

Step 1: User Population

For this assignment, I chose to work with two college students majoring in Computer Science at UW-Madison. They are my friends who I met in class. Since freshman year, we have often talked about how to search for job opportunities. In the process, they stressed the importance of using social networking apps for job searching. So, I decided to explore further the relationship between SNS apps and job searching.

One participant was born in the United States, while the other comes from China. I tried to select participants from different nationalities because I thought their job search methods would vary. For example, international students may also look for job opportunities in their country due to some disadvantages, such as visa requirements.

The American participant, nicknamed *P1*, is a sophomore at UW-Madison. His main interest these days is to get an internship in the summer of 2022. He puts significant importance on managing his network and expects to get a job through networking. To achieve this high-level goal, he uses SNS a lot, such as LinkedIn or Facebook.

The other participant, nicknamed *P2*, comes from China and is an international student on an F-1 visa. He is a rising sophomore and wants to get a job in the States. In the worst case, he will have to come back to China due to visa problems. So, he may be more desperate for job opportunities. His high-level goal is to gather information and expand his skills through SNS.

Step 2: Design of Cultural Probe

Figure 1 illustrates the components of my probe. It includes instruction, diaries, in-depth analysis, timely quests, star rating sheets, and to-do lists, as shown in Figure 2 below.

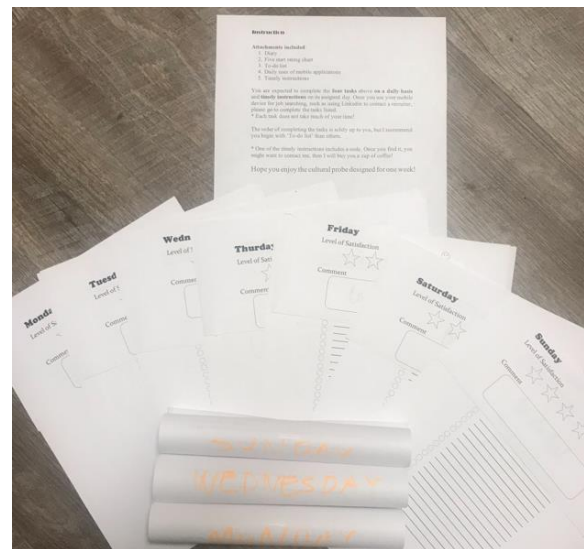


Figure 1: These items are served in a box with snacks.

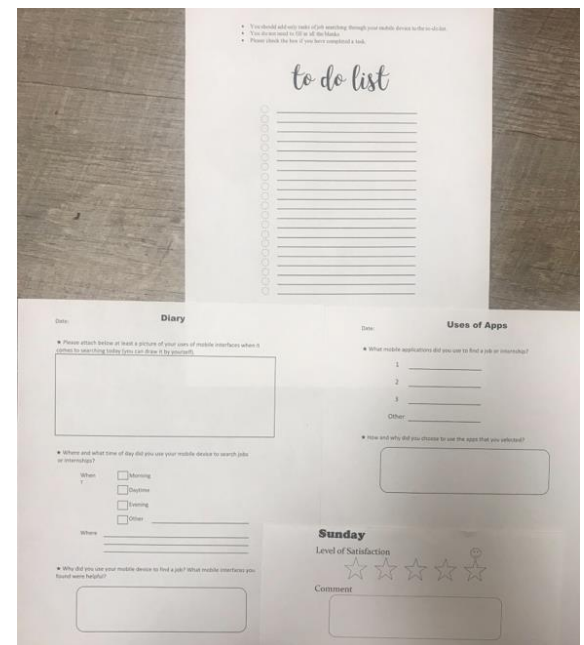


Figure 2: These tasks must be performed daily, different from timely quests.

The instruction briefly describes how to perform tasks and the observation goals, such that participants will record high-quality data.

My participants will also write every day what to do with job searching through mobile interfaces. Then, they will answer the questions from diaries and in-depth analysis.

Looking at diaries, I expect to see when, where, and why the participants use social networking systems for job

searching. They may want to attach at least a picture of their work with a brief description.

The in-depth analysis report focuses on the technical uses of the apps and investigates what pros and cons exist in the process.

In addition, timely quests point the users in the right direction. In other words, it prevents them from deviating from my expectations. For example, the first quest suggests exploring SNS apps installed on one's device and seeing their possibilities of being used for job searching.

The last step is to evaluate their use of mobile interfaces for job searching. This evaluation process will make it easier for you to recognize how helpful social media is to find a job.

Step 3: Present, Probe, Collect

For quality control, the number of questions on each component is less than or equal to three. The questions clearly show what form of data is proper, and the instruction specifies the purpose of this study. For quality control, the number of questions on each component is less than or equal to three. The questions clearly show what form of data is proper, and the instruction specifies the purpose of this study. I also met my participants three times and discussed what kinds of answers I expected.

During the first meeting, I encouraged my participants to explore as many functions of mobile interfaces as possible to gain a large snippet of data. For example, they may follow companies of interest through a social media app and observe how it satisfies their needs. In addition, we talked about how to write answers in the right way and the goal of this observation.

At the second meeting, I reviewed the progress of the participants' probe activities and gave advice of how to answer the entries properly if necessary. After that, we briefly discussed the roles of social media for job searching based on

the finds. Facebook, for example, is a powerful tool for job searching because of many promotions of job offers. We will discuss this in the next segment in detail.

At the last meeting, I listened to my participants' experience of using my probe. Then, I debriefed them on how I would use the data collected to clarify the relationship between social media and job searching.

Lastly, to protect participants from getting bored, I hid a secret code for a cup of latte on one of the timely quests, and I attached a chocolate bar on a quarter of the rating paper. In the end, I also conveyed my thanks for their participation in my project.

Step 4: Analyze Data

The data collected in the previous step shed light on why my participants chose to use social media applications for job search, positive or negative effects, level of satisfaction, etc. I organized all the findings in an excel sheet, as shown in Figure 3 below.

in-depth diary		rate	remark
breakdowns			
- some sns apps required payment - UI of some apps, such as glassdoor, appeared confusing to me (prolly not just familiar?)		****	- some social networking apps appear to be designed for job searching, while others are not. - imo, one of the significant advantages of using SNS for job searching is easy interaction between users. More specifically, I could get help easily from other users who were also looking for jobs through apps. The mobile environment appears to be fit well these characteristics.
- advanced search needs more options - not included visa sponsorship requirement - filter was not applied perfectly - sometimes return unrelated jobs		***	- applied a filter to show software engineer intern positions, but marketing research position was returned - convenient to search various jobs easily through mobile sns apps - nice for sns to have job promotions/ads

Figure 3: This Excel sheet describes all the findings from the probing observation.

In Figures 4 and 5, I organized ideas by topic using affinity diagramming. I also designed an artifact model showing the technical aspects of using social network applications for job searching. I based the model on the social media app LinkedIn.

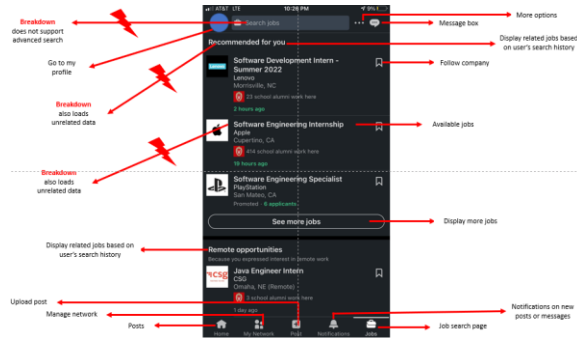


Figure 4 This artifact model illustrates an aspect of how to find a job through LinkedIn.

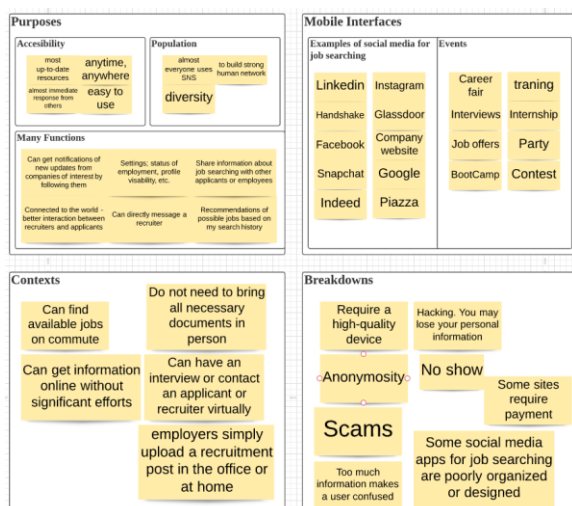


Figure 5: This affinity diagram illustrates various ideas based on the data collected through probing.

In addition, the following diagram shows how job seekers and recruiters interact through SNS – Figure 6.

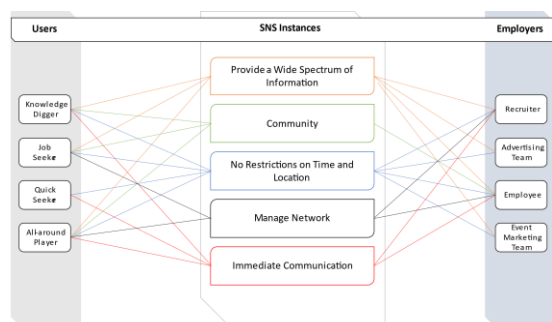


Figure 6: This conceptual model shows the relationship between users and employers through SNS.

With all these kinds of data, when extracting concepts from the data, noticeable features like breakdowns were marked in different colors or bold, as shown in Figure 3, then written on post-it notes. After that, I categorized them with similar meanings, as shown in Figure 5. I reflected these characteristics in the artifact model.

In a nutshell, my participants use social media for job searching for many reasons. First, the users can communicate directly with a recruiter and receive a relatively immediate response. Next, they can gather information from other users who use the apps or job search-related information posted on the apps. In addition, the job seekers form a bond and motivate each other through community systems of SNS. Similarly, they can manage their network easily through SNS. Finally, considering when and where my participants performed the activities, their use of mobile interfaces for job searching is not affected by time and location.

SNS, however, does not always work well when searching for a job. From its technical aspects, for example, it does not support decent advanced search or filter. It is also clear that SNS is susceptible to attacks by hackers. The following stories suggest new designs to rectify these issues.

“John is a freshman and wants to build his career path early. Since he doesn’t know where to start, he is looking for someone who can answer his questions in person. Unfortunately, his friends are so young that they don’t know much about job searching, and John feels it’s too much to go to talk to a specialist. So, he uses SNS to look around the right person. However, according to the data collected from the probe, social media manifested weakness in advanced searching; it does not support advanced

search by location. John gets in trouble with finding people nearby through the apps. A simple new design, such as filtering by location, might significantly improve their experience.”

“Some users like John in the previous story look for job opportunities using SNS. As part of the process, they may want to join a group or club found on the apps, in which people share information about job searching. According to the data collected from the probe, SNS supports various powerful tools to explore groups. Despite these advantages, lots of fake clubs involving ads or hacking are waiting to fish the users. Adding a simple system for a user to rate a club might significantly resolve this problem.”

Step 5: Final Reflection

In conclusion, we observed how conducting a cultural probe played out effectively to examine the effect of SNS on job search activities – mobile situations. Since my participants record data, the easiest part of the probe observation was to gather data. On the other hand, I found it slightly hard to direct my participants to record data to my expectations. So, I had to brief them on my thoughts throughout the three meetings. Fortunately, my participants communicated the information I was hoping for by asking lots of questions from the start. Surprisingly, a user presented new design possibilities for the observed discomfort, even though he was never asked. So, I reflected on his idea when investigating new design opportunities by plotting a story.

When devising the first draft of the probe, each component had to have five questions. But after making it, I soon discovered that some of the questions were duplicated, and the total number of tasks was high. Therefore, I shortened the number of questions for each component to a maximum of three questions and removed all unnecessary questions.

Instead, I offered more clarification by debriefing the type of data that I expected.

I believe that my overall experience with the probe was decent, but there remains room for improvement in this probe. It seems that I missed including a few essential questions in my package. For example, this probe never asked my participants to think about possible ways to resolve the breakdowns they found. In addition, it would have been much better if I explained how to take a phone screenshot, then upload or print and attach it to the paper. By fixing these errors, I could improve this process.