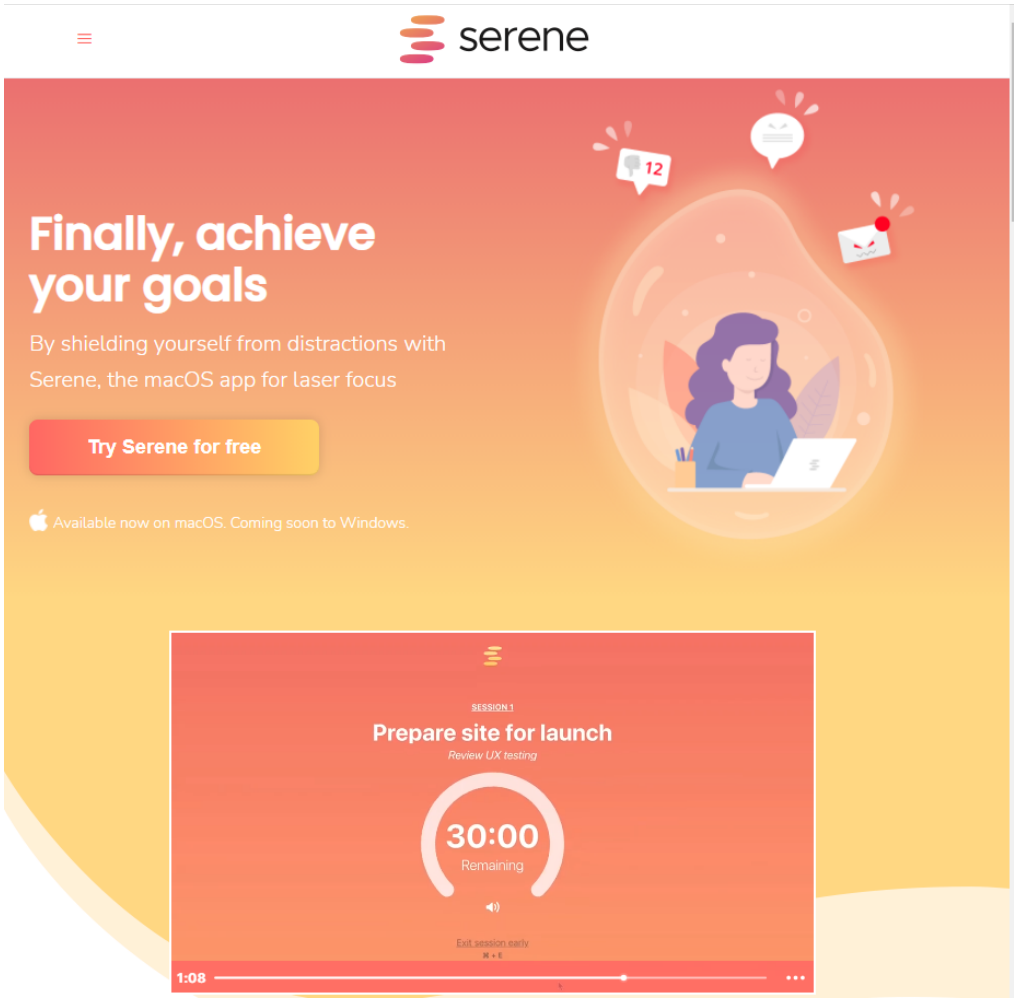
1.) Set up a study/work session
2.) Have users select a start and end time for their Deep Focus Session using the User Interface Paper Prototype
3.) Have users select the type of Sound Feedback they'd like created in order to emulate the social pressure/ expectation of their environment.
4.) Trigger the Sound Feedback and fill the progress bar based on user's chosen timeframe
5.) Ask for feedback AFTER the session (Retrospective)

Make an Inspiration board

Verbal Inspiration

Engaging	*Rewarding*	*Challenging*
Motivating	*Professional*	*Intuitive*
Multipurpose	*Auditory Interactivity*	*Informative*
	Productive	

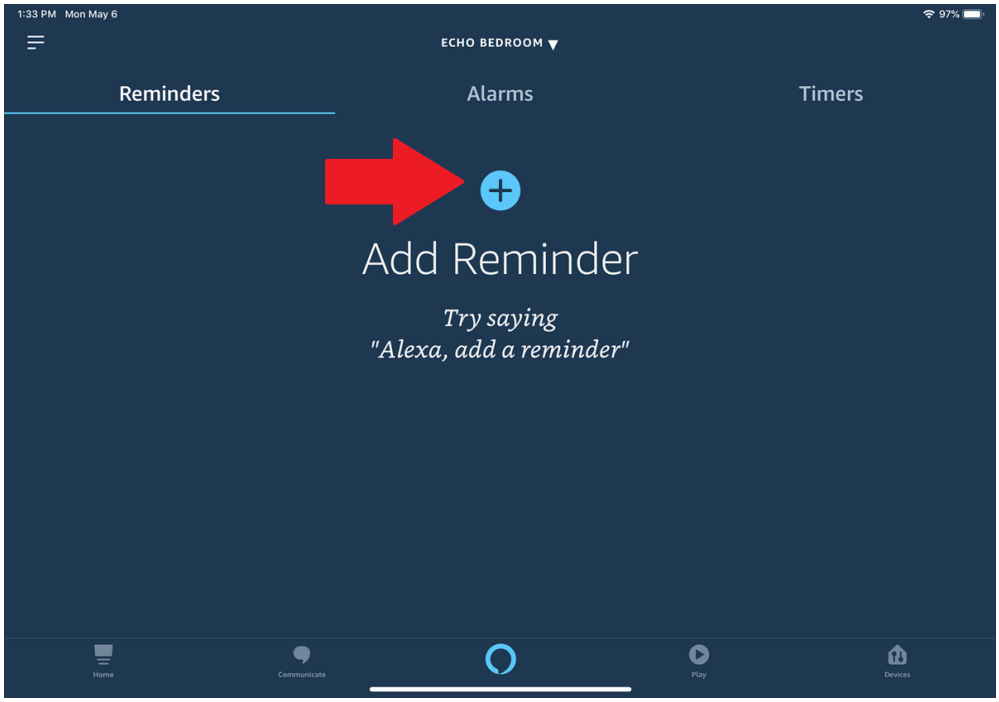
Visual Inspiration



Serene:

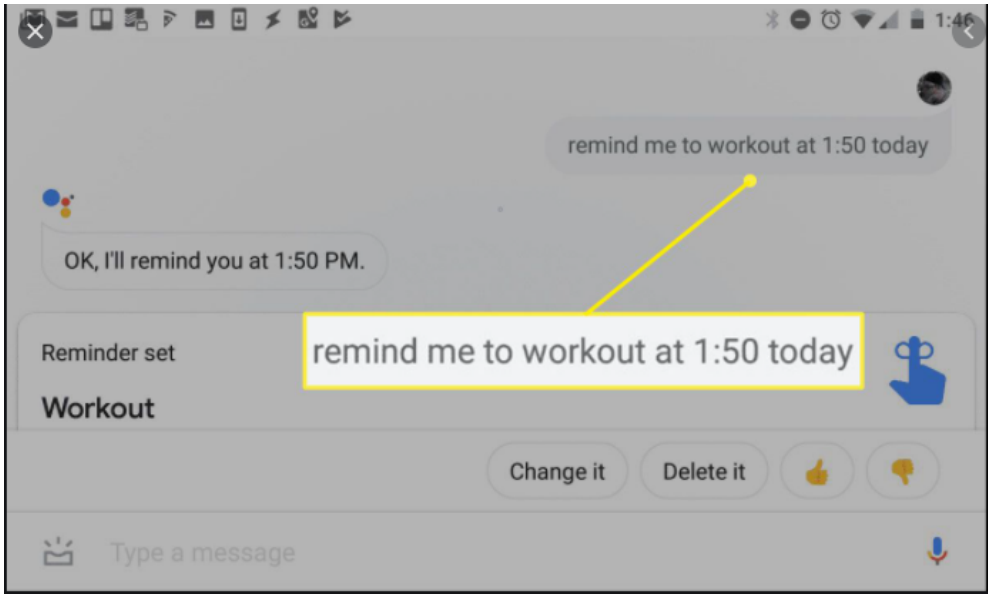
- \+ **Has both a distraction blocker and productivity system integrated**
- \- **I wish it had some audio function as it doesn't incorporate auditory interactivity aspects and is still in beta**

I believe Serene could satisfy the need today as it dedicates itself to optimizing one's work environment by emulating constraints you'd find yourself with at work and school. However, it lacks the Sound Feedback aspect that truly separates a normal reminder app from a Focus Session app.



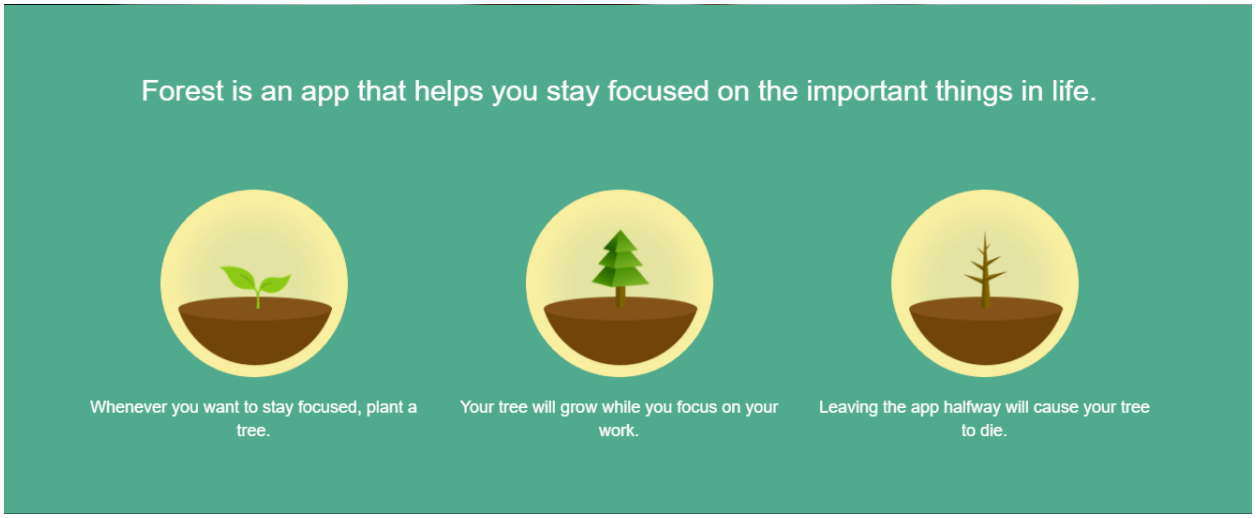
Alexa Reminder:

- \+ **Can create reminders and timers vocally**
- \- **I wish it had a dedicated focus session function, it itself a distraction (intended for multiple uses, not just reminders and timers)**



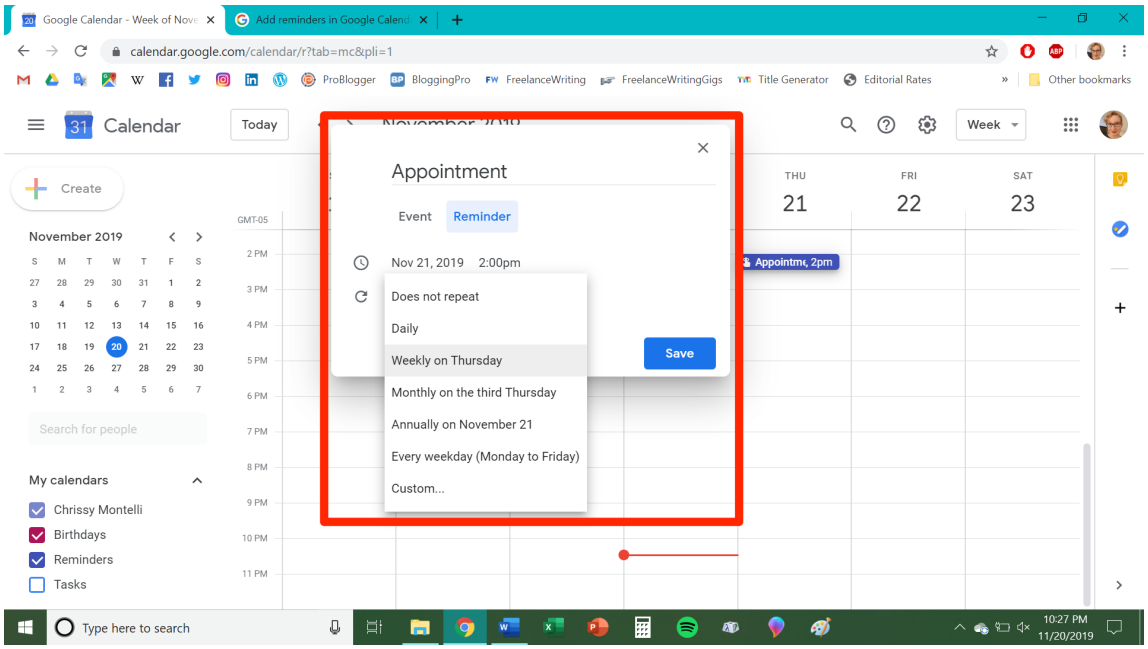
Google Home:

- \+ **Much like Alexa in its Auditory Interactivity, and has Google Calendar functionality**
- \- **I wish it had a dedicated focus session function, as it is too broad of a device since it's other features take away from creating focus.**



Forest:

+ **Innovative idea that gives motivation for a user to stay focused (plants a real tree each successful focus session)**
- **I wish more lifestyle improvements were made, doesn't have much functionality (music, disabling browsing, etc.) outside the tree growing in a focus session**



Google Calendar:

+ **Sets reminders, notification alerts, and very transformative with the amount of addable extensions**

- **I wish it was more interactive and engaging as it is static, lacks auditory interactivity, and it's original purpose is not just for focus.**

Competitive Analysis

Competitors	Auditory Interactivity	Timed Work/Study Session	Visual Progression	Routine Functionalities	Limits Distractions	Reward Factor
Serene	X	X	X		X	
Alexa Reminder	X	X		X		
Google Home Reminder	X	X		X		
Forest		X	X		X	X
Google Calendar	X	X		X		