

## Heuristic Evaluation of Coalease

### 1. Problem/Prototype Description

We evaluated the medium-fi prototype of the Coalease app, which is an app that helps people find like-minded people in their network to co-lease spaces/properties with.

### 2. Violations Found

**1. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 3 / Found by: A/B/D**

When signing a co-lease, what is the procedure for communicating when to sign the lease? Is it asynchronous, so that separate parties/individuals are able to sign a lease whenever they would like? If so, how would users be notified of a lease being signed on another party's end (or any lease updates)?

Fix: Include notifications, user statuses, and suggestions/tooltips to help users understand how & when a lease is signed and/or cancelled.

**2. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 2 / Found by: C**

As a user, you are looking for co-leasers through the app, it would be interesting if you could see a metric of other people that people you want to coalesce with are talking to, whether that is a number or a list of names. I think it would prevent confusion and make it transparent if people back out of agreements. Ex. If I think that talks are going really well with Brad but Brad is actually about to sign a lease with somebody else then I have no way of knowing.

Fix: Add transparency about who else people are talking to on their profiles and how far along they are.

**3. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 1 / Found by: C**

This is super small, but when I first logged in because there's no difference in color between the background of the app and the button bar, for a second I was a little unsure of what page I was on until I clicked onto the next icon and the color filling shifted. I think it's because the icon looks like the type that's always filled in because of the thick sides, I can't quite figure it out. It's a super small problem--maybe just my eyes specific.

Fix: Change the styling of the house icon so that it's easier to distinguish it as a filled in icon or add a difference between the background of the toolbar and the rest of the screen so it's easier to distinguish.

**4. H2: Match between System and World / Severity 1 / Found by: D**

The first icon, which shows the home icon, leads users to the page where they can swipe on other co-leasers. Most would associate finding other users with a search or globe icon, whereas a home icon does not necessarily make one think of making new connections.

Fix: Change to a different icon, such as people, search, or globe

**5. H2: Match between System and World / Severity 1 / Found by: C**

The third icon, which shows the location icon, actually brings up a map and the ability to search for apartments. This could be confusing as I tend to associate the pin icon with my location such as in google maps.

Fix: Change to a search+map icon

**6. H2: Match Between System and Real World / Severity 2 / Found by: C**

Your platform is going to do a good job of showing the prospective apartments online, I think that to make it more realistic adding the option to set up a time to view the apartment and possibly coordinate with your coleasers, would be more realistic! I think most people see a place before they sign a long lease.

Fix: Add an option to schedule a viewing of apartments.

**7. H2: Match Between System and Real World / Severity 1 / Found by: B**

The button that leads to signing a lease is placed where other messaging features are often placed (e.g. sending a voice message, image, GIF, etc). In the future when more chat features are added, the signing-lease button may not belong in its current location anymore.

Fix: Consider moving the button somewhere in the top right corner, or part of a menu that drags out.

**8. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 2 / Found by: A**

The user has no way to delete chats.

Fix: On the chat page, have a settings icon that allows you to delete chats (or a trash icon that directly deletes the chat).

**9. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 3 / Found by: A**

The user has no way to block other users. Users may encounter harassment or other harmful behavior on apps, and should have a way to block/report other users if necessary.

Fix: Include a block/report button on every users' profile page.

**10. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 4 / Found by: A**

Users do not have a way to remove other users from a chat/lease. If the coaleasing group changes, users might want to remove other uses from their chat/lease.

Fix: When users click on the title of the chat, they should be taken to a page that shows the details of the chat, and allows users (or maybe an admin) to remove another user.

**11. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 4 / Found by: A**

Right now, any users can just add any other users to a lease. There should be an approval/request process to add User 2 to a lease, which User 2 should be able to approve/reject.

Fix: On the Add Coaleaser page, there should be a "send request" button, which sends a request to the other user instead of automatically adding them to the lease

**12. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 2 / Found by: B**

Users are required to swipe on the home page in order to view other profiles. Users could have more control and freedom with an additional tap-based option on the sides of the next/previous cards

Fix: allow users to tap the edges of the next/previous cards to change the current card.

**13. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 3 / Found by: D**

As of now, the user has no ability to hide their profile on the platform. They are always visible to be swiped on and contacted by other coaleasors, but they may want to make themselves not publicly visible for some period of time if they are already finalizing their lease or taking a pause from the process of signing a lease.

Fix: Add a “hide profile” function that can be turned on and off

**14. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 2 / Found by: C**

As of now, the user can only search by price range. In the real world, you would want to sort by bedrooms and bathrooms. Moreover, when it comes to coleasing not everyone is going to be comfortable with the same number of roommates or shared bathrooms.

Fix: Add a preferences page to your profile to indicate how big of an apartment you want and add optionality to the search.

**15. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 1 / Found by: A/B/C/D**

Inconsistent button styles. For example, the “view” buttons on the Profile page have a different background color and shape than the buttons on the Your Favorite Coaleasors page.

Fix: Make all buttons have the same background, text color, text size and font.

**16. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 1 / Found by: A/C**

Inconsistent page background colors. The background color on the Profile page is different from the background color style on the Your Saved Locations page.

Fix: Make all backgrounds have the same color scheme/them.

**17. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 4 / Found by: B/C/D**

Lack of a home page is inconsistent with platform and industry conventions. Upon logging into the app, users are thrown right into discovering other coaleasors by swiping through them, which can be overwhelming as an initial screen because of all the information displayed and possible actions.

Fix: Create a home screen, which could be where you design your own profile or look at your favorite locations and coaleasors.

**18. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 1 / Found by: A**

Inconsistent title text color. For example, the title text color on the Your Favorite Coaleasors page is blue (on a white background), while the text color on the Chat page is black (on a white background).

Fix: Make all text types have similar/same styling.

**19. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 3 / Found by: A/B/D**

On the Sign Your Lease page, the “sign your lease” text at the top looks like a button (it looks the same as the “tap to sign” button on the bottom of the page. However, it seems to actually just be the title of the page. It would be more intuitive to style it as a title, because there is already a button that accomplishes the same thing at the bottom of the page.

Fix: Remove the blue outline from the “Sign your lease” text at the top of the Sign Your Lease page, to make it look less like a button.

**20. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 4 / Found by: A**

There is no confirmation button once users click “sign this lease”. Signing a lease is a major action and there should be a confirmation/cancel button to prevent accidental clicks of the button.

Fix: Add a confirm or cancel option after the user clicks “sign this lease”

**21. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 2 / Found by: D**

“Your Saved Locations” and “Your Favorite Coaleasors” are under the Profile tab, which is not an intuitive place to reach them. Instead, when searching for locations and coaleasors, your favorites could be featured there.

Fix: Add these 2 sections to the discovering locations and discovering coaleasors pages.

**22. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 4 / Found by: A**

On the lease and the chat, the address/name of the property is not shown anywhere. Users may not remember the details of the property they are signing for.

Fix: Either link to the property the users intend to co-lease, or include its name at the top of the page (or in a details section).

**23. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 4 / Found by: A**

After signing a lease, users don’t have a way of viewing the signed lease. Users may want to see the details of their lease(s).

Fix: In a separate “leases” section, display signed and unsigned leases.

**24. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 2 / Found by: B**

A user knows their own saved locations and can view the saved locations of another user on the profile page, but doesn’t have easy access to the intersection of those locations (or both sets if that would make more sense) when chatting. It would be nice to augment the chat feature with some ways to help get the conversation started such as common saved locations, etc.

Fix: for starters, including common saved locations in a chat.

**25. H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use / Severity 3 / Found by: A**

When adding a coaleaser to a lease, there is no way to filter potential coaleasers. If the user has “saved” several Coaleaser profiles, then it may be difficult to find the correct user to add to the lease

Fix: Add a search bar or other filter functionality, such as a “most recently added” filter.

**26. H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use / Severity 4 / Found by: A, D**

It may be helpful for users to search for other users. For example, if two friends know they want to both use the Coalease app to sign a lease together, it would be helpful for them to be able to search for each other's names, instead of having to swipe to eventually find each other.

Fix: On the home page, add a search bar to search for people.

**27. H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use / Severity 2 / Found by: A**

There is no way to select/”star”/”favorite” users who someone might coalesce with often. For example, if a user has a partner who they always coalease with, it would be useful to be able to star the partner’s profile, and have the starred profiles show up at the top of the “Add Coaleaser” section.

Fix: Allow “starring” functionality, and show starred users at the top of the “Add a Coaleaser” section

**28. H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use / Severity 3 / Found by: B, D**

It is not currently clear what is the most effective way to search for the best co-leasors (i.e. map view versus searching by location). This is somewhat related to H10 (help).

Fix: clarify the purpose of having a map view vs user view (which is on the home page).

Or possibly consolidate the screens into one search screen.

**29. H8: Minimalist Design / Severity 1 / Found by: C**

On the first screen with log-in, when it says welcome to Colease you use the logo but then the logo turned on its side is also beneath it. Using the logo as the C makes it hard to read and is confusing as the logo is shown both horizontal and vertical and isn't consistent.

Fix: Make logo placement consistent and remove it from text so it's easy to read.

**30. H8: Minimalist Design / Severity 2 / Found by: B**

When viewing a saved location, all the pictures are laid out on the same screen. While nice to view all the pictures of a location at once, it can take up a lot of screen space.

Fix: possibly put all the pictures into a carousel.

**31. H10: Help & Documentation / Severity 2 / Found by: A/C/D**

There is no FAQ and no help resources. Users might have questions about the app and won't have a place to go to find answers.

Fix: Add an FAQ button/tab

**32. H10: Help & Documentation / Severity 2 / Found by: A/B/D**

There is no onboarding intro. It would be helpful to include one that goes over the basics of the app, to ensure new users know how to use the app.

Fix: Add an onboarding section or guide users through main screens with tooltips

**3. Summary of Violations**

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
H1: Visibility of Status	0	1	1	1	0	3
H2: Match Sys & World	0	3	1	0	0	4
H3: User Control	0	0	3	2	2	7
H4: Consistency & Standards	0	3	0	1	1	5
H5: Error Prevention	0	0	0	0	1	1
H6: Recognition not Recall	0	0	2	0	2	4
H7: Efficiency of Use	0	0	1	2	1	4
H8: Minimalist Design	0	1	1	0	0	2
H9: Help Users with Errors	0	0	0	0	0	0
H10: Help & Documentation	0	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Total Violations by Severity</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>32</b>

**Note: check your answer for the green box by making sure the sum of the last column is equal to the sum of the last row (not including the green box)**

## 4. Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C	Evaluator D	Evaluator E
Sev. 0	100%	100%	100%	100%	N/A
Sev. 1	38%	25%	63%	25%	N/A
Sev. 2	36%	36%	36%	27%	N/A
Sev. 3	67%	50%	0%	67%	N/A
Sev. 4	86%	14%	14%	29%	N/A
<b>Total (sevs. 3 &amp; 4)</b>	77%	31%	8%	46%	N/A
<b>Total (all severity levels)</b>	53%	31%	31%	34%	N/A

**\*Note that the bottom rows are *not* calculated by adding the numbers above it.**

## 5. Summary Recommendations

Overall, we felt that the app had a strong user interface but there were a few areas for improvement.

Due to the overwhelming and sometimes confusion of signing leases and coordinating multiple things at once, we felt that the app would be greatly improved by an onboarding process and detailed documentation. Helping the user understand the process and the features of the app before they try to use them will result in an overall better and more efficient user experience. Furthermore, safety or error checks to prevent users from accidentally signing legally binding documents would be critical in ensuring that users are protected from legal action and feel comfortable using the app. This information could also be incorporated into the app documentation and onboarding process.

Moreover, we liked the functionality of the chat but we felt that user controls were lacking in terms of the chat capabilities and personal profiles. These improvements would make the process of finding an apartment easier and offer safety and privacy controls to users matching the industry trend towards protecting users.

Given humans are prone to forgetfulness, the chat feature would be improved by a section that allows potential co-lease groups to share potential options and ongoing lease considerations. In doing so, it removes the burden of responsibility from users to find and share addresses and apartment information as the app can store and share that information between group members easily.

Finally, we found the home screen to be unnatural as it also acts as a discovery page, in addition to the map-based discovery page. The home screen and map screen could possibly be redesigned such that there is one page or way for users to find co-leasers and/or properties. The home screen could then potentially be used to show statuses/activities of the user / other users.

With these changes and small improvements to the overall aesthetic and consistency of the app styling, we are confident that *Coalease* will be a strong high-fidelity prototype and we look forward to seeing the final product.

## Severity Ratings

0 - not a usability problem

- 1 - cosmetic problem
- 2 - minor usability problem
- 3 - major usability problem; important to fix
- 4 - usability catastrophe; imperative to fix

## ***Heuristics***

### **H1: Visibility of System Status**

- Keep users informed about what is going on

### **H2: Match Between System & Real World**

- Speak the users' language
- Follow real world conventions

### **H3: User Control & Freedom**

- "Exits" for mistaken choices, undo, redo
- Don't force down fixed paths

### **H4: Consistency & Standards**

- Words, actions, and UI elements should be consistent across the entire platform
- Follow platform and industry conventions

### **H5: Error Prevention**

- Minimize error-prone conditions
- Remove memory burdens, support undoing, and warn your users when necessary

### **H6: Recognition Rather Than Recall**

- Make objects, actions, options, & directions visible or easily retrievable

### **H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use**

- Accelerators for experts (e.g., gestures, keyboard shortcuts)
- Allow users to tailor frequent actions (e.g., macros)

### **H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design**

- No irrelevant information. Focus on the essentials.

### **H9: Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors**

- Error messages in plain language
- Precisely indicate the problem
- Constructively suggest a solution

### **H10: Help & Documentation**

- Easy to search
- Focused on the user's task
- List concrete steps to carry out
- Not too large