



# UX Case Study

Time Request Off Application

By: Kimberley Johnson  
[www.kimjaydot.com](http://www.kimjaydot.com)

## PetSmart | Anything for Pets!

PetSmart is a large retail corporation specializing in pets and has numerous locations across the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. It sells food for your pet's nutrition, provides veterinarian care, sells products such as bedding, toys, and grooming essentials to keep your pet clean, offers grooming services to style your pet, sells live animals, and has adoption centers.

People who want to work in the pet industry often seek out PetSmart, which is ranked one of the best companies to work for because of its care for employees' well-being and its values regarding animals.

## Project Description

### Employees at PetSmart Face Challenges with Requesting Leave/Time Off

As employees of PetSmart, we use many applications to help us perform our duties and manage our personal tasks effectively. However, one application that we need is a dedicated in-house application/online system for employees to request leave or time off.

At my retail store, we still rely on filling out paper forms to request leave, which is an outdated practice. We don't have a request time off digital application that would pair nicely with our other applications for employees and management to use at our convenience.

## Problem Statement

### The Challenge

The absence of a digital application to request leave/vacation at PetSmart forces employees to rely on paper forms, leading to accessibility issues, errors, and poor communication around time-off approvals.

## Solution

### Creating a Digital Application to Request Leave or Off

- PetSmart will provide its employees with a way to request leave and time off digitally easily, and they will have access to other features within this app.
- The application will allow employees to request their type of off, which could be for personal, sick, bereavement, or other reasons.
- Employees can receive company news of dates they can't request off due to blackout dates from retail stores and show holidays, so employees can plan their vacation.
- There will be a messaging system for managers and employees to discuss their leave.
- Employees will have an overview of their accumulated vacation hours.

## UX Goals

### What are our objectives?

- Understand the frustrations PetSmart employees experience when completing paper forms to request leave and during the approval process.
- Develop a digital application to streamline the leave request process and improve efficiency for both employees and management.
- Gather feedback from employees and managers to ensure the digital solution meets user needs and aligns with existing workflows.

# User Experience (UX) Methodologies

## What will be doing?

We will conduct in-person user interviews and record videos as part of our qualitative research. The moderator will also take notes and prepare a comprehensive analysis to present to stakeholders.

## Key Insights

### Challenges of Using Traditional Paper Forms to Request Leave/Time Off

Employees at PetSmart faced challenges when filling out traditional paper forms to request leave or time off.

#### *PetSmart #1121 Store (Pearland, Texas)*

- The forms are located at a distance to walk to and get to, which is a barrier for people who have mobility limitations.
- Managers may be unable to decipher your handwriting and put the request wrong.
- There is no communication between the manager and the employee when a request is granted, and the only way to find out if your leave has been approved is to check your schedule on the bulletin board.
- Employees experienced their leave being forgotten because managers misplaced the employee's paper forms.

## Recommendations

### What We Suggest

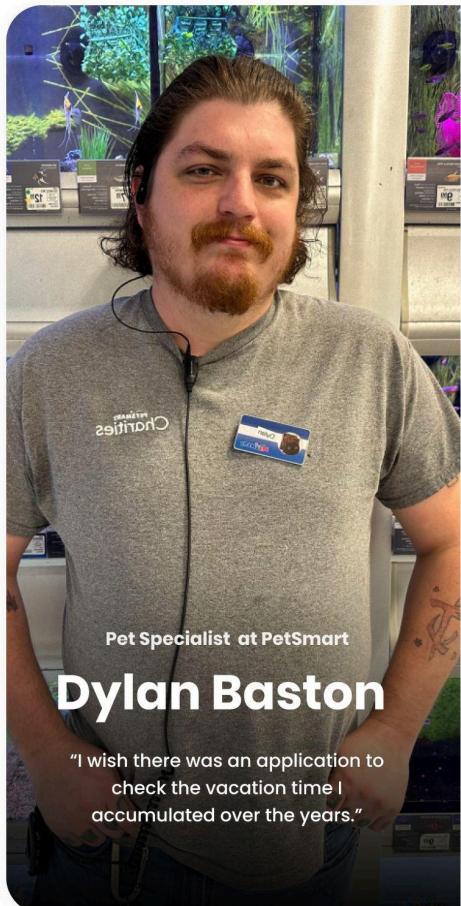
We recommend developing the PetSmart Request Time Off application exclusively for mobile and tablet devices as a native app for iOS and Android. This approach enables employees to log in on company tablets during work hours or install the app on their personal devices to request leave anytime.

A mobile-first, in-house development strategy will allow PetSmart to:

- Stay current with modern design standards
- Reduce reliance on third-party solutions, cutting expenses
- Leverage internal resources for integration with other PetSmart systems
- Gather continuous feedback from employees, stakeholders, and the development team to drive improvements

## Personas

### Persona A: Dylan B.



#### ABOUT

Dylan accrued a substantial amount of paid time off over 3 years at PetSmart, which conveniently carries over annually. Juggling both full-time work and school, Dylan finds himself overwhelmed and is eager to take a break from his demanding routine. He set his sights on a much-deserved November vacation in city of Austin, Texas, where he plans to embark on a three-week camping adventure.

#### NEEDS

- Accessible online form
- Ability to access shift information on both phone and computer
- Centralized platform to monitor accurate time and approval statuses

#### FRUSTRATIONS

- Unsure about number of hours accrued during shifts
- Regular management check ins with to confirm shift times
- Hassle of handwritten paper forms when handwriting isn't a strong suit

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE	28
GENDER	Male
FAMILY	Single, with 2 pets
LOCATION	Houston, TX
TENURE	3 years

#### VALUES

TIME	EFFICIENCY
COMMUNICATION	
ACCURACY	

## Persona B: Dollie R.



"I want a tool that will allow me to streamline employees' leave effectively."

### ABOUT

With over 10 years of experience at PetSmart, Dollie has been instrumental in leading one of the highest-rated sales stores in Pearland, Texas. However, she often feels overwhelmed due to the manual paperwork involved in her company's outdated vacation request system, which hinders her ability to focus on other tasks. Dollie is seeking improved methods to help her be more organized.

### NEEDS

- Online system that allows her to review employee requests for time off across her devices
- Swift vacation approval process for managers

### FRUSTRATIONS

- Misplacement of request-off forms from employees across different offices
- Time wasted with filling time-request forms multiple times
- Slow approval responses given her responsibilities

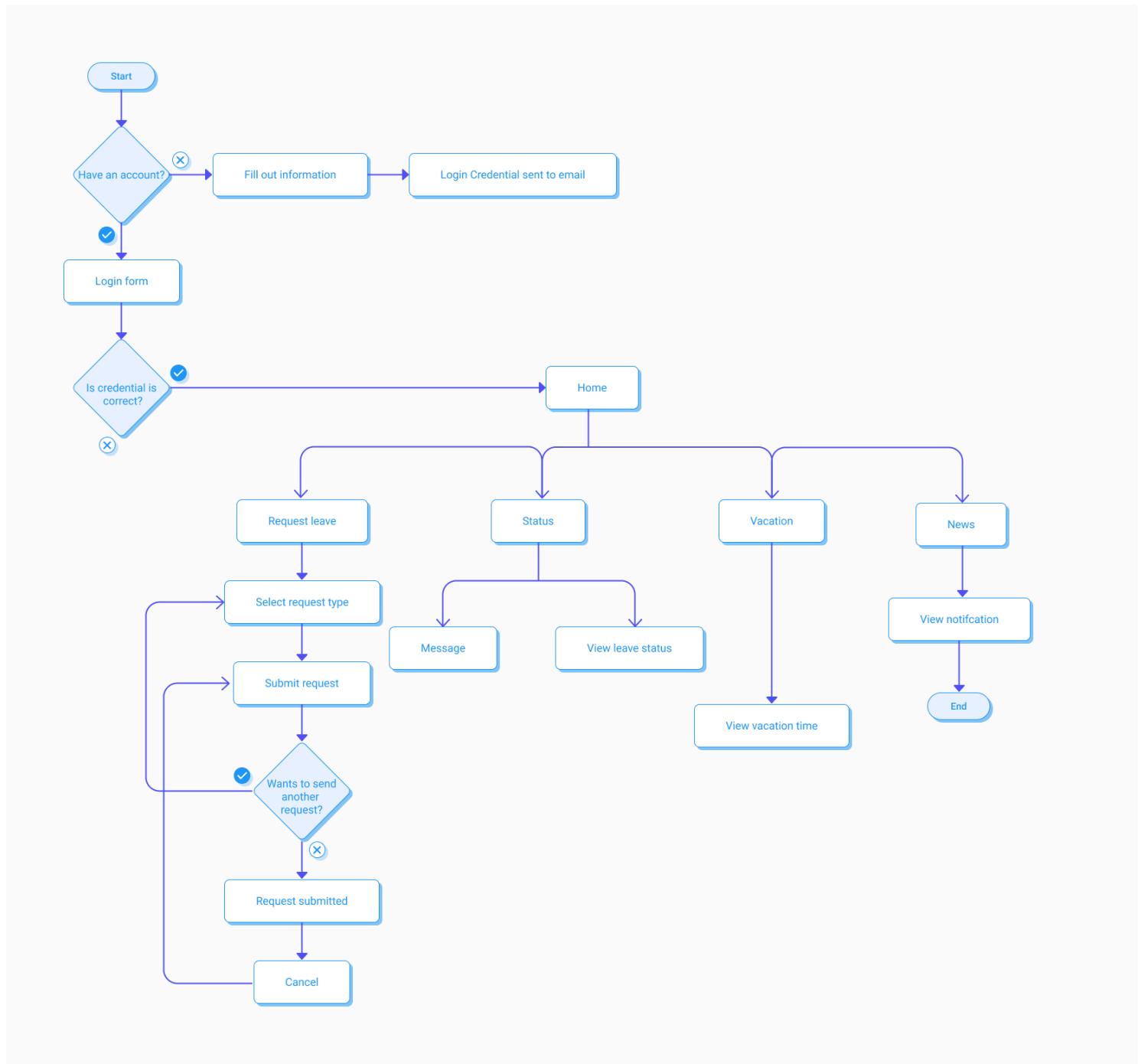
### DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE	34
GENDER	Female
FAMILY	Married 2 kids and 2 pets
LOCATION	League City, TX
TENURE	10 years

### VALUES

RESPONSIVENESS  
EFFICIENCY  
SIMPLICITY

# Flowchart Diagram: How the User Navigates



# Brainstorming: Paper Sketches of Time Request Off App

1. Sign In (Fig 1)



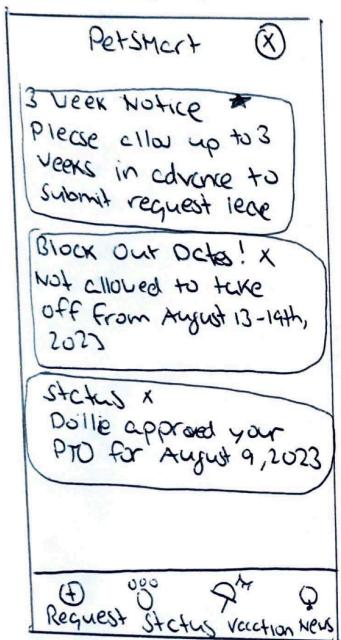
2. Sign Up (Fig 2)



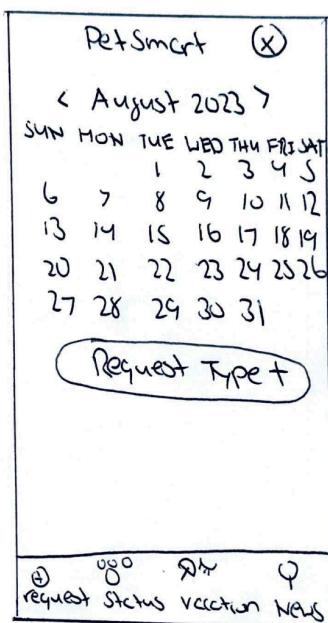
3. Sent Employee ID (Fig 3)



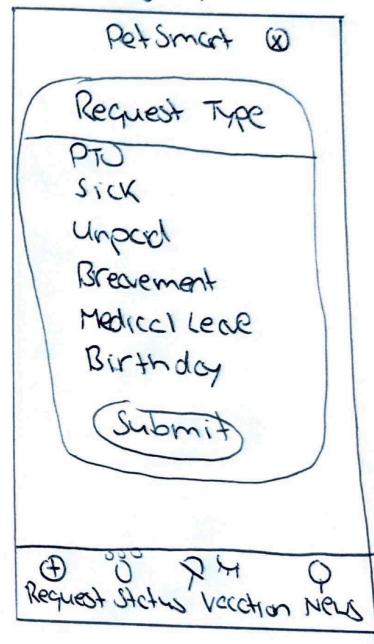
4. News (Fig 4)



5. Request Type (Fig 5)

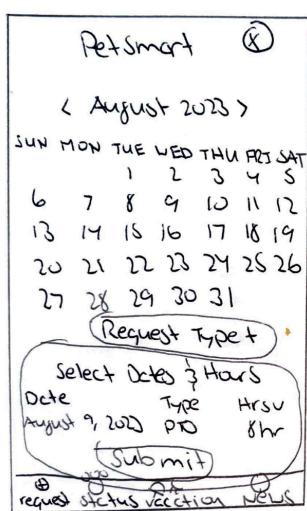


6. Request Submission (Fig 6)

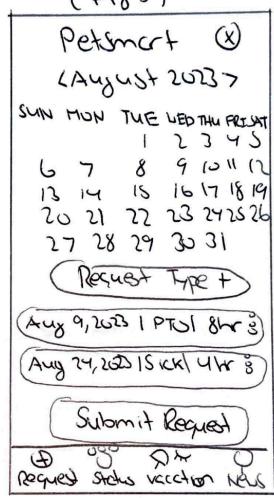


# Brainstorming: Paper Sketches of Time Request Off App - Continued

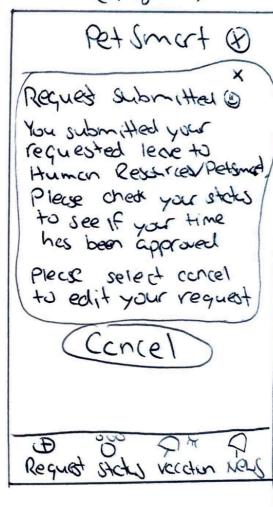
7. Request Dates (Fig 7)



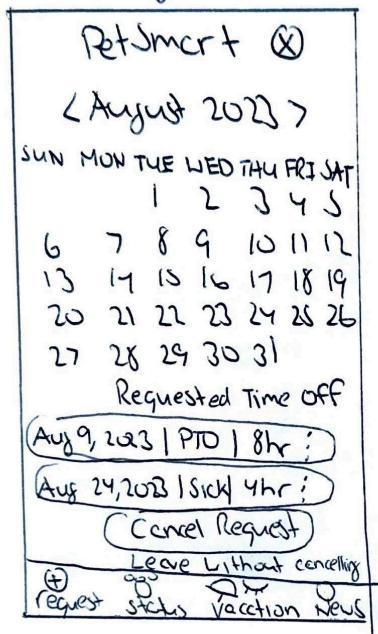
8. Submit Request (Fig 8)



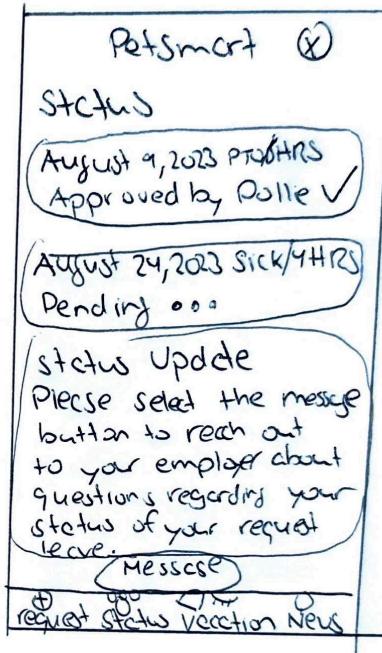
9. Request Submitted (Fig 9)



10. Cancel Request (Fig 10)



11. Status (Fig 11)

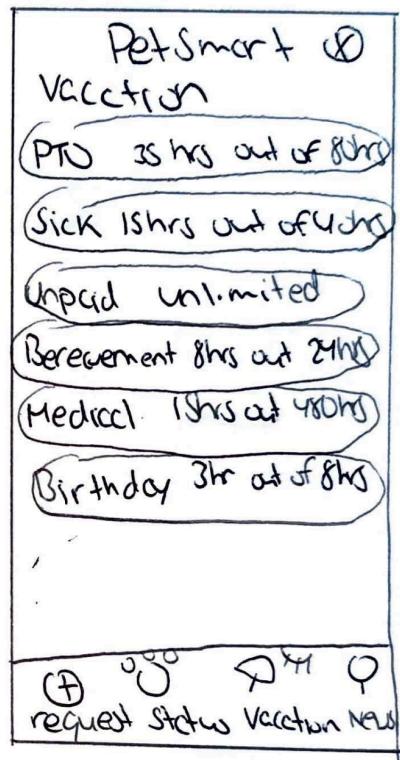


## Brainstorming: Paper Sketches of Time Request Off App - Continued

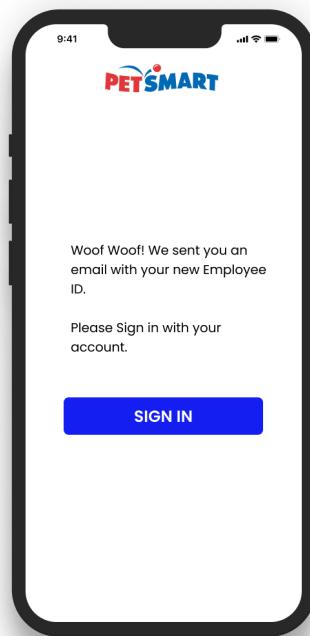
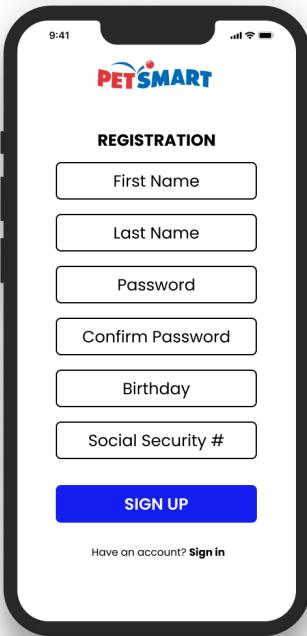
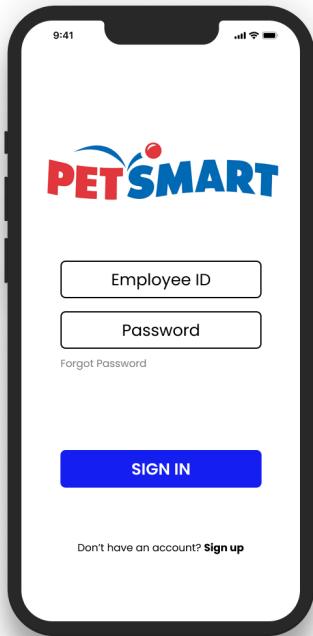
12. Messaging (Fig 12)



13. Vacation (Fig 13)



# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - Sign-In Process



**Sign In (Fig 1)**

**Sign Up (Fig 2)**

**Sent Employee ID (Fig 3)**

## Sign In (Fig 1)

When first employed, PetSmart assigns you an employee ID. In another software called Otka, the employee can create a password to sign in.

## Sign Up (Fig 2)

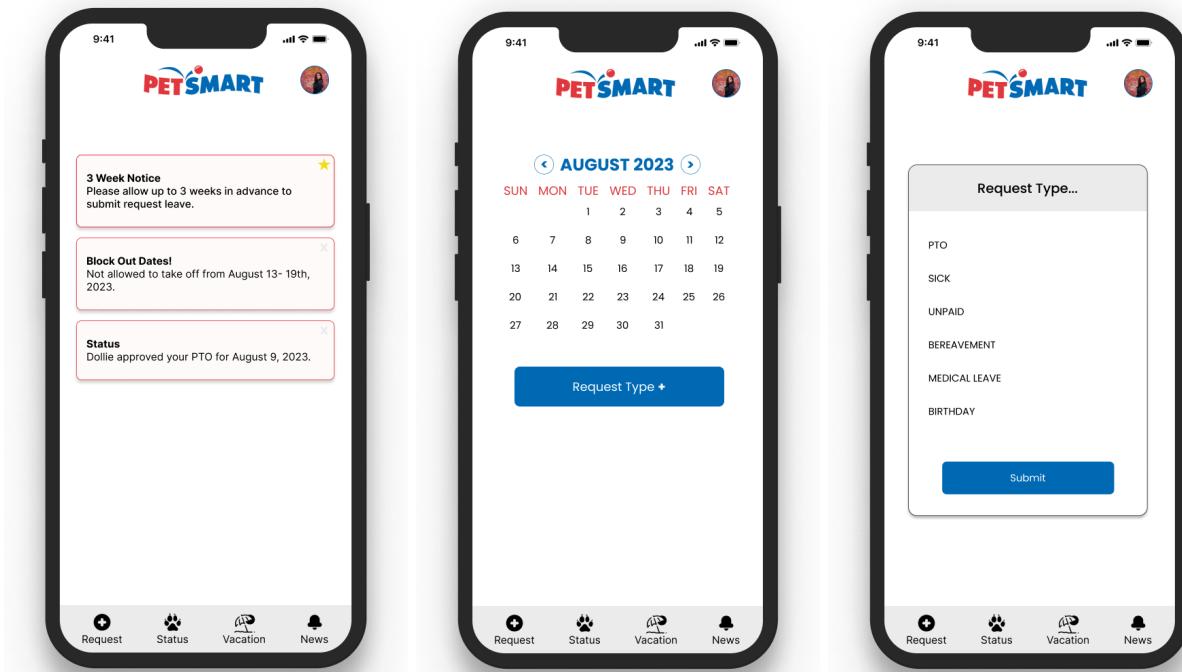
Since the Time Request Application is used on mobile and desktop devices, employees can register their accounts by filling out their first and last name, password, birthday, and social security.

## Sent Employee ID (Fig 3)

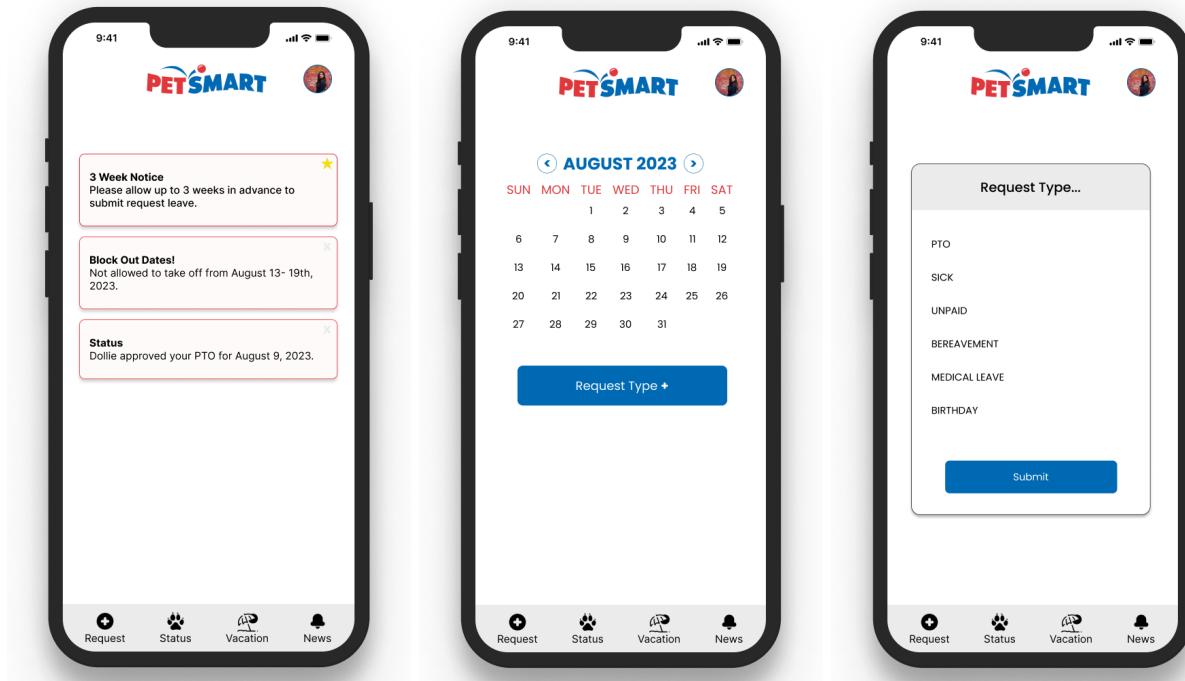
Once the employee inputs their data, they will receive a notification alerting the employee that their Employee ID and temporary password will be sent to their PetSmart email. The employee can select the sign-in button to log into the application and sign in with their credentials.

**View Interactive Prototype:** [Select Here](#)

# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - News & Requesting Type Off



# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - News & Requesting Type Off - Continued



**News (Fig 4)**

**Request Type (Fig 5)**

**Request Submission (Fig 6)**

## Request Type (Fig 5)

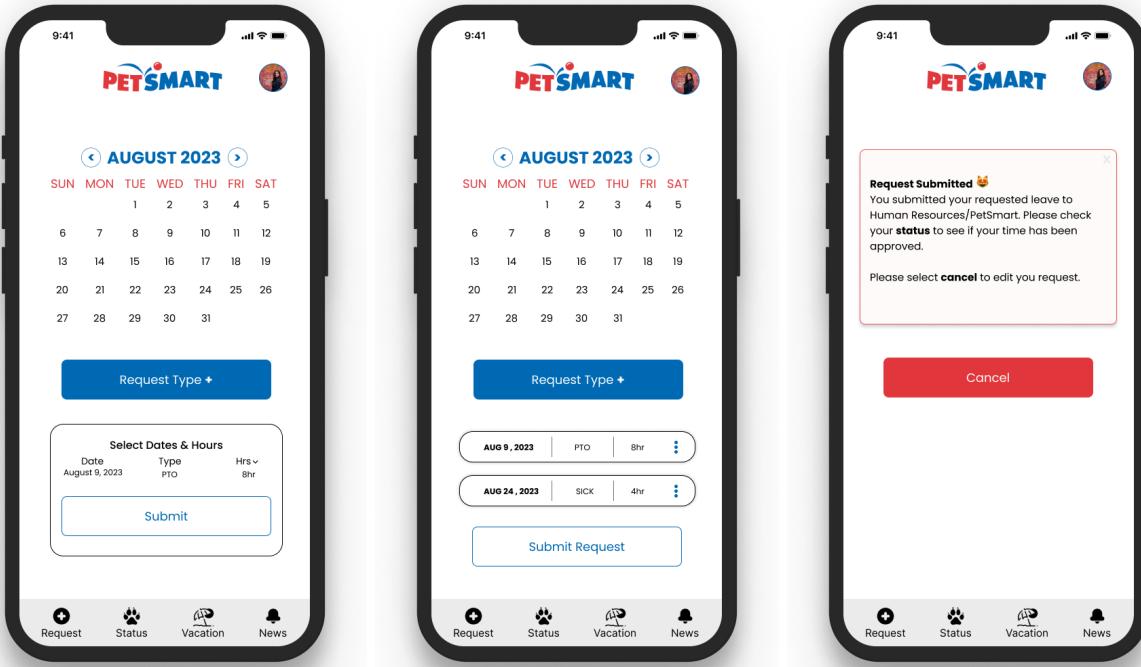
When the employee selects the request button from the navigation, they will see a monthly calendar view and a request type button. They can select what type of leave they want to take.

## Request Submission (Fig 6)

After selecting the request type button, the employee will see options for the type of leave they can select from. Once they choose an option, they will select the submit button.

View Interactive Prototype: [Select Here](#)

# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - Requesting Dates and Time, Submit Request, and Request Submitted



**Request Dates (Fig 7)**

**Submit Request (Fig 8)**

**Request Submitted (Fig 9)**

## Request Dates (Fig 7)

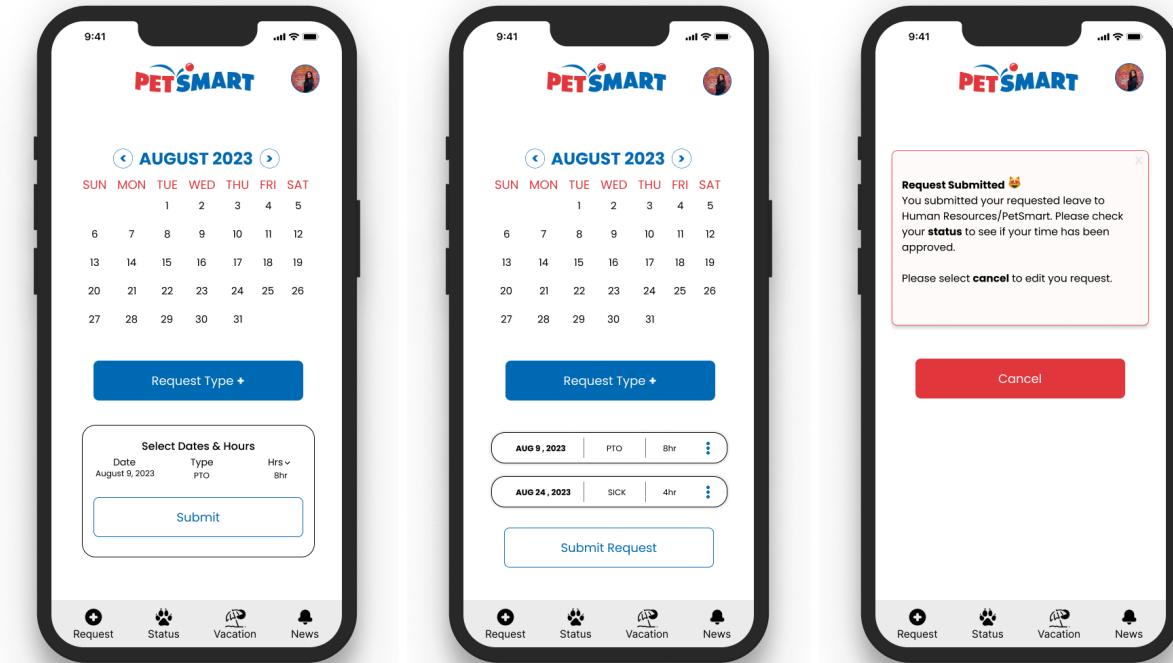
The employee will be able to select a date from the calendar that corresponds with the request type choice they selected. In this example, the employee selected August 9th and Paid Time Off. The employee can adjust the number of hours in the drop-down menu. In this example, the employee selected 8 hours. Once they are done, they will select the submit button.

## Submit Request (Fig 8)

The employee will see a view of their requested leaves and can select the request type button to choose another leave. Once the employee is done, they will select the submit request button.

**View Interactive Prototype:** [Select Here](#)

# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - Requesting Dates and Time, Submit Request, and Request Submitted - Continued



Request Dates (Fig 7)

Submit Request (Fig 8)

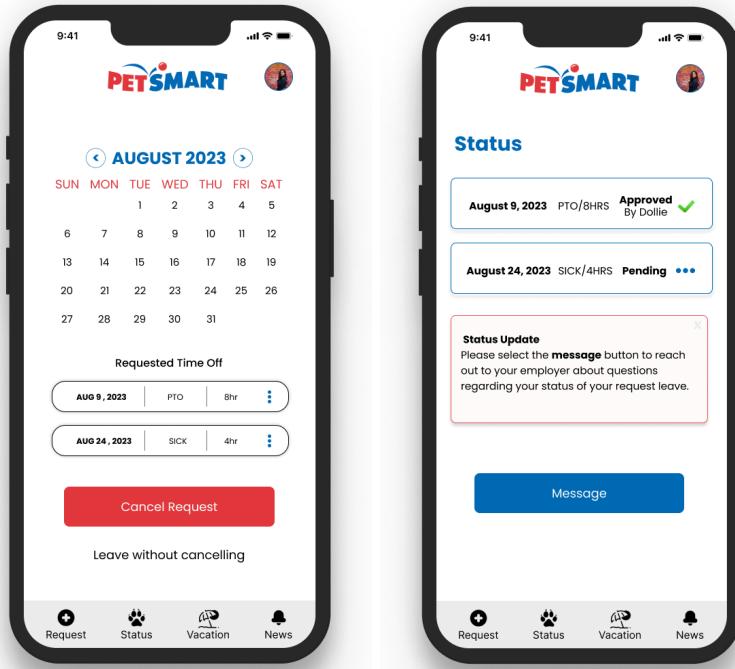
Request Submitted (Fig 9)

## Request Submitted (Fig 9)

The employee will be notified that their request has been submitted to Human Resources/PetSmart. They can select cancel if they want to edit their requested leave.

View Interactive Prototype: [Select Here](#)

# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - Cancel Request and Status



Cancel Request (Fig10)

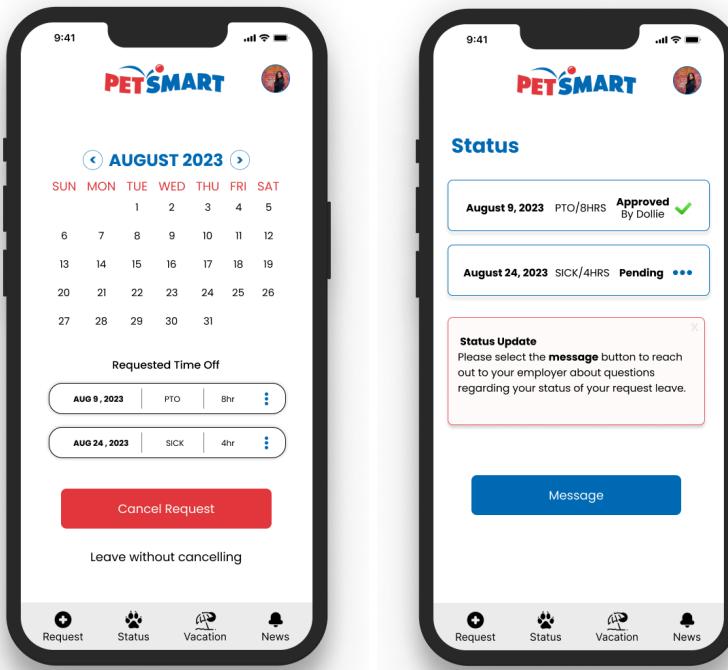
Status (Fig 11)

## Cancel Request (Fig10)

If the employee selects the cancel button from **Request Submitted (Fig 9)**, they will be able to see the selected dates, type of off, and hours they made and be able to cancel the request. Once they click the cancel request button, the employee will be returned to **Submit Request (Fig 8)**. Employees can select the vertical blue 3 dots to edit or delete their requested time off, and they can resubmit their request. The employee can also select the text “Leave without Cancelling”, which will take them to the News section.

View Interactive Prototype: [Select Here](#)

# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - Cancel Request and Status - Continued



Cancel Request (Fig10)

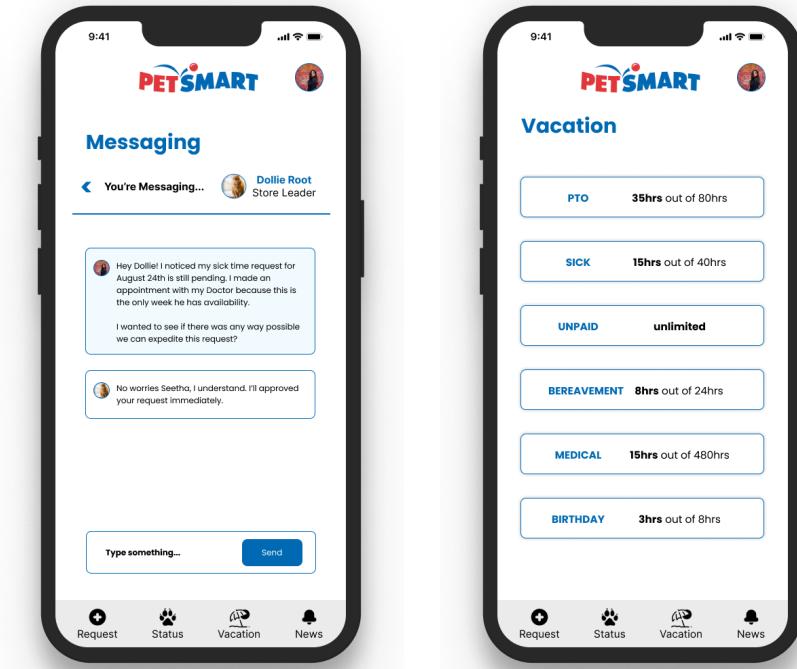
Status (Fig 11)

## Status (Fig 11)

Once the user reads the notification from **Request Submitted (Fig 9)** that their request for leave has been submitted, they can check their leave status by selecting the status button. In the examples, the employee requested August 9th as PTO, which their Store Leader, Dollie approved. However, their leave for August 24th is still pending. On the bottom, they will see a status update with a message button below to contact Human Resources/PetSmart to inquire about their time off.

View Interactive Prototype: [Select Here](#)

# Wireframes: High-Fidelity - Messaging and Vacation



**Messaging (Fig 12)**

**Vacation (Fig 13)**

## **Messaging (Fig 12)**

When the employee selects the message button from (**Figure D-11**), they can select their point of contact to message them about their time off or other questions. In this example, Seetha, the employee, is messaging her Store Leader, Dollie, about an urgent matter regarding her pending sick leave on August 24th.

## **Vacation (Fig 13)**

When the user selects the vacation button, they will see an overview of the hours accumulated for different types of leave.

**View Interactive Prototype:** [Select Here](#)

# Reflection

## What I learned

As a Pet Associate at my local PetSmart store, I experience the same frustrations as other employees who request leave on the paper form only to find out later that their paper was misplaced and their time off wasn't granted. It's not convenient for me to check my work schedule on a board when schedules are finalized a week ahead, as I need to be prepared for my vacation and know ahead of time that my leave has been approved.

As a UX Designer and researcher, I learned that it is essential to conduct thorough research to uncover what works and what doesn't, creating a digital online application that alleviates employee frustrations and streamlines the approval process for employee leave from the management side.

I hope to see PetSmart adopt a digital solution that integrates with our current application, allowing employees to request time off online instead of using traditional paper forms.



This project is dedicated to my Smokey, who passed away on May 12, 2022. Within the following year, I pursued a Master's degree in UX, having been interested in this field since 2010.