BUDGETING BUDDIES

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Description

Budgeting-Buddies is a website created by seven college students that aims to help others, in the same age-range, become financially independent and secure. Becoming financially independent, is a transition that almost every person goes through in early adulthood. Many people have always relied on the older and more experienced people in their lives for finances. The struggle of not knowing how to manage or budget money is one of the biggest issues that hold recently independent, young-adults back from reaching their personal goals. Whether it is planning for travel, personal expenses, or emergencies, Budgeting-Buddies teaches everyone how to make smart financial decisions.

Budgeting Buddies is an easy to use, interactive website that offers young adults with advice and motivation to budget their spending. Users are encouraged to look at their spending from two categories: wants vs needs. This helps prioritize where money should be spent.

Competitors Products

- Concur.com
  - Have to make an account to start budgeting
  - Asks for financial information and helps users see where to focus spending on

- Mint.Intuit.com
  - Have to make an account to start budgeting
  - Provides resources on credit cards, loans, investments, bills
  - Users import information and the website helps the user see where to spend money

Industry Data from External Sources

- ○ Average student spends 1750 a month total on expenses between rent, food, personal needs, entertainment, and other goods.
- ○ They get 1500 a month from their parents or other forms of income if they have a job.
- ○ Breakdown per month - 200 on groceries, 1000 on rent, 50 on necessities like drugs store goods, 300 on eating out, 100 on miscellaneous goods, 100 on entertainment

Survey Results and Questionnaire

- We questioned our friends and peers on their spending and budgeting habits using a google form
- Found that most are haphazardly spending their money, they do not track their spending on eating out, groceries, necessities, and other wants
- Found that on average young adults receive $100 a week and spend $75. Most of their spending goes to food.

Persona from Data

Warren Roche

- Age: 20
- Occupation: Junior in college
- Lives in apartment off campus with 3 other friends, their rent including utilities and internet is $3000
- His parents send him $1200 a month and he tutors once a week to get an extra $100 a week (400 a month)
- He is a typical lazy, unaware college student

Prior to college, Warren's parents dealt with finances. But to push some independence on their son, they are telling him to balance his budget on his own. Warren did not pay attention in his high school home EC class, so he is struggling to figure out spending on his own.

Our E - Easy to Learn

- We are focusing on creating a website that is extremely user friendly and provides users clear instruction on what to do.
- Our users are going to learn from this website, so we want their focus to be on learning about finances and not devoting time on how to use the website
- To ensure this:
  - provide a lot of explanation of what to do
  - offer back arrows and a help button

Measuring Improvement:

- measure speed to complete tasks on each page since with less confusion, the speed of the task increases
- count number of questions asked as questions sign to unclear instruction

Target Population

- People just like us
  - We are all college aged students that are forced to budget on their own for the first time in our lives. We do not have our parents hovering over us, offering advice.
- Young adults have not been exposed to spending yet, and thus could benefit from a website that is interactive and informative on the subject.

Differ from Competitors

- The biggest fault in our competitors is the overcomplexity of their websites
  - They discuss overwhelming things like loans, mortgages, credit cards, interests, investments, etc
  - The average 20 year old is not worried about these things and just wants to not spend too much money on dining out
  - Our website is straightforward and stays basic, giving users the space they need to learn the basics of financing

First Design - Paper Outline

Breakdown

Food
- Groceries
- Eating out
- Weekly coffee

Necessities
- Medicine
- Pharmaceutical/Personal Products
- Rent
- Pay for parking, transportation

Wants
- How many times a month to you make smaller purchases <$100 (clothes, shoes, decor, excursions, movies)
- Larger purchases >$100 (concerts, trips)
- Repeated purchases (streaming services, premium websites, spotify)

Save
- How much would you like to save

Income
- How much do you receive from a job or parents
- How much do you have saved up, willing to spend

Here, we are drafting what to focus our questions on and then we asked test users their opinions

We had several of these papers with different questions to see how users reacted to the questions we were considering

First Design - Paper Outline

- This prototype helped us figure out what we wanted to include in our website.
- Prior to this we were unsure of what direction we wanted to take our project, but physically outlining it made it clear what to do
- We know to follow our Easy to Learn goal that we need to be clear and explain a lot.
- The key aspect of our design is the simplicity which is also how we relate to our target audience of young adults with no financial experience.

User Feedback - First Design

- We had 2 friends look at our prototype
- The users enjoyed the idea of interacting with the website with their personal information to get a better understanding of their financial situation. None of them had outlined their spending before.
- Since there was no physical website for them to interact with, we have no data for time to complete tasks.
- Suggested more options and keep the questions straightforward- no unnecessary wordiness

Second Design - HTML Outline

Home   FAQ   Login

Budgeting Tip

With a clear outline of your wants vs needs, you will be able to better understand where your money should be spent as it is necessary to prioritize things you need.

VIEW ALL TIPS

Second Design - HTML Outline

- → Key aspect of the design is the simplicity of it. Again, we do not want to overwhelm the users
- → To ensure our E is prioritized, we outlined where to put the informative boxes of instructions and keep the website simple.
- → To grab target population's attention we keep the website simple to not overwhelm

User Feedback - Second Design

- We had 3 friends look at our design, same 2 as previous and 1 more.
- A repeated comment was that the design was low effort and basic - the font was nothing fancy and the gray background was offsetting. Our website was not engaging and looked like it was just basic HTML
- They liked that there were plenty of buttons to click on and move around the website and that we kept each page very basic.

Third Design - Figma (1st Interactive, High Fidelity)
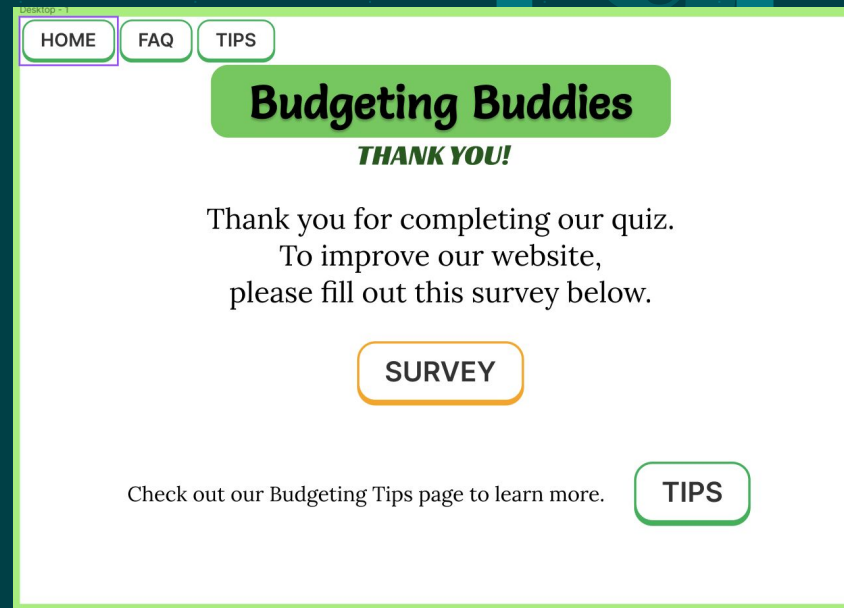
Third Design - Figma

- Our HTML code was scrappy and incomplete as not every page was made. We realized we were wasting time trying to get the code to function properly over the design, so we moved over to Figma.

- Figma.com provided an easy to use platform for the whole group to creatively collaborate without the effort of coding every detail. We were able to focus our attention on the user interface over the code. We finalize the layout and vision for the website.

Third Design - Qualitative User Feedback

- We had 10 friends look at the prototype. This included the 3 from the previous iteration and 7 more
- All said that the website had potential to look really engaging when complete. They said the mismatched fonts were off putting and that the website needed to be more cohesive.
- Again, the buttons were well liked as it kept the users' attention. And they appreciated the balance of informative and engaging.
- 3 users said it was helpful and 2 said not helpful: the users that said it was not helpful said they already had experience with budgeting. This makes sense since our website is for people that have never budgeted before or even looked at their spending

Third Design - Measuring Time

We timed users to complete the 12 questions. This took an average of 3 minutes.

They took the longest on questions that involved unclear spending amounts like small expenses vs large expenses because they did not understand what fell into which category.
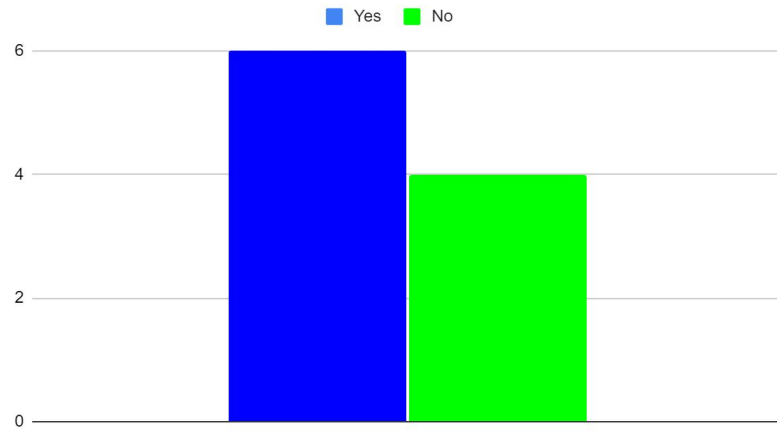
Third Design - Quantitative User Feedback

Was overall look of website appealing?

Yes   No

8

6

4

2

0

Was the website useful?

Yes   No

6

4

2

0
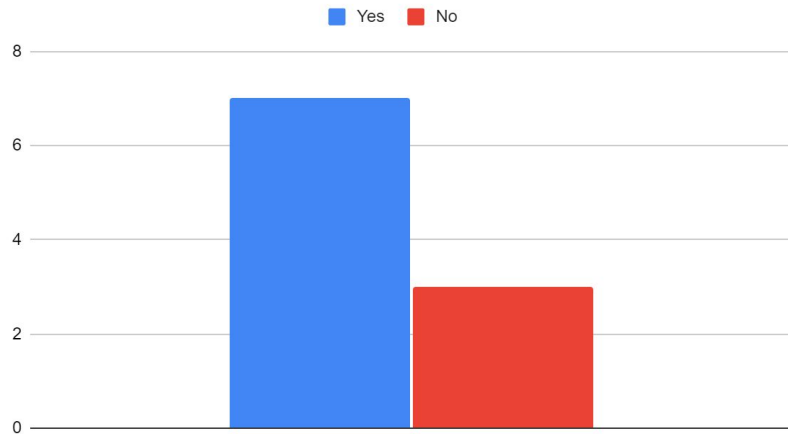
We had 10 friends complete the survey. Most agreed that it the website was visually appealing with the colors, fonts, and overall aesthetics.
6 said it was useful and 4 said not useful, this is something to work on

Fourth Design - Final Product

Budgeting Buddies

Budgeting Buddies

Finances made easy

CREATE YOUR BUDGET

Fourth Design - Final Product

From our Figma outline, we were able to get snippets of code that we formed together to get a real website using HTML and CSS. Now we had a fully functional, high fidelity website

We used GitHub to share code
https://github.com/durnazzer/budget-buddies.git

Fourth Design - Qualitative User Feedback

We had 10 friends look at our final design. These were 5 of the same and then 5 new people.

The general consensus was that the style was very cohesive across every page. They appreciate that the style remained the same.

They agreed that the buttons were clearly marked and going through the questions was not confusing.

They said that it helped them outline their budgeting and spending habits. The said they website was not overwhelming, kept finances simple, and kept them engaged.

# Fourth Design - Measuring Time

We timed users to complete the 12 questions. This took an average of 2 minutes. This went down from last time. We believe it is because the questions were more straightforward and less wordy.

All questions had relatively the same amount of time spend (around 15 seconds) this means that no one question was too confusing. Which is an improvement from last iteration.

Fourth Design - Quantitative User Feedback

Was overall look of website appealing?

■ Yes   ■ No

Was the website useful?

■ Yes   ■ No
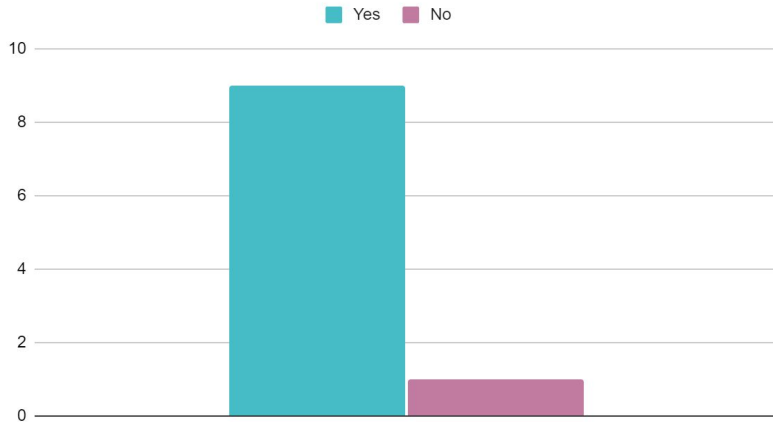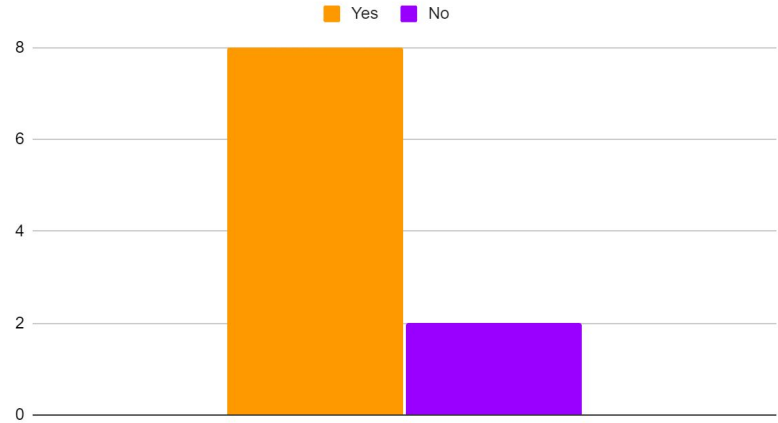
We had 10 friends complete this survey. Majority of them agreed that the website is visually appealing and useful. This is an improvement from the previous iteration.

Demo and Walkthrough

Here is the HomePage to our website.
As you can see, there is a giant start button to click on to start budgeting
We also have 3 help pages in the upper right corner that offer information on the website, how to use, and other useful information.

Budgeting Buddies   About Us   FAQ   Tips

Budgeting Buddies

Finances made easy

CREATE YOUR BUDGET

Demo and Walkthrough

Here are the 3 help pages.
These are in the top right corner for every page so that users can refer back to them at any point.
These pages over helpful information to the users if they get confused.

Budgeting Buddies   Home   FAQ   Tips

About Us

Budgeting-Buddies is a website created by six college students that aims to help others, in the same age-range, become financially independent and financially secure. Becoming financially independent is a transition that almost every person goes through, around the time of their twenties. Many people have always relied on the older and more experienced people in their lives for finances. The struggle of not knowing how to manage or budget money is one of the biggest issues that hold recently independent, young-adults back from reaching their personal goals. Whether it is planning for travel, personal expenses, or emergencies, Budgeting-Buddies teaches everyone how to make smart financial decisions.

Budgeting Buddies   Home   About Us   Tips

FAQ

How does it work?   Click on "Create Your Budget" on the Home Page. This will direct you to questions for you to answer about your current spending habits. Each question will give you spending feedback based on your responses!

What if i don't know exactly how much I spend?   Our answer choices for each question will give you a price range, rather than requiring you to type in an exact price. If you aren't sure exactly how much you spend, try to estimate! In the future, keeping better track of how much you spend on different things will allow you to overall be better at budgeting.

How can I keep track of how much I spend?   There are many ways to keep track of your spending habits. You could use a spreadsheet, a notebook, choose out of several apps, etc. There is no wrong way to keep track of it and it depends on your preferences. Choose whatever is easier!

How should I make a budget?   Decide what is important to you and what you want to prioritize. If there is something you want to save money for, set goals! Keep your income in mind and then plan how much money you will spend each month. Make sure to include all of your monthly expenses.

Budgeting Buddies   Home   About Us   FAQ

Tips

Our favorites:
1. Calculate your net income
2. List monthly expenses (i.e. food, rent, travel, etc.)
3. Organize your expenses into fixed and variable categories
4. Determine average monthly cost for each expense

Websites we suggest to our users:
[The Student's Guide to Budgeting in College](#)
[What is the 50/30/20 Budget Rule?](#)
[Budget for Your Future](#)

Demo and Walkthrough

This is an example of what the bulk of our website looks like. Users step through 12 questions.

Each question has several buttons that users are prompted to click on to compare to their average spending.

There are next and back buttons on these pages for users to go back or skip a question.

After they click a button, they are sent to a tip page where they are given information about how to prioritize spending in correlation to the question.

Budgeting Buddies   About Us   FAQ   Tips

Back

Question 5:

How often do you purchase necessities like medicine, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products etc?

Click the button below that best applies to your spending habits.

Never   1x Every Week   1x Every Month   1x Every 3 Months

1x Every 6 Months   1x Every Year

Next

Budgeting Buddies   About Us   FAQ   Tips

Things like medicine and toilet paper are essential to living. Undeniable expenses like these should be a top priority when creating a budget. Recognizing that you might have to sacrifice non-essentials like shopping or coffee is an important part of growing up.

Next

Final User Feedback Pt. 1

- For our final user feedback, we created a survey to gauge interest and any comments:
  - https://forms.gle/tA9BVVLw4oGWa1Yb7
  - In this survey, we asked for age, general financial information and goals, and feedback on our product.

Final User Feedback Pt. 2

- Some data we collected from the survey:
  - 83% (10/12) of those who responded were 18-25 and pursuing a university degree
  - 75% (9/12) were struggling to manage their finances and indicated that Budget Buddies would benefit them.
  - The most common feedback was to "provide more personalized recommendations."
    - We would develop a better algorithm if this were a professional product!

PAR Review

- Perception
  - We kept the same format on each page so that the user noticed patterns and could tell what each page was asking them to do. We chose fonts and styles that were aesthetically pleasing for the users.

- Attention
  - We keep the users focused on the task. The interactive use of the buttons keeps the users' attention. We do not just give a giant text box for the user to read and learn from. Instead, we made our website interactive.

- Retention
  - We do not require our users to rely on memory because we are very clear with what we want them to do. The users do not have any confusion that would make them lose focus.

Simplicity Review

- Our website does not have access information nor is it wordy on any page. We reduced the amount to draw the users attention to the importance of the questions and choosing an answer to each question. Our website is in no means too complex for the users
- We have designated information on each page so that the user can clearly get the information we are sharing

Accessibility Review

We kept accessibility in mind throughout the project.

- Colorblindness was taken into account when choosing colors, we made sure the colors of the website would not affect colorblind people. Our theme is money, so we wanted to make the website green. This meant we could not use red anywhere in our website.
- We took Fitts Law into consideration and ensured that users did not have to move the cursor a lot by keeping buttons in the same general area.

Heuristic Evaluation

We prioritized the use of the Nielsen-2 checklist.

- This emphasizes the importance of consistency and standards, error prevention, and recognition rather than recall.
- These three principles all involve limiting the user's memory load. This is important in our project because we aim to encourage users to return every month or so. This is a rather long gap between uses and could cause the active user paradox. To avoid this we help the user recognize consistency and give clear instructions to avoid errors. We do not want our users to rely on their memory. We want our website to be very easy to learn and not have any period of learning required for the user.

MicroInteraction

- The most basic form of a microinteraction is a button. Since we wanted to make our website as easy to learn as possible, we only included buttons throughout the website.
- For many of these buttons, hovering over it changes how the button appears, signifying an action is required.

Improve E for Targeted Population?

Yes

- Our website is extremely simple and not hard to understand, thus users never had a hard time learning what to. We did see decreases in times per page, which is how we measured improvement. The decrease in time spent means that our website became more clear and easy to understand.
- We should have made the website more complex with each iteration and measured if users were able to easily learn with each new, more complex version.

Future Work

- If we were to continue this project, we would make the website more interactive. We would have more options and provide more personalized recommendations. This would be done with the export button on the last page. None of us have experience with exporting to files in webdev, so we were not able to implement this.
- We had a goal to not overwhelm the young users with a lot of information, so it would be interesting to make a version that is more complex for older adults