The Design Challenge

For CHI 2014 we were asked to design an object, interface, system, or service intended to help develop and share self-awareness, understanding or appreciation for bodydata.

Focused on Fitness Motivation

The open ended design challenge allowed us great freedom in choosing a project we were passionate about. We performed research through the CDC on obesity and physical activity in the U.S and questioned whether mobile fitness applications could do a better job of motivating or creating entertaining fitness experiences.

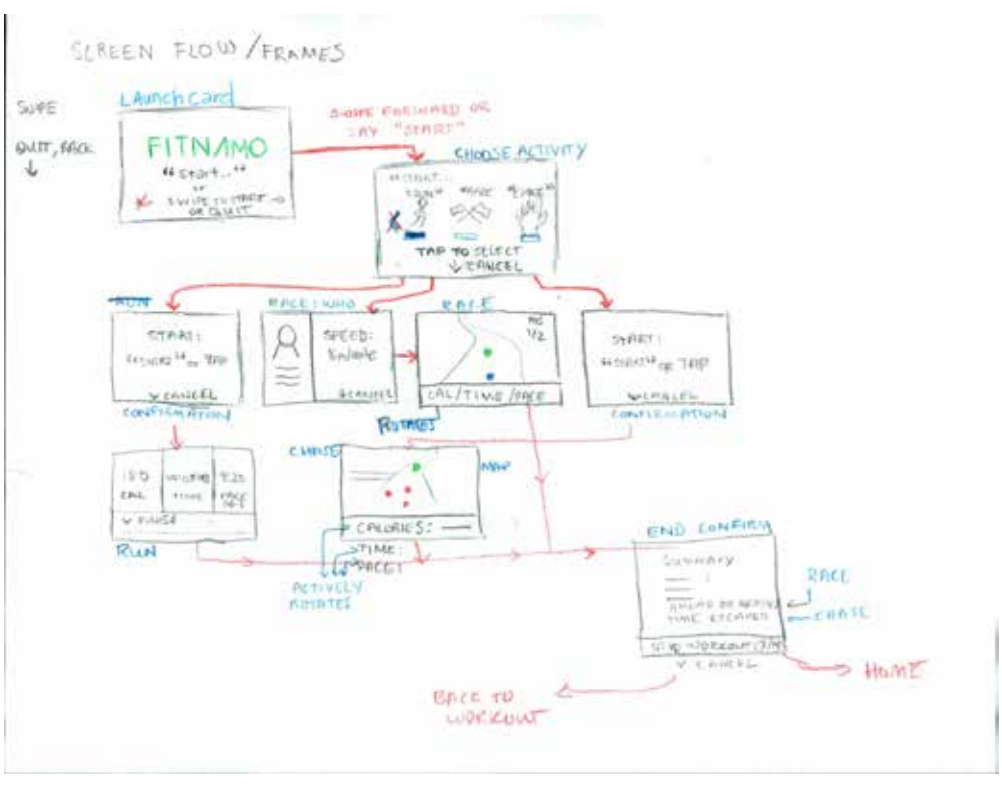
Google Glass

While it has yet to gain mass consumer adoption, Google Glass makes sense for specialized applications, like in the case with fitness. It's hands free and at the time, was catching momentum in the wearables market. It is a great platform to explore different possibilities with apps and was the perfect platform for CHI.

Researching Glass

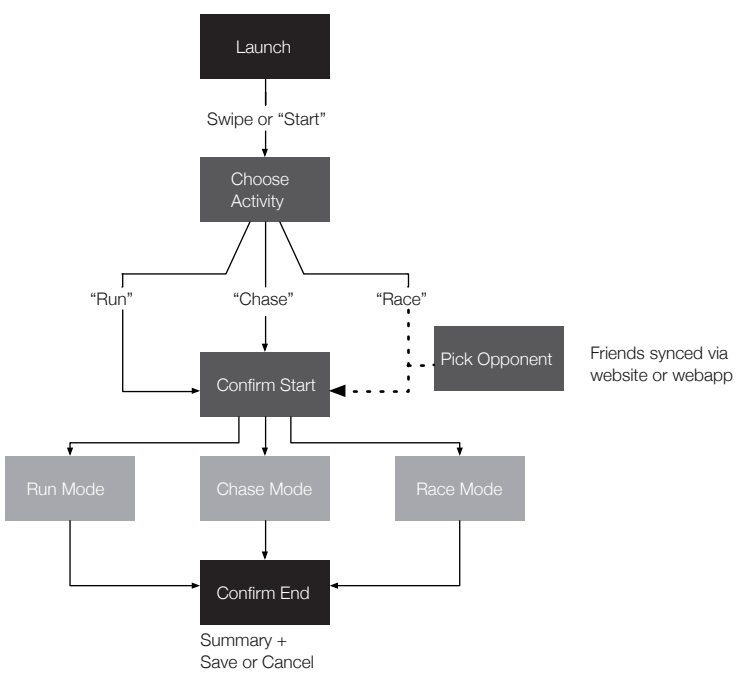
To start, our team was unfamiliar with Glass. We performed research on Google's documentation for Glass, taking note of gestures, best practices, and design patterns. We aimed to stay consistent with the established Google Glass language. The display itself is small and sits in the upper right corner out of a user's line of sight. The best example I can give is imagining where the brim is when wearing a baseball cap.

With Glass, it seemed to be an exercise in prioritizing information. This is the pattern with Glass - showing concise information at the right time. Even Google recommends a "fire-and-forget" approach, where users can take actions quickly and resume what they were doing. This influenced our experience flows greatly.



Experience and Flow

To validate our experience flows and ideas for the app, we regularly consulted with our peers. We also conducted two interviews with Ph.D students studying human centered design, who had experience in health metric UIs, and Glass itself. From our findings, we found great support for the app, but were warned about the possibilities of games being too immersive and thus dangerous, since Glass is so close to the senses.



Making Navigation Simple

The biggest design challenge was making sure the app was easy to navigate, and that users could get from point A to B easily, with either trackpad gestures or voice. Granted, we kept the number of "cards" to a minimum, so this made our job a bit easier. In the end, we were happy with the number of cards, the interactions to navigate, and the overall simplicity of the app.

Result and Looking to the Future

The result of our hard work with Fitnamo landed us at CHI 2014's Student Design Competition, where we were selected as Semi-Finalists. The judges were particularly fond of the "chase" mode, which we detailed as using adaptive A.I. to create a challenge for users of all experience levels. The race mode was primarily aimed at fitness motivation, and was a key feature of our app for the design challenge.

Looking back on the project, I learned an extensive amount about prioritizing information, experience flows, and how to design for new technologies.

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