
Feed Your Monster

Group: Flowery Stones

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Introduction

As Yau, N (2009) indicates in Beautiful Data, the tide of the Web is turning from data distribution toward the individual. Applications and websites mushroom every day, allowing people to track their daily routines and to analyze their pattern, in order to gain a better understanding of themselves and their surroundings. Based on personal experience and observation, individuals are found unproductive and difficult to focus on big picture projects if they cannot manage to break the big goal into actionable tasks. To hack and make work smarter, our website tends to provide users with a playful, flexible time-management tool, allows them to manage projects and review workflows by collected data. This helps users to form a good habit so they can work efficiently. Technically, our website exploits Pomodoro technique aligned with Getting Things Done (GTD), which are two of the most efficient time-management methods in the world.

- Pomodoro:

The Pomodoro technique uses a timer to break work into intervals 25 minutes in lengths, separated by short breaks(usually 3-5 minutes). Before starting a 25-min pomodoro, users are supposed to decide on the to-do task at first; and after four pomodoro, users can take a longer break(traditionally 15-30 minutes).

- Getting Things Done:

The concept of GTD methods is that individuals are allowed to record planned tasks and projects externally and then break them into easy-to-accomplish steps instead of recalling them, so that individuals can focus on current tasks.

As gaming context is found to improve the perceived ease of use of information system, we gamify the website to improve user engagement. Users are set as a player, who are supposed to feel interested and entertained to get all things done with ease when engaging in the website.

Existing Time-management Tools

Many web-based time-management applications and services exist that try to improve productivity and creativity. We will introduce two types of websites: Trello and Workflowy.

- Trello is a project management application which consists boards, lists and cards. Projects are represented by boards, which contain lists(task lists). Lists contain cards(tasks). Task lists can be set as “to do”, “doing”, and “have done”, and cards on each list can be drag and drop from one list to the next when progressing. As users can be assigned to cards, trello is applied to organize group works.
- Workflowy is a light project management application, which helps users to manage projects logically. The interface is as simple as a white paper. Users are allowed to create projects and break them down into as many steps as they want. From a project and its subordinate tasks, users can see the big picture of projects as well as the minute details clearly and know their top priority.

Concept

Rest on the ideas of Pomodoro and GTD, our website aims to help users to break a big project down into small actionable tasks, so as to allow them to focus attention on tracking action on tasks, instead of on recalling them. We are trying to gamify the website, engaging with individuals who want to improve creativity and productivity and those who are easily distracted. Using an empathy-based approach, we address users as players and allow them to enter a playful context: the process of adopting a monster and feeding it uses as the metaphor for the process of finishing a project. Projects are represented by big monsters, which are adhered to little monsters (corresponding to small tasks). Users are supposed to feed monsters with pizzas. The process of feeding pizza is a metaphor for time spent on a specific task, every pizza represents interval 30 minutes in lengths. Fed with a given number of pizzas, a little monster will be “grown up” — their face and body shape will change, which means a task is done. The big monster will feel satisfied if little monsters are becoming happier.

Representation of Data

In order to help users analyze patterns of their workflow and increase the efficiency, we provide users with history review. However, not everyone is of interest in sifting through massive data, and not everyone has the ability to deal with large data sets. To address this, rather than presenting users raw data that needs personal interpretation, we offer a very personalized, and immediate way to comprehend the workflow. At this stage, we have collected the data of users behavior history, for example, the time of beginning and finishing a task, users’ attempting to quit feeding. In the future, users will be noticed if they always leave hard tasks at last; when is the most productive time can tell from the history record, etc...

What we have done

Till now, we have finished several pages and implemented following functions: login, creating new project, adding new tasks, and viewing task lists.

-Login page: At this stage, users are supposed to log in with their phone number. (For your information, if you want to see the function easier we have accomplished, you can log in with the account: 07510942062.)

-Main page: All projects that users create will be shown as monsters' houses on main page. Users are supposed to click the "+" to add new project (corresponding to adopting a new big monster), and they are requested to name the project and give it a simple description.

-Monster home page: This page exhibits the images of a big project and its subordinate tasks.

-Monsters' info page: This page will pop up after clicking on little monster, and it shows as a small info card presenting the information of each actionable tasks. Users can feed monsters with pizzas after they deciding on planned task, and they are supposed to focus the attention on working during every pizza time. Besides, on the info card, the number of eaten pizza will be seen, which reflects that how much time an individual has spend on this task.

Things to be done

Some functions are not implemented in Monster alpha because of the time limitation, but will be developed in Monster beta.

Personalize the appearance of little monster

When users creating a new task, an image of a little monster will appear on the interface. Users are supposed to choose the appearance of little monsters by themselves, the function is not finished yet though, the image of little monsters appears randomly at this stage. A question need to be discussed in the future: personalize the appearance of monster might improve the user engagement, but this may cause too many mouse clicks. How to weigh and consider balance?

User Instructions

As we use the process of bringing up monsters as a metaphor for the process of engaging in projects, it is possible that users do not understand what our website is about. Therefore, we plan to place some instructions on the main page and guide users to use our websites appropriately and productively.

Projects and tasks should be editable

Users can edit or delete the information of their projects and tasks.

Trackable records

Users' data are collected and will be visualized for them to review their history and help them to form a good habit. This is one of our core concept and it is supposed to be developed and implemented in alpha. However, a further discussion on the form of data representation is needed.

Reference

Allen, D.(2002). *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. Penguin. p267.

Trello. <https://trello.com>

Workflowy. <https://workflowy.com>

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