Connecting volunteers with communities

PROJECT STATEMENT

Volu is a start-up that aims to connect volunteers with volunteering opportunities. For this project, I served as a design consultant for Volu, a startup based in Syracuse, NY. I conducted design research, testings, and ideation to redesign the user experience and interface of Volu, addressing the design opportunities from the research and its obvious shortcomings.
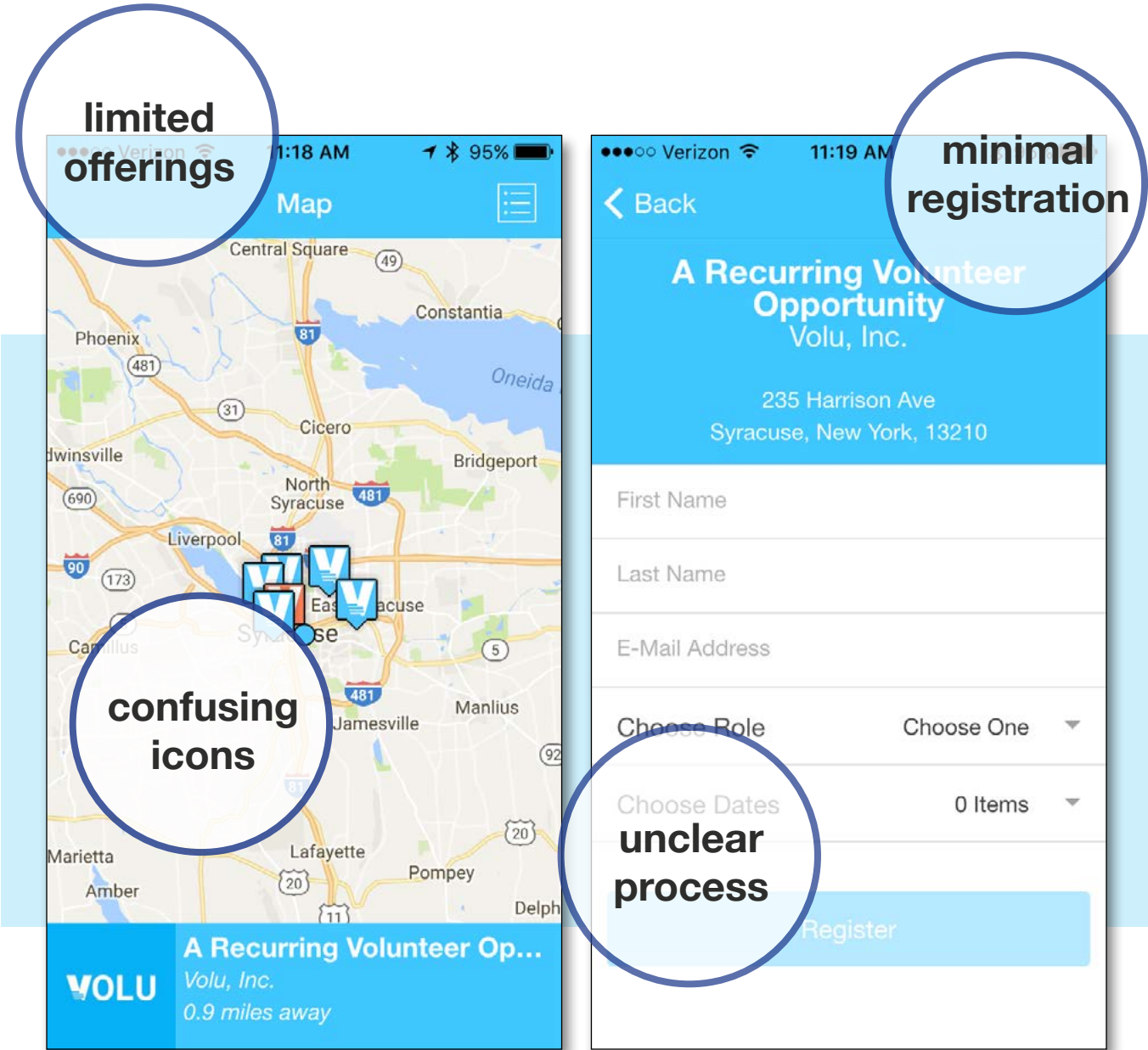
REFERENCE

Place holder images: Unsplash and Pixabay
Icons: Noun Project and Icon8

CURRENT PRODUCT

Volu is a mobile application that enables users to sign up for volunteering events with a minimal on-boarding process. Users only need to search events, input names, emails, and phone numbers to register for volunteering events.

Besides some obvious UI issues, Volu's emphasis on minimal on-boarding process misses out a great opportunity for them to understand its user-base and establish a stronger relationship between volunteers, the communities, and Volu.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

There are several web platforms and mobile applications that share the same value offerings as Volu. One apparent difference is that the competitors' on-boarding processes are often dull and lengthy. On the other hand, they offer more varieties of opportunities and provide recommendations to their users.

ADVANTAGES
- Sufficient understanding of their users
- Large varieties of volunteer opportunities

WEAKNESSES
- Lengthy on-boarding process
- Complex search and filter UI

INTERVIEW

The majority of the participants I interviewed responded that they do not usually volunteer because they did not have time. But they later revealed they viewed the process of looking for volunteering opportunities as "work".

Some responded they would be more willing to volunteer if they are joined by their friends or family. In fact, most responded that their most recent volunteer experiences have been prompted by their friends or family.

From my conversation with Liz, she stated that the holistic goal of volunteering is often overlooked. Volunteering is about building a relationship with the surrounding communities, not just a tedious academic requirement.

FINDINGS
- Volunteering events searching process is often viewed as 'work'.
- Volunteering should not be an isolated experience but an opportunity for an individual to establish a meaningful relationship with the community.
- Social factor is big part of volunteering motivation and commitment.
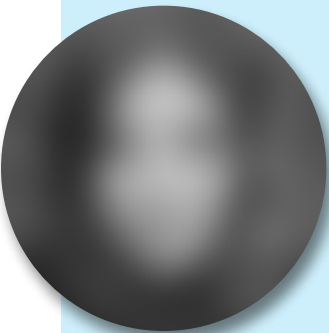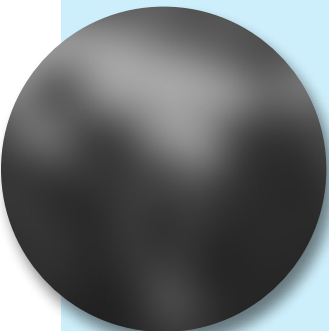
"Volunteering is all about building relationships."

- Liz, Associated Director of Shaw Center, a volunteering organization center in Syracuse University.

"I have just been really busy with work, and volunteer opportunities don't really actively present themselves."

- Erol, Design Student, who volunteers twice a year

"Often volunteer events get canceled simply because we cannot get a ride, or people fail to commit to them."

- Yaskira, Engineering Student, who volunteers every month.

MOTIVATIONS

From an article Measuring motivation to volunteer in human services by Ram Cnann and Robin Goldberg-Glen, published by American Psychology Association, he points out there 6 distinctive motivations of volunteering. He also states that typical volunteers usually have 2 or more motivations and tailored messaging about their motivations can greatly increase their chances of volunteering again.

FINDINGS

- **Typical volunteers usually have more than 2 different kind of motivations**
- **Tailored message about their motives can greatly encourage them to return.**

Values

I feel it is important to help others.

Enhancement

Volunteering makes me feel better about myself

Career

Volunteering can help me advance in my career

Understanding

Volunteering lets me learn through direct experience.

Social

People I know share an interest in volunteering

Protective

Volunteering is a good escape from my own trouble.

SERVICE MAP

Volu lacks certain essential interactions between its stakeholders in order to assist and encourage users to build a stronger relationship with the community. With a minimal understanding and interaction with their users, they are unable to motivate users to commit to an event or recommend users further opportunities. There's a huge communication gap between non-profit organizations and the users. Volu does not enable users to share the event information with others on social media and other platforms.
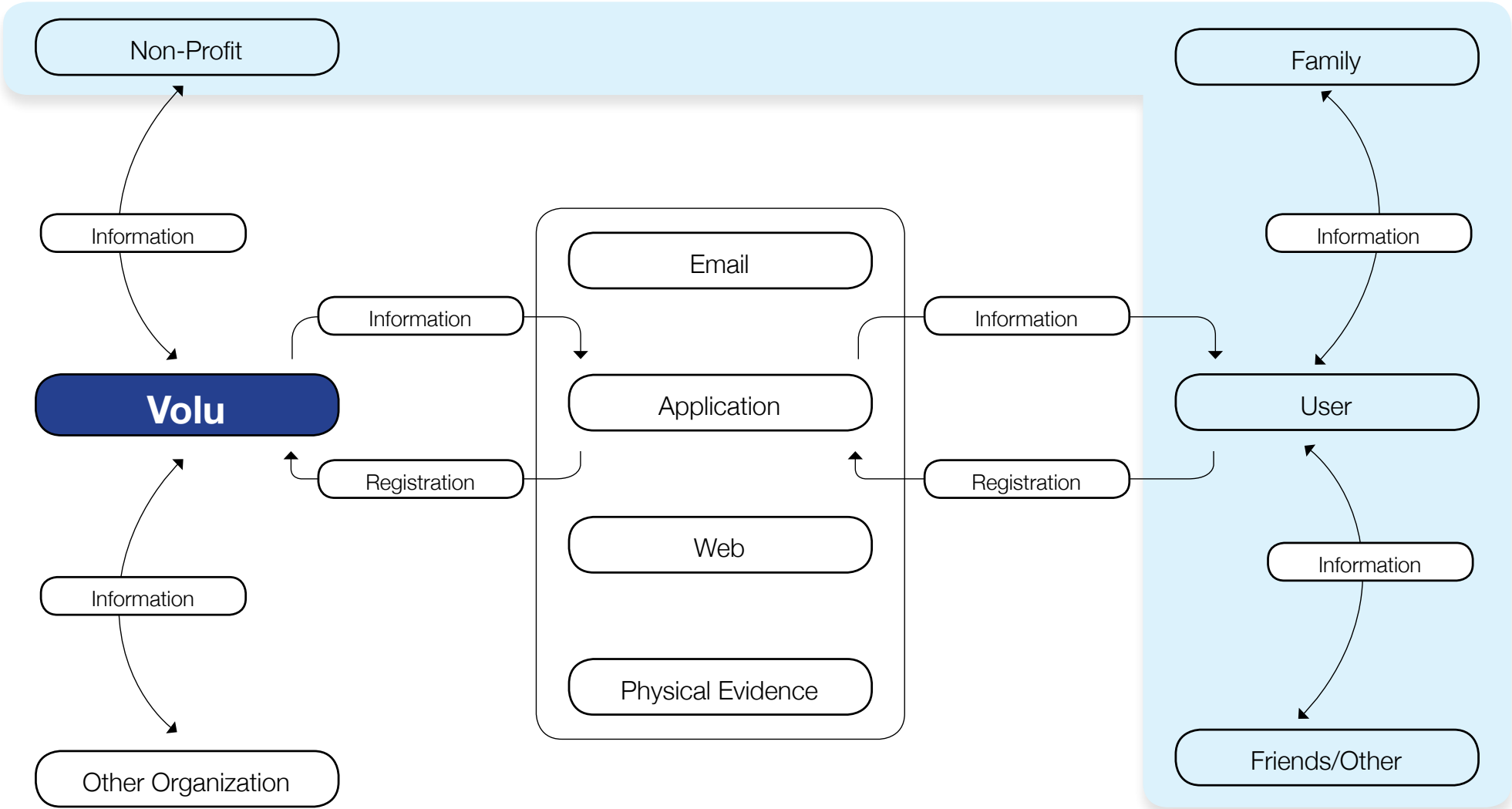
Searching for volunteer events is considered "work"

For people who seldom volunteer, some view the process of looking for volunteering opportunities as dull and tiring.

Volunteering is about building relationships

The holistic goal of volunteering is building a strong and beneficial relationship between the volunteers and the surrounding communities.
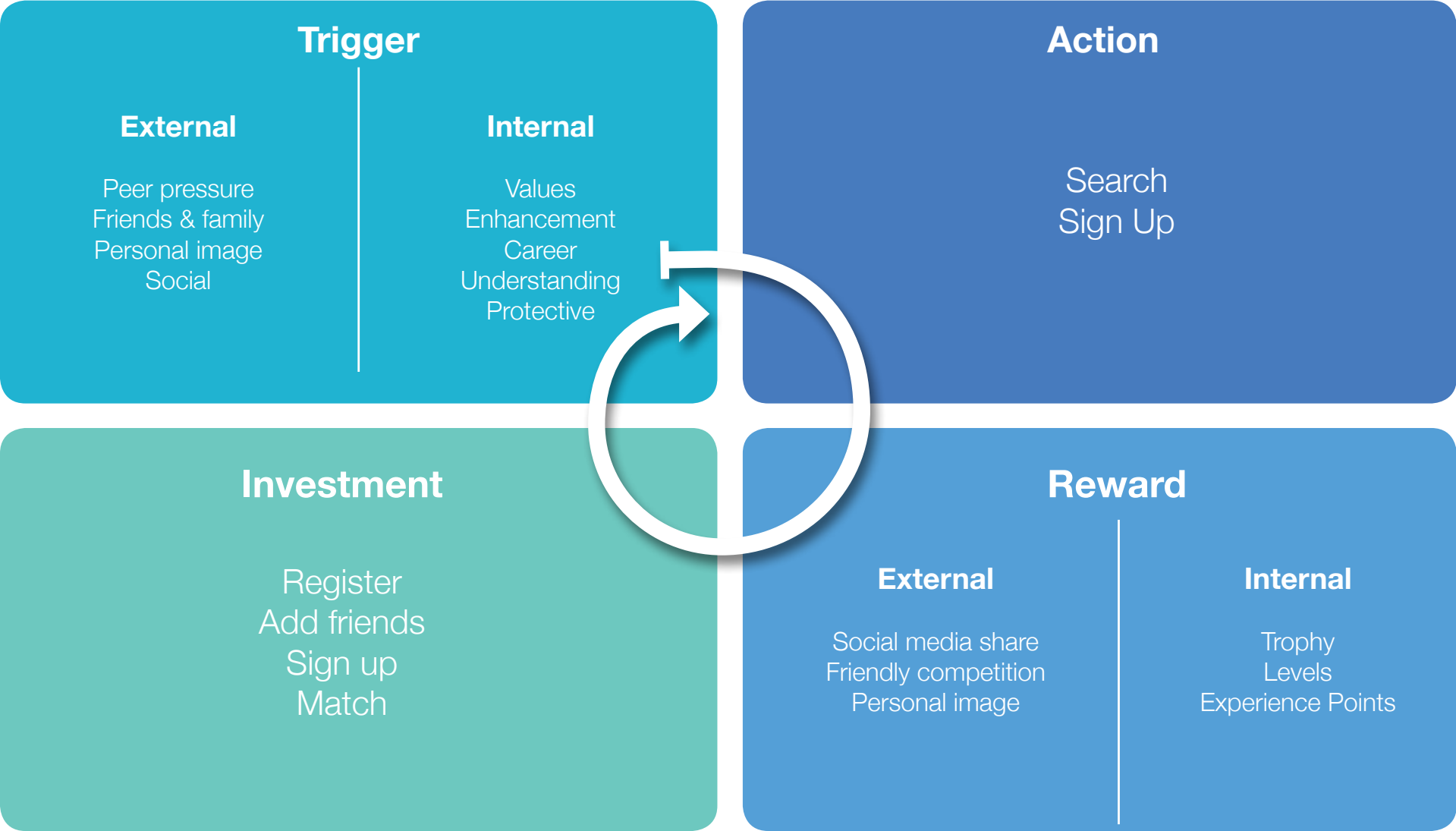
Infrequent volunteers can be motivated to volunteer and form a habit of volunteering

Volu can't motivate the users with minimal understanding of them. The lack of social media feature created an gap between the stakeholders.

HABIT-FORMING SYSTEM

The goal of the gamification system is to help the user to build a habit of volunteering. This system aims to assist the users in creating a long-term beneficial relationship with the organizations.

Understanding of both the internal and external triggers and rewards can be utilized to encourage users to achieve said goal.

Trigger

External
Peer pressure
Friends & family
Personal image
Social

Internal
Values
Enhancement
Career
Understanding
Protective

Action

Search
Sign Up

Investment

Register
Add friends
Sign up
Match

Reward

External
Social media share
Friendly competition
Personal image
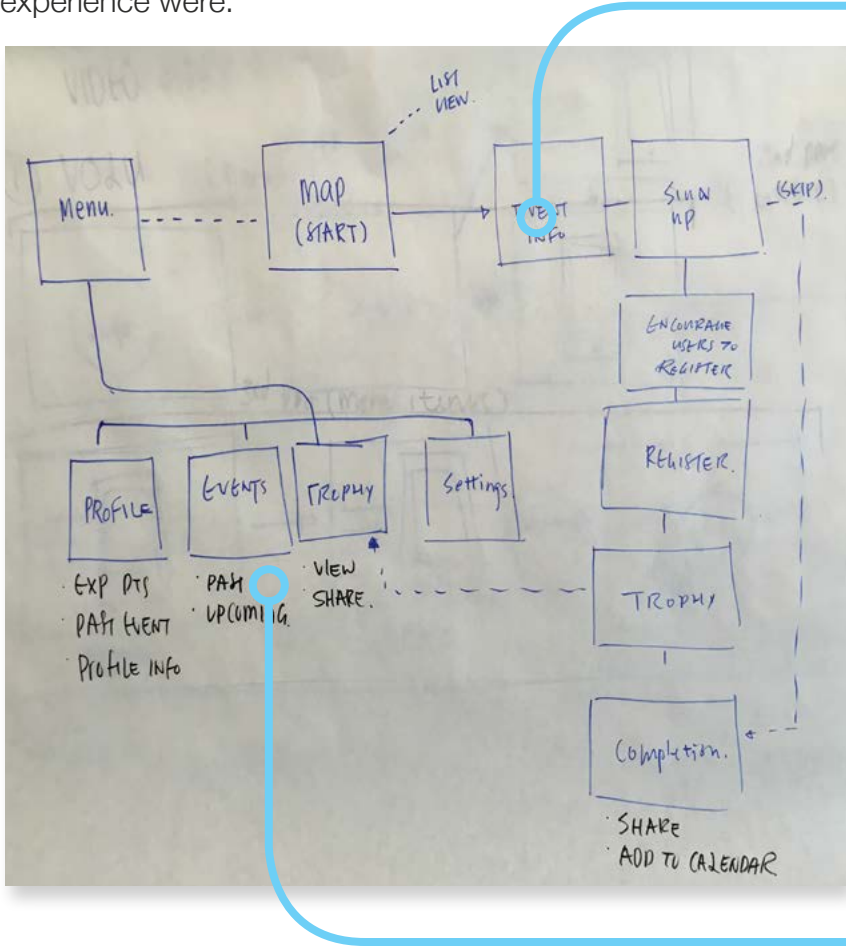
Internal
Trophy
Levels
Experience Points

STORYBOARD

Variety of scenarios are explored through sketching possible storyboards to understand the potential experience this application can offer.
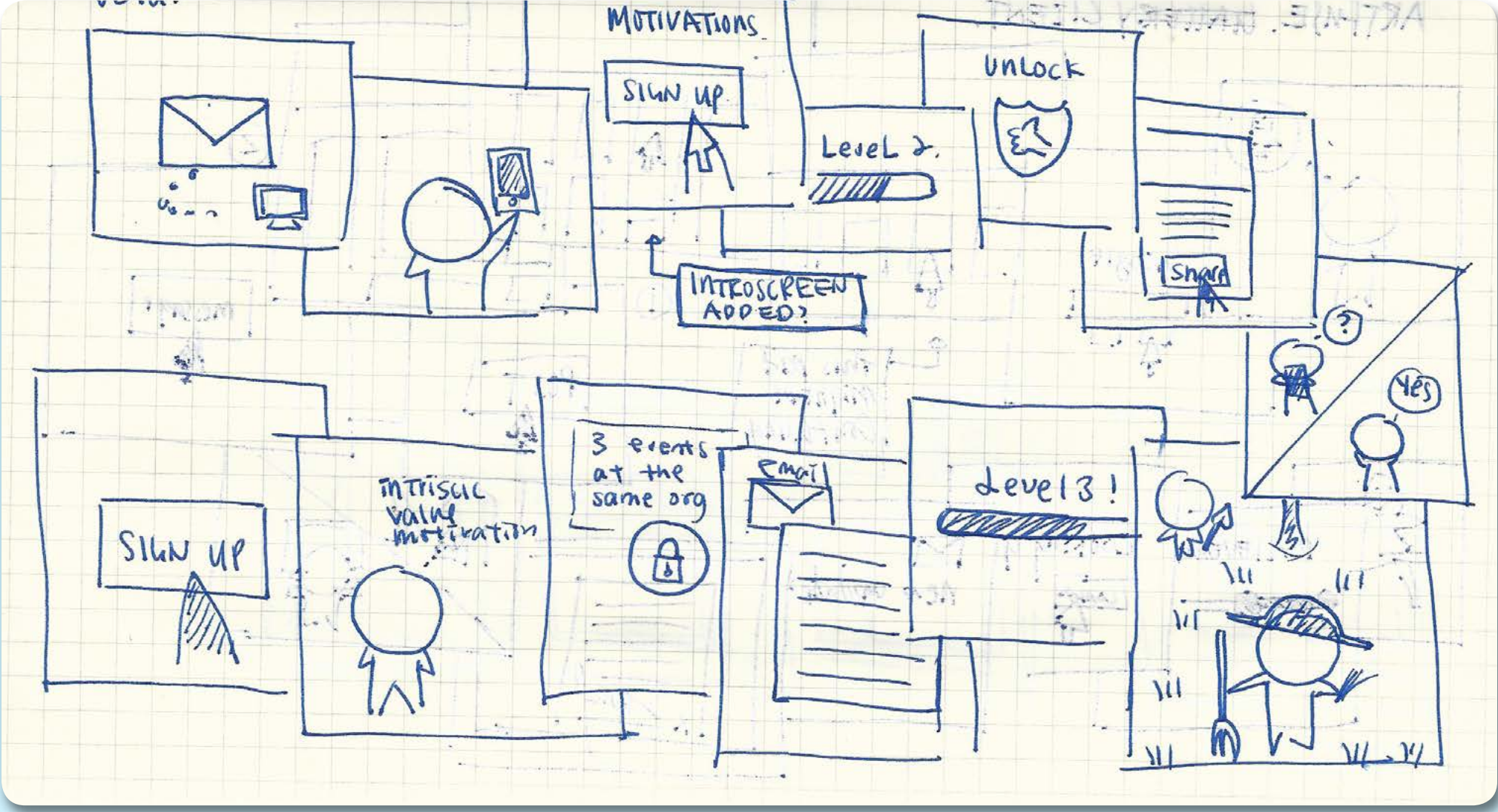
WIRE-FRAME

Starting with a rough sketch, I continuously tested the prototype with users as I discovered what the pain points and successes of the experience were.
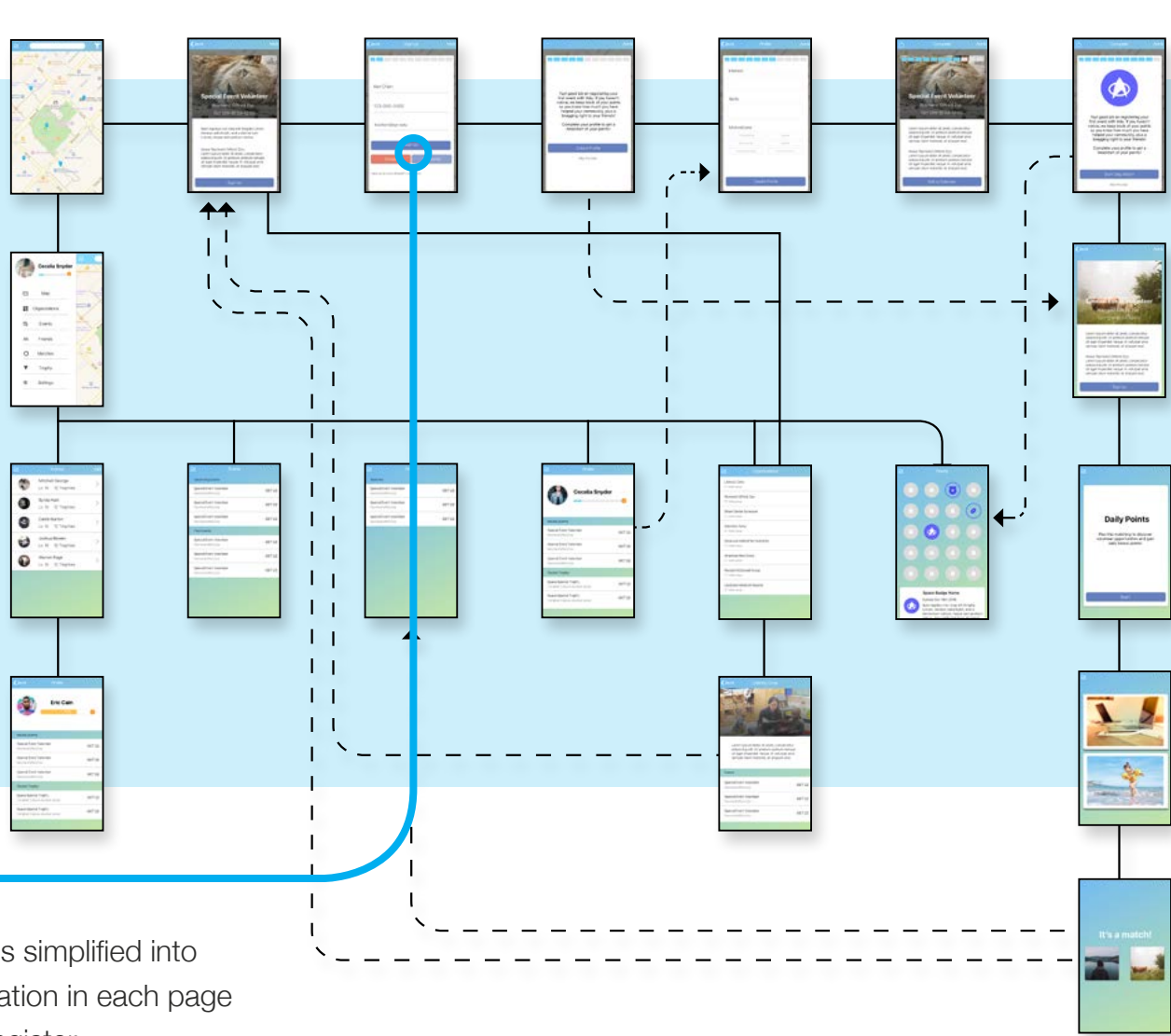
Gamification system is added to create a habit forming experience.

The addition of the gamification system the address the issue of the user viewing searching for opportunities as 'work'.

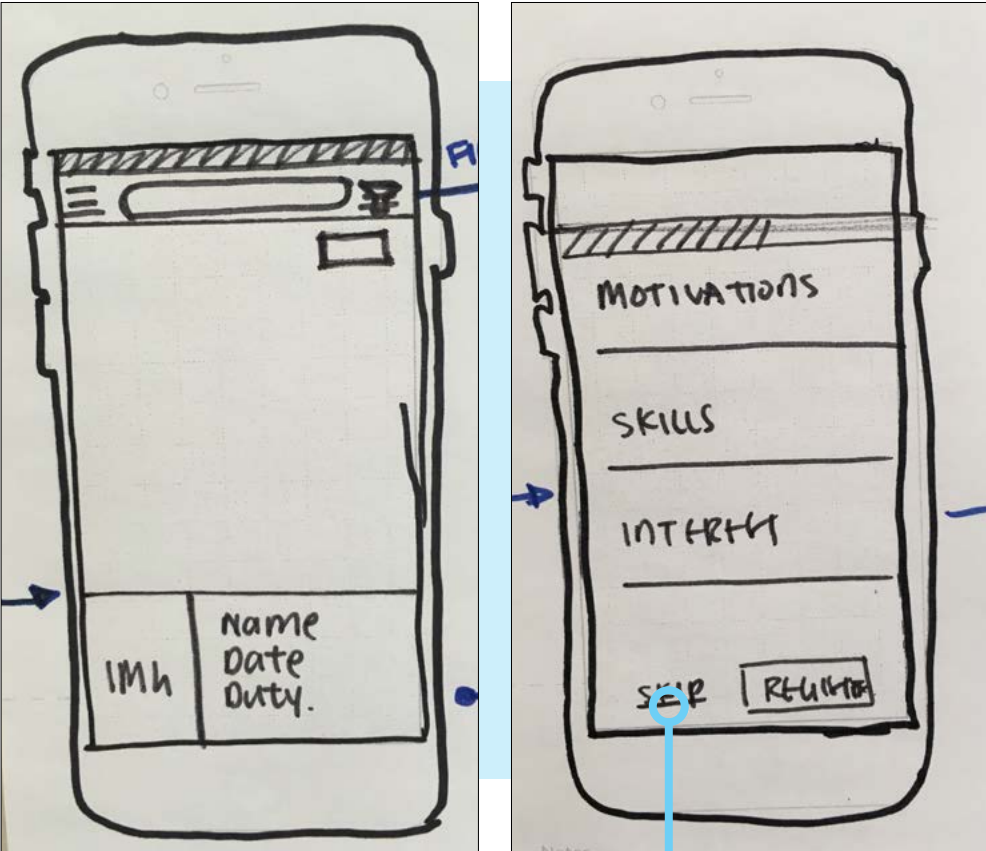The flow of event signing up and creating profiles are switched to create a more encouraging experience for users to create profiles.
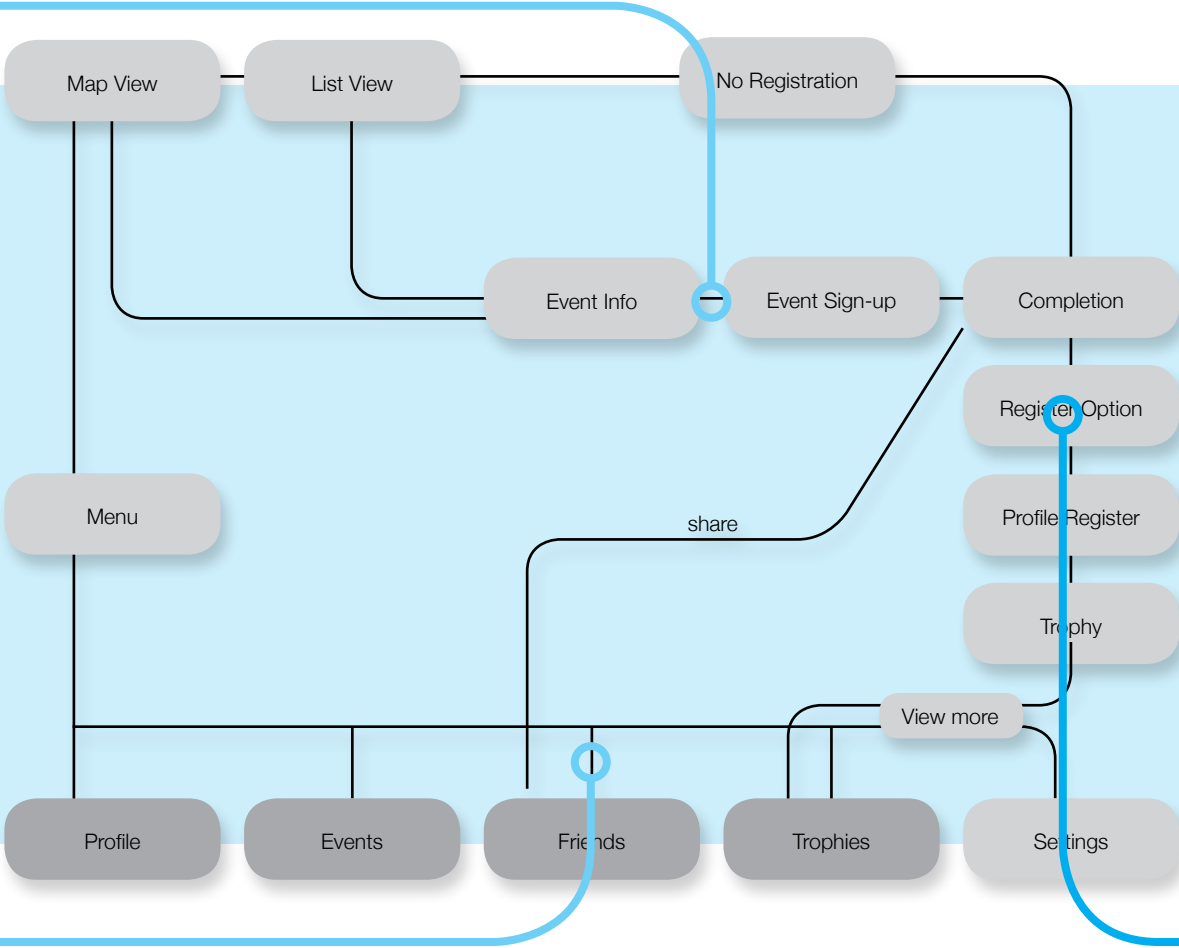
The on-boarding experience is simplified into more digestible bits of information in each page to encourage of the user to register.

Map View

List View

No Registration

Event Info

Event Sign-up

Completion

Register Option

Menu

Profile Register

share

Trophy

View more

Profile

Events

Friends

Trophies

Settings

USABILITY TESTING

The processes of signing up for events and creating profiles for the platform are clearly distinguished to avoid confusion.

The profile registration section is improved by allowing more variety of interests, skills and motivations, along with a clearer UI

The usability of the application is improved through careful word choice and icons to guide the users through the application
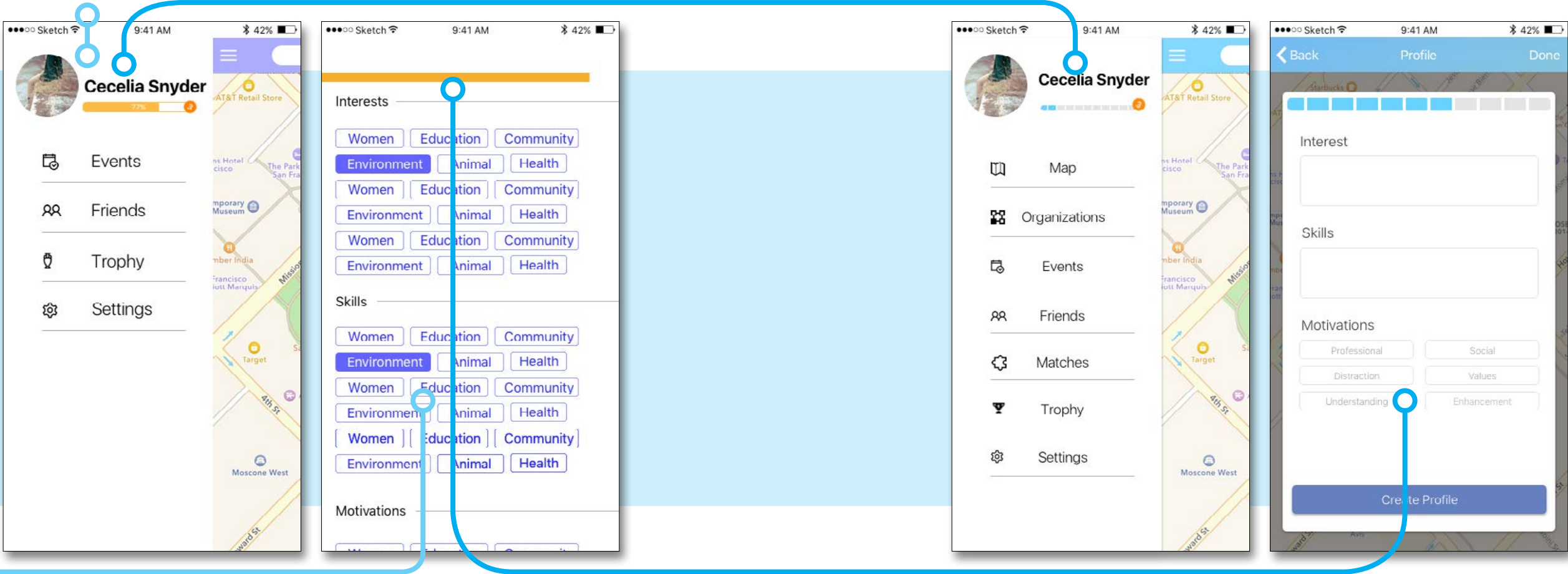
The interface of the gamification is improved and clarified to clearly explain the game system and the ways to achieve further progress.
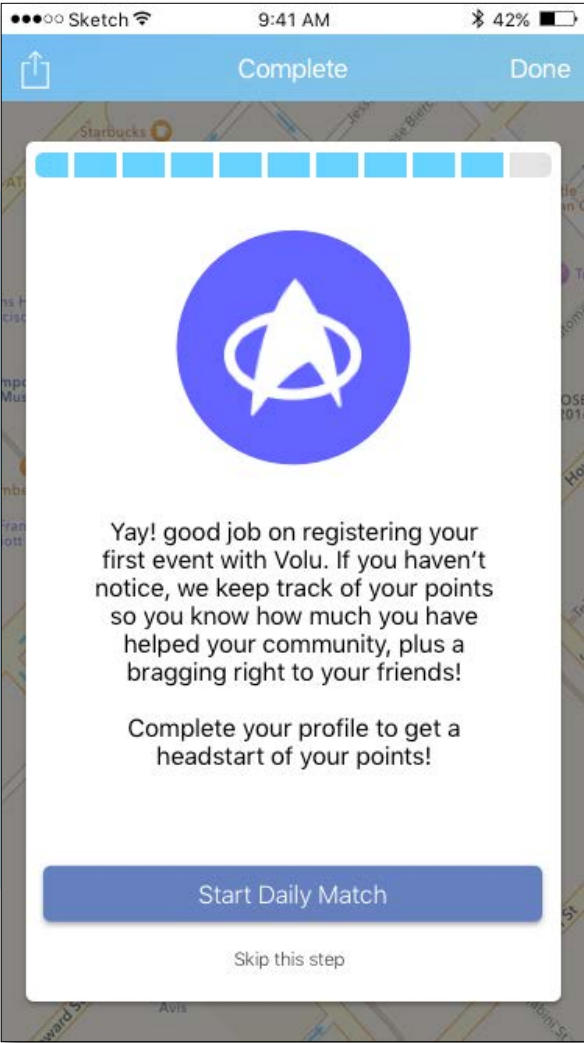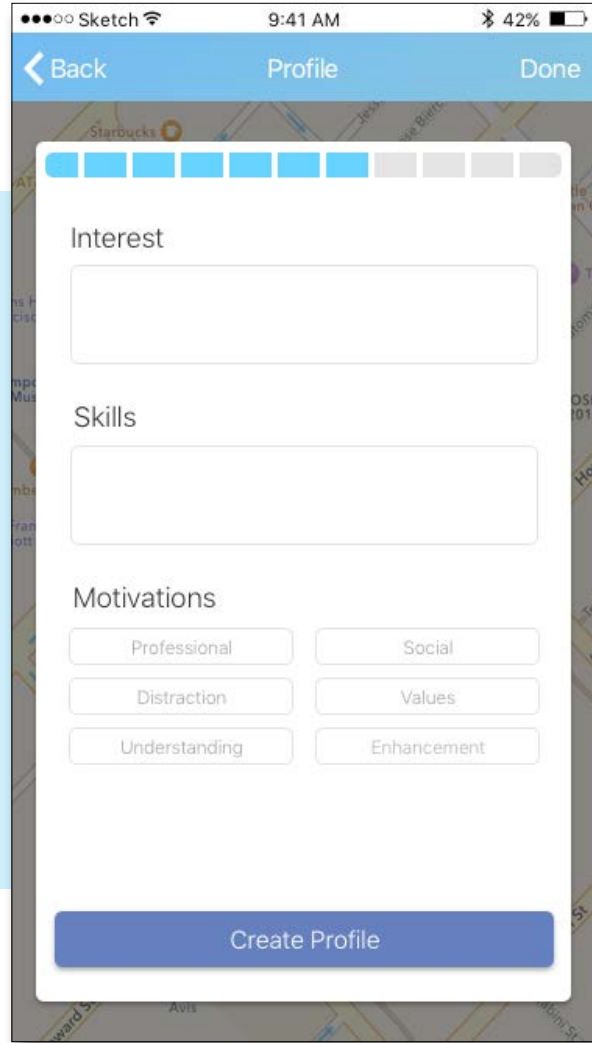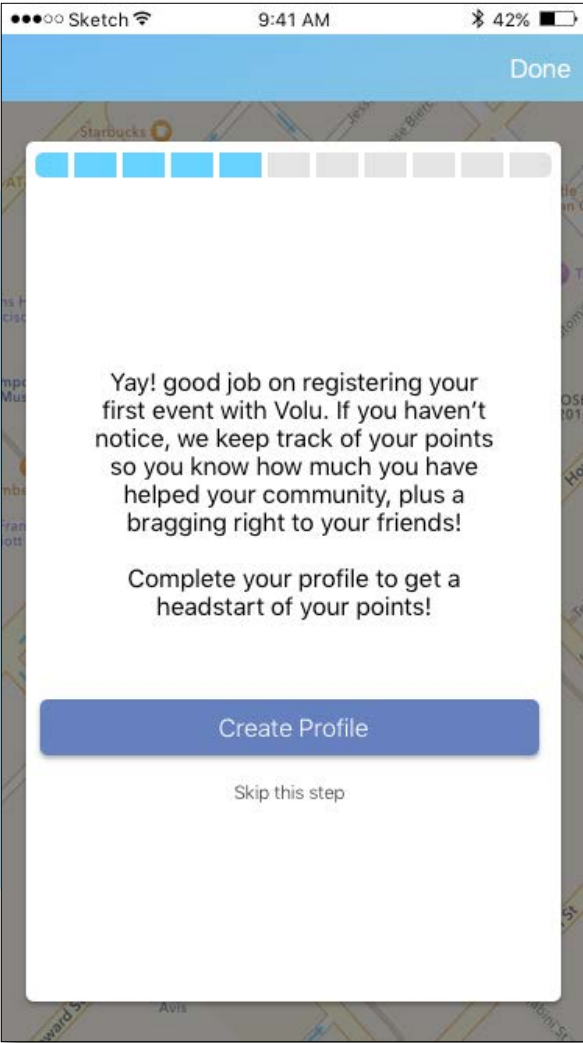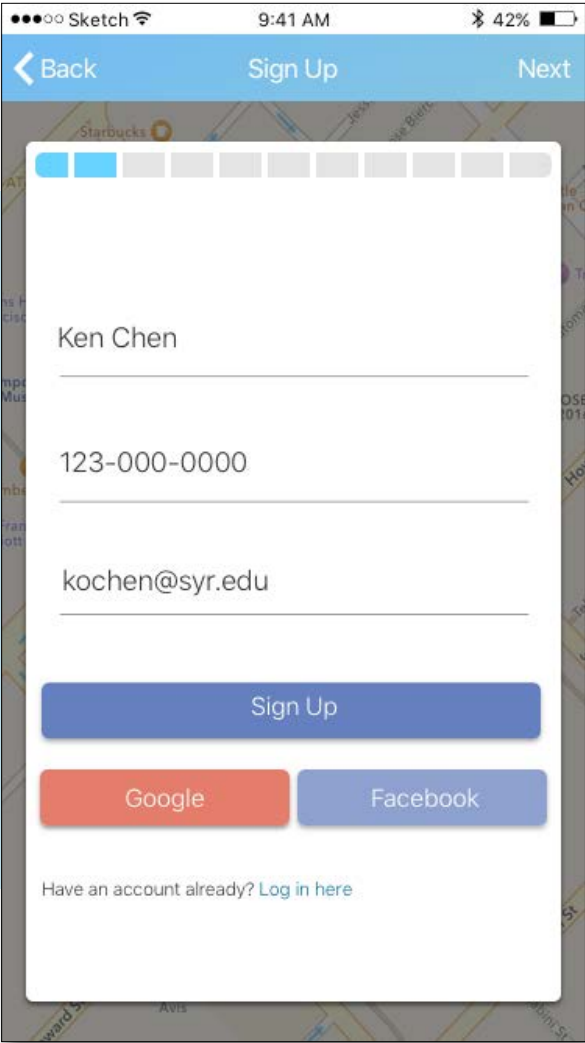
SIGN UP

Encourage conversion through digestible information flow and gamification rewards

As users spend time looking for events and sign up, the gamification system would give rewards and encourages them to go through the optional step of creating a profile. With more in-depth information on the users, Volu can get to know the user better.

In the create a profile flow, the system would gather users' skills, interests, and motivations to recommend them other opportunities and create follow up email content based off of the user's individual interests and skills.

User is encourage to share the events info on social media or complete daily match challenge to gain more points in the gamification system


Screen 1:
●●●○○ Sketch 📶   9:41 AM   ✳ 42% ▭
❮ Back   Next

Special Event Volunteer
Rosmand Gifford Zoo
Oct 12th 10:00-12:00

Nam dapibus nisl vitae elit fringilla rutrum. Aenean sollicitudin, erat a elementum rutrum, neque sem pretium metus.

About Rosmand Gifford Zoo,
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectuer adipiscing elit. Ut pretium pretium tempor. Ut eget imperdiet neque. In volutpat ante semper diam molestie, et aliquam erat.

[Sign Up]

Screen 2:
●●●○○ Sketch 📶   9:41 AM   ✳ 42% ▭
❮ Back   Sign Up   Next

Ken Chen

123-000-0000

kochen@syr.edu

[Sign Up]

[Google] [Facebook]

Have an account already? Log in here

Screen 3:
●●●○○ Sketch 📶   9:41 AM   ✳ 42% ▭
Done

Yay! good job on registering your first event with Volu. If you haven't notice, we keep track of your points so you know how much you have helped your community, plus a bragging right to your friends!

Complete your profile to get a headstart of your points!

[Create Profile]

Skip this step

Screen 4:
●●●○○ Sketch 📶   9:41 AM   ✳ 42% ▭
❮ Back   Profile   Done

Interest

Skills

Motivations

Professional	Social
Distraction	Values
Understanding	Enhancement

[Create Profile]

Screen 5:
●●●○○ Sketch 📶   9:41 AM   ✳ 42% ▭
⬆   Complete   Done

Special Event Volunteer
Rosmand Gifford Zoo
Oct 12th 10:00-12:00

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About Rosmand Gifford Zoo,
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[Add to Calendar]

Screen 6:
●●●○○ Sketch 📶   9:41 AM   ✳ 42% ▭
⬆   Complete   Done

Yay! good job on registering your first event with Volu. If you haven't notice, we keep track of your points so you know how much you have helped your community, plus a bragging right to your friends!

Complete your profile to get a headstart of your points!

[Start Daily Match]

Skip this step

GAMIFICATION

Create volunteering habit and relationship with communities through gamification

The users would receive trophies for various achievements such as volunteering with the same organization on three different occasions, and other similar achievements to encourage them to form a relationship with the organizations and form a habit of volunteering.

Users are able to add and invite their friends to have a friendly competition with them to compete for points, trophies, and levels to see who puts forth the most effort in volunteering,
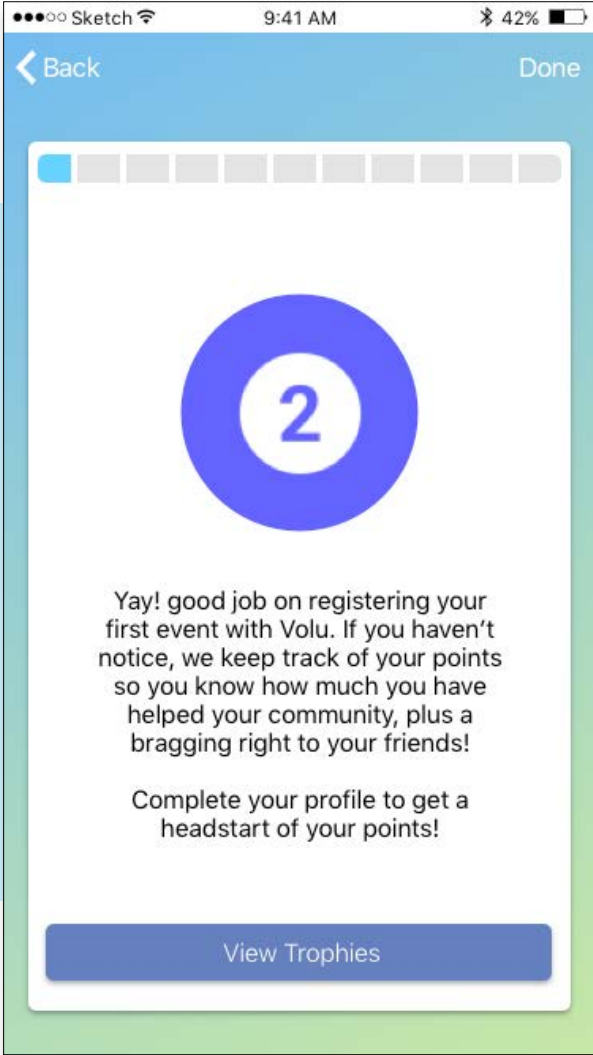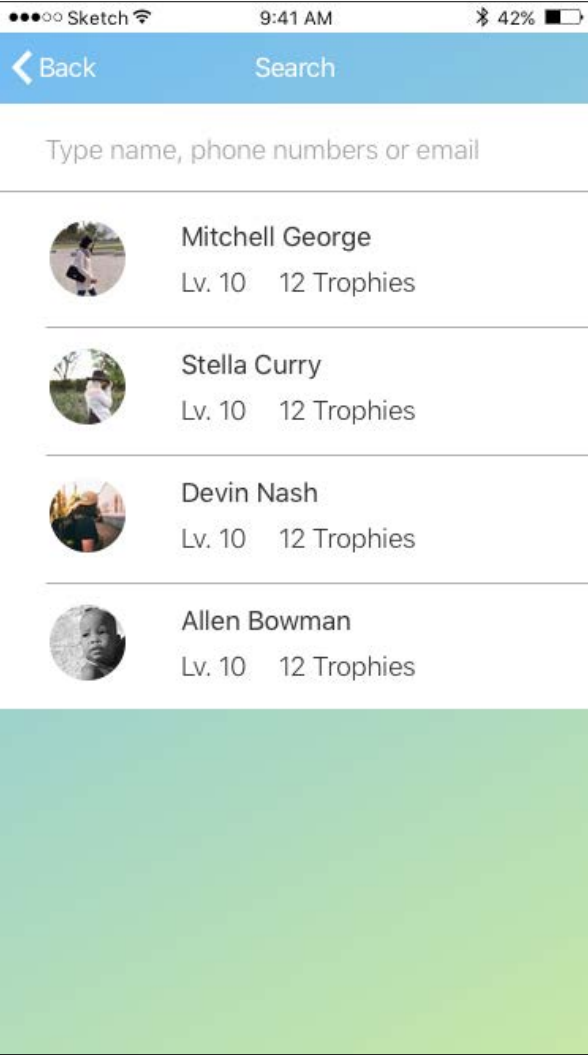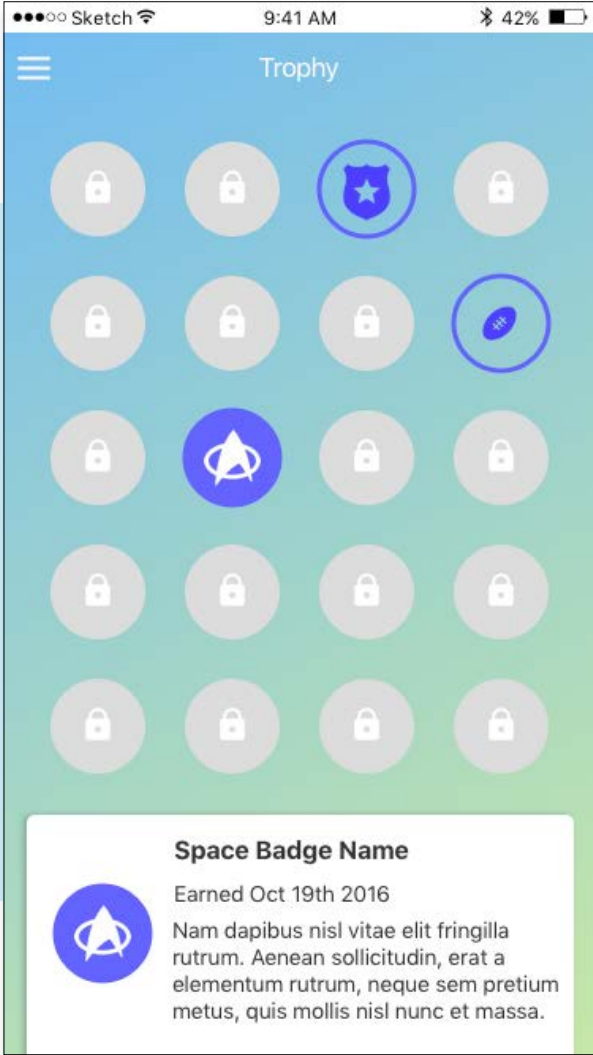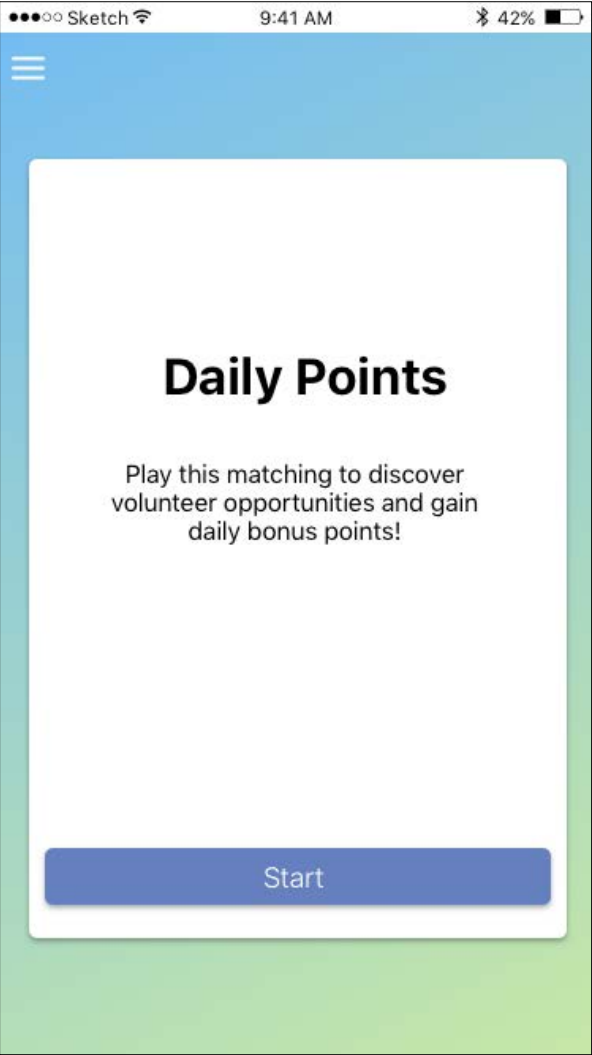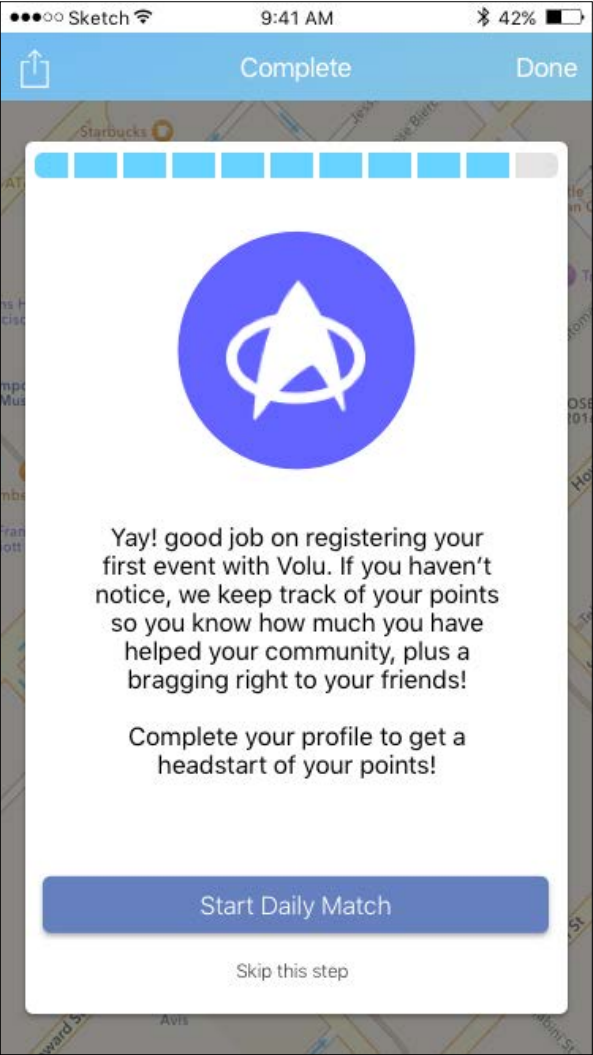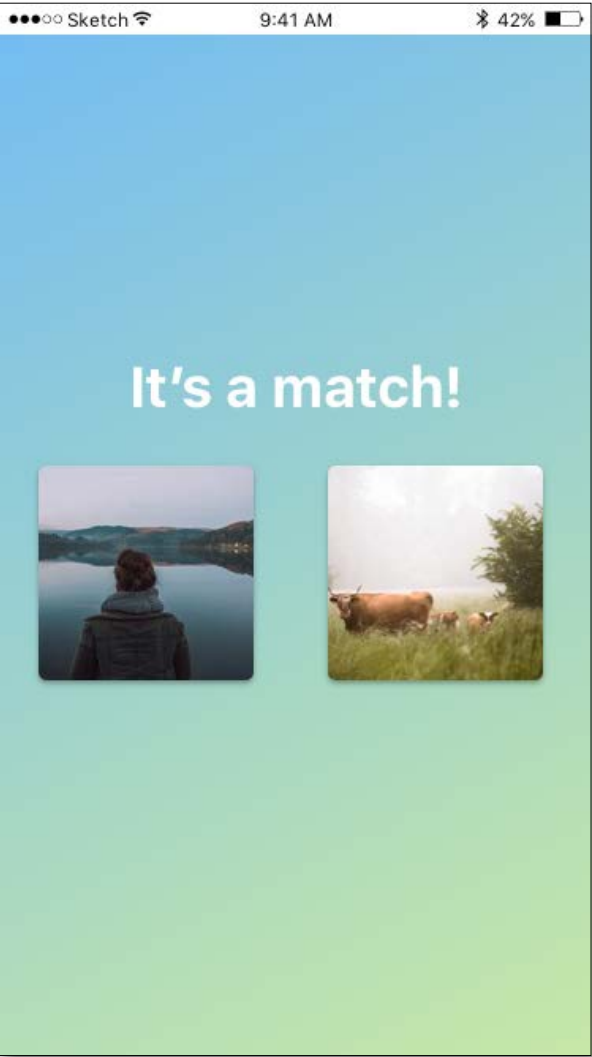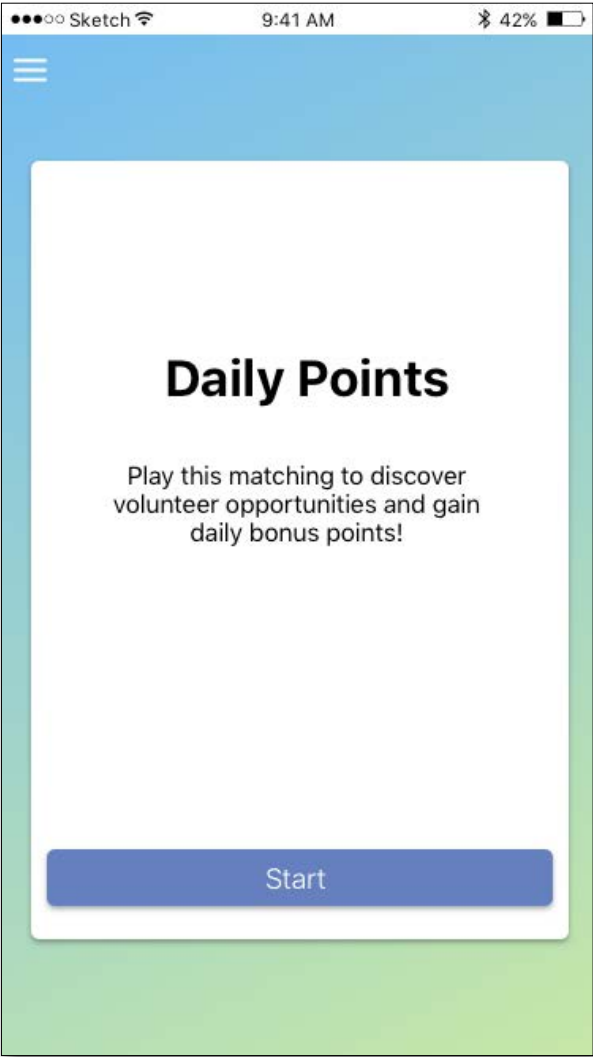
DAILY MATCH

Fun experience of searching for volunteering opportunities

To make the volunteering search process less like 'work', daily match feature is implemented for user to find opportunities through an entertaining game.

There would be 10 rounds of binary selection. The user would select one card that they prefer. Through the process of deduction, the system would present the user with events that match their preferences the most.

Daily Points

Play this matching to discover volunteer opportunities and gain daily bonus points!

Start

It's a match!

Back   Done

Special Event Volunteer

Rosmand Gifford Zoo

Oct 12th 10:00-12:00

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Ut pretium pretium tempor. Ut eget imperdiet neque. In volutpat ante semper diam molestie, et aliquam erat.

About Rosmand Gifford Zoo,
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Ut pretium pretium tempor. Ut eget imperdiet neque. In volutpat ante semper diam molestie, et aliquam erat.

Sign Up

Special Event Volunteer

Rosmand Gifford Zoo
Oct 12th 10:00-12:00

Nam dapibus nisl vitae elit fringilla rutrum. Aenean sollicitudin, erat a elementum rutrum, neque sem pretium metus.