

Vanguard Year-in-Review Redesign: UX Case Study

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Overview



The Problem:

- Users ages 50+ struggled to understand key financial insights.
- Important metrics were hard to find or lacked context.
- Visuals felt decorative instead of informative reducing clarity and trust.



The Goal:

- Enhance clarity, trust, and usability for investors ages 50+
- Project driven by research, user testing, and accessibility priorities.

The smartphone screen shows the 'Year in Review' section of the Vanguard app. At the top, there is a red circular progress bar with the number '1' indicating the current slide. Below it, the text 'Vanguard' and 'Year in Review' is visible. The main content area features two cards: the top card is titled 'FUNDED RETIREMENT WITH 3 ACCOUNTS' and shows an illustration of a yellow gift box with a green ribbon; the bottom card is titled 'ON TRACK TO RETIRE AT 65 IN 2058' and shows an illustration of a yellow trophy with a white star. Both cards include descriptive text below their respective icons.

1

Vanguard

Year in Review

FUNDED RETIREMENT
WITH 3 ACCOUNTS

Funded your retirement goal via managed accounts

ON TRACK TO RETIRE
AT 65 IN 2058

Supported your goal to retire in 2058 at age 65.

Overview



Audience Overview

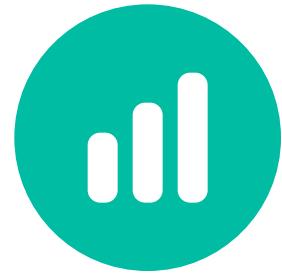
- Digitally active investors ages 50–70.
- Require clarity, trust signals, and simplified navigation.
- Value straightforward wording and easy-to-follow information flow.



Usability Testing Overview

- 50+ participants assessed the existing Year-in-Review prototype.
- Think-aloud sessions, surveys, and task observations conducted.
- Further feedback was also gleaned from two surveys done before and after the test.

Key Findings



Key Findings: What Worked

- Clear language improved user confidence.
- Progress indicators and checkmarks motivated users.
- Brand trust reinforced through consistent visual identity.



Key Findings: What Didn't Work

- Confusion about where to go after finishing the Year-in-Review.
- Abstract visuals were seen as unhelpful or unprofessional.
- Users struggled to find fee information, creating trust issues

Minor Problems

1

Users struggled to locate “Year in Review”

2

Visuals Reduced Perceived Professionalism

3

Complex Terminology Often Confused Participants

Major Problem #1

Problem: Confusion on how to proceed with Year in Review

- Across experience levels, users felt the Year in Review provided too little insight into their financial progress.
- Advanced investors wanted more detailed breakdowns, such as the factors driving portfolio changes, while beginner investors needed clearer explanations to interpret what the data meant.
- Users expected a stronger link between performance metrics, goals, and future projections.
- Users wanted a more complete “financial story” that was informative and personally meaningful yet easy to understand.

Major Problem #2

Problem: Users Were Seeking More Depth & Context from Year in Review

- Users struggled to understand what to do next after viewing the Year in Review section.
- The transition into the checklist felt abrupt, lacking a clear narrative connection or sense of progression.
- Many were hesitant to interact with checklist links because it wasn't clear where they would lead or whether they could easily navigate back.

Users Reported:

- “If I look at this checklist, I’m getting a little bit confused.”
- “This kind of feels overwhelming, so I don’t know how those links work, or what is there on those pages?”

What Makes My Redesign Unique

- Added visual anchors and numbered steps at the top of the experience
- Removed playful illustrations
- Focused visual hierarchy on readability, not decoration
- Clear action labels: Edit Retirement, Review Contributions, Review Accounts, Goal Optimizer
- Creates a clear, predictable next-step flow that eliminates end-of-journey confusion

The screenshot shows the Vanguard Year in Review mobile application. At the top left is the 'Digital Advisor' logo with a red 'V'. A navigation bar with a red dot at index 1 and six grey dots follows. On the right is an 'Exit X' button. The main title 'Vanguard Year in Review' is centered. Below it are four achievement cards:

- FUNDED RETIREMENT WITH 3 ACCOUNTS**
Funded your retirement goal via managed accounts
- CELEBRATED YOUR 5TH YEAR**
Celebrated another year with Digital Advisor
- ON TRACK TO RETIRE AT 65 IN 2058**
Supported your goal to retire in 2058 at age 65.
- MADE PROGRESS ON 2 ADDITIONAL GOALS**
Made progress towards 2 additional goals

A 'Continue' button is at the bottom right.

What Makes My Redesign Unique

- Keeps contextual explanations, modals, and tooltips so users continue to understand complex terms
- Added narrative text explaining why
- Kept graphs tied directly to key insights
- Framed results with reassuring language that matches how adults 50+ process financial uncertainty
- Added definitions via info icons + dropdown modals



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A horizontal sequence of seven small pink circles, with the number '7' in a larger pink circle at the end, indicating a step or progress bar.

Exit X

A button labeled 'Exit X' enclosed in a thin black border.

What Next? Suggested Actions

Edit Retirement ↗

Review your planned contributions and confirm if your income and expenses are correct.

Review Contributions ↗

Set up or review recurring contributions to make steady progress to your goals.

Review Accounts ↗

Link or update your non-Vanguard accounts so you get the whole picture of your finances and help us better estimate if you'll reach your goals.

Goal Optimizer ↗

Confirm that your goals align with your progress and then explore different scenarios that could help you reach them.

Back

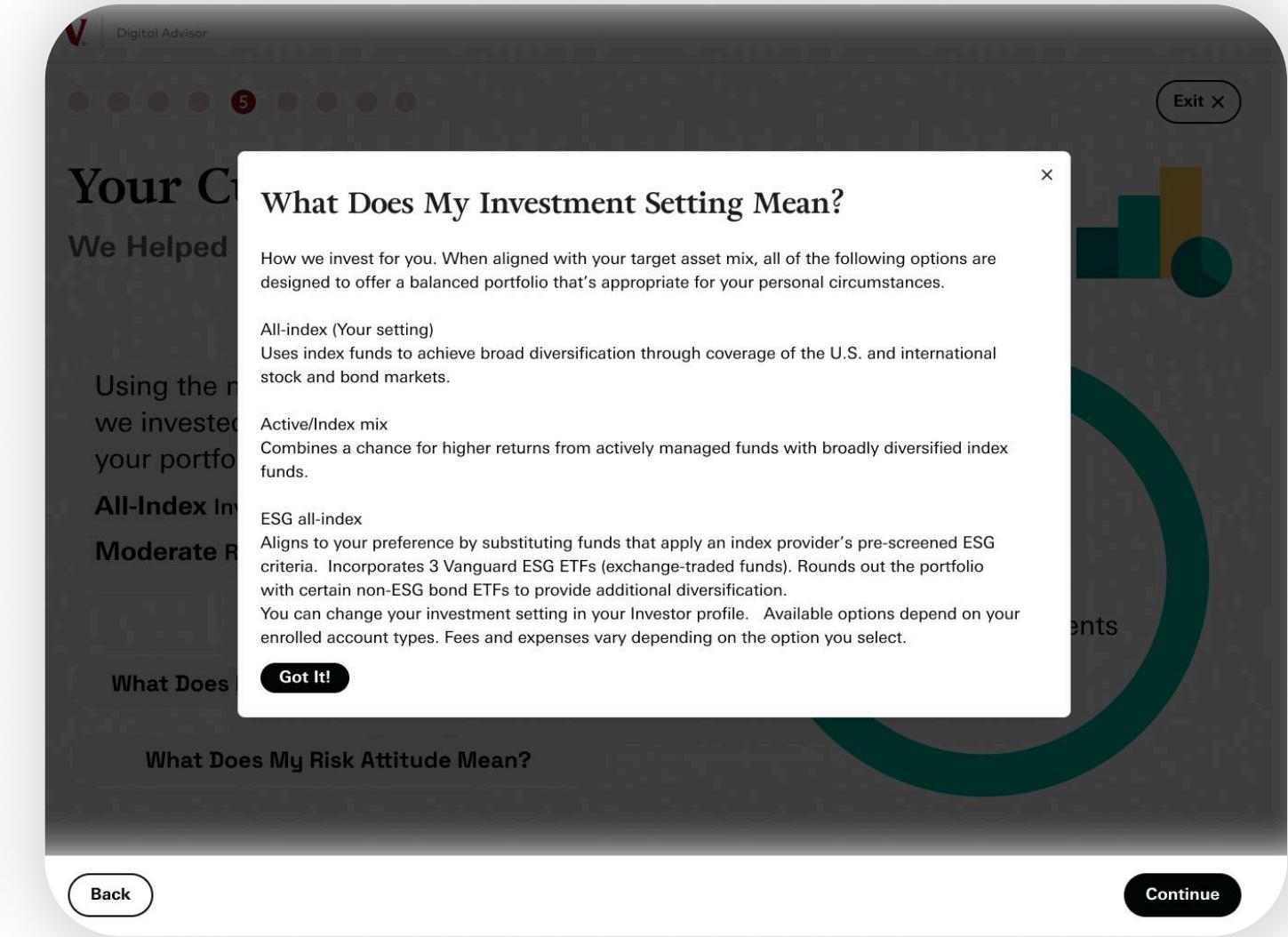
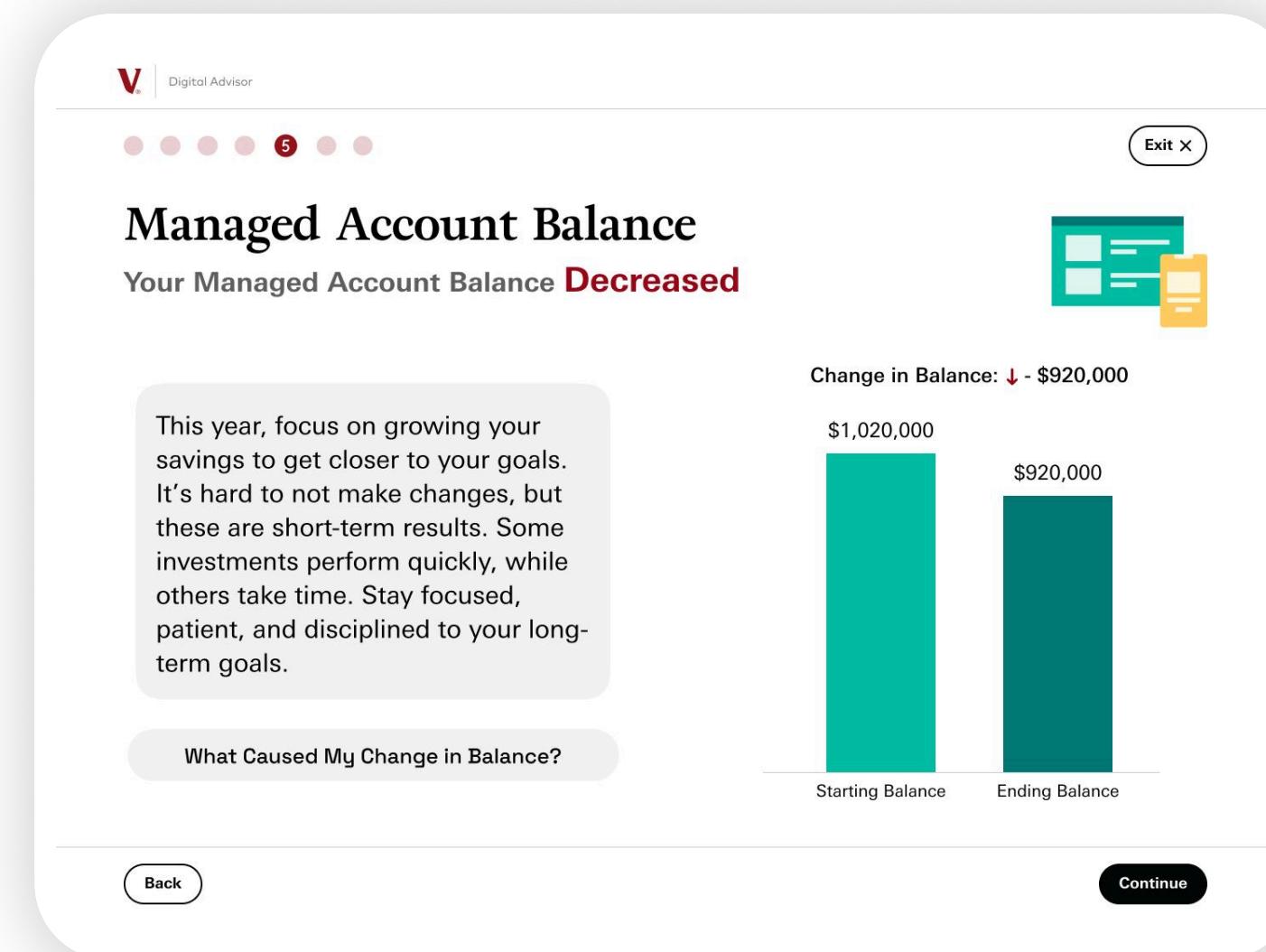
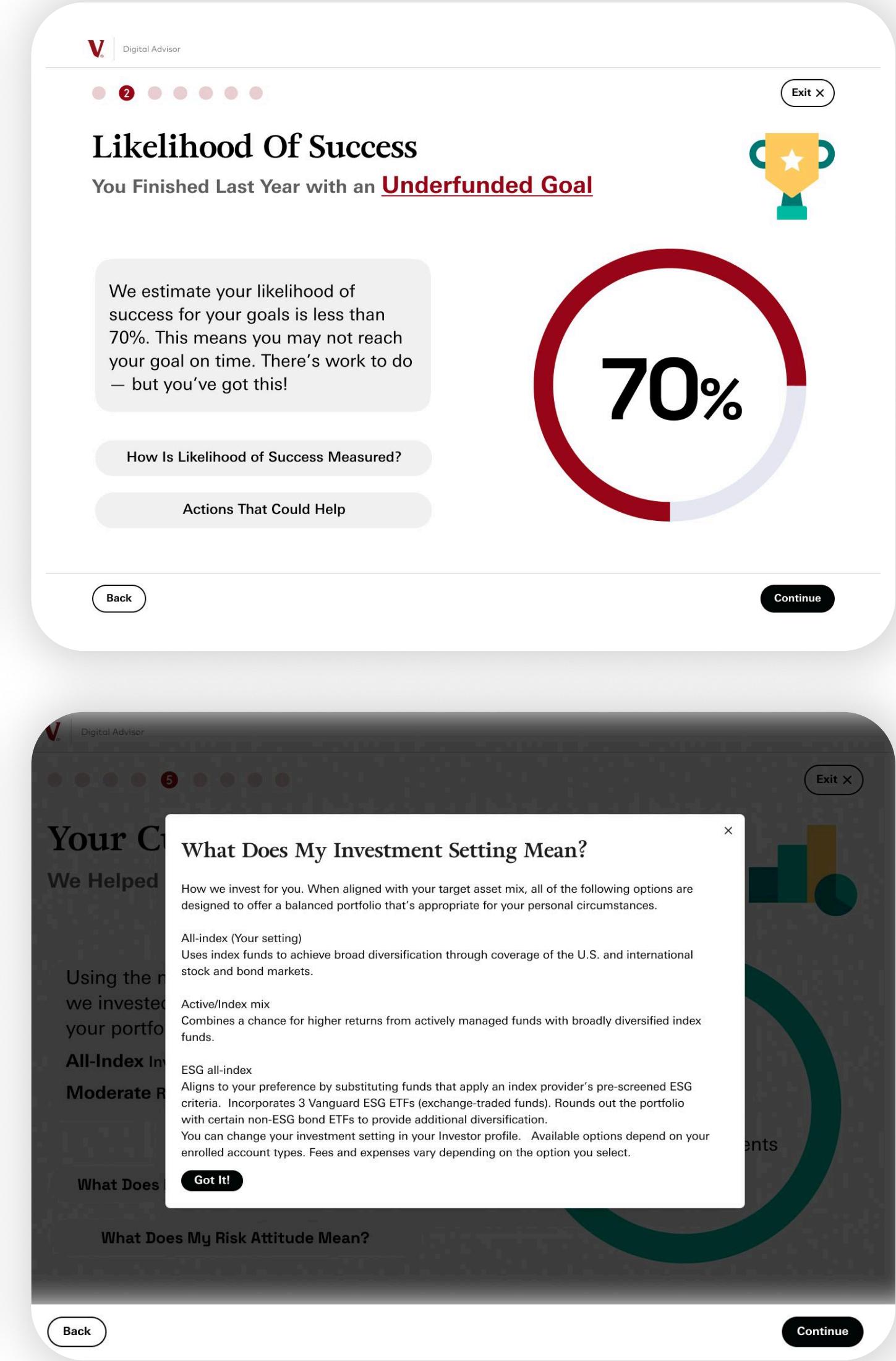
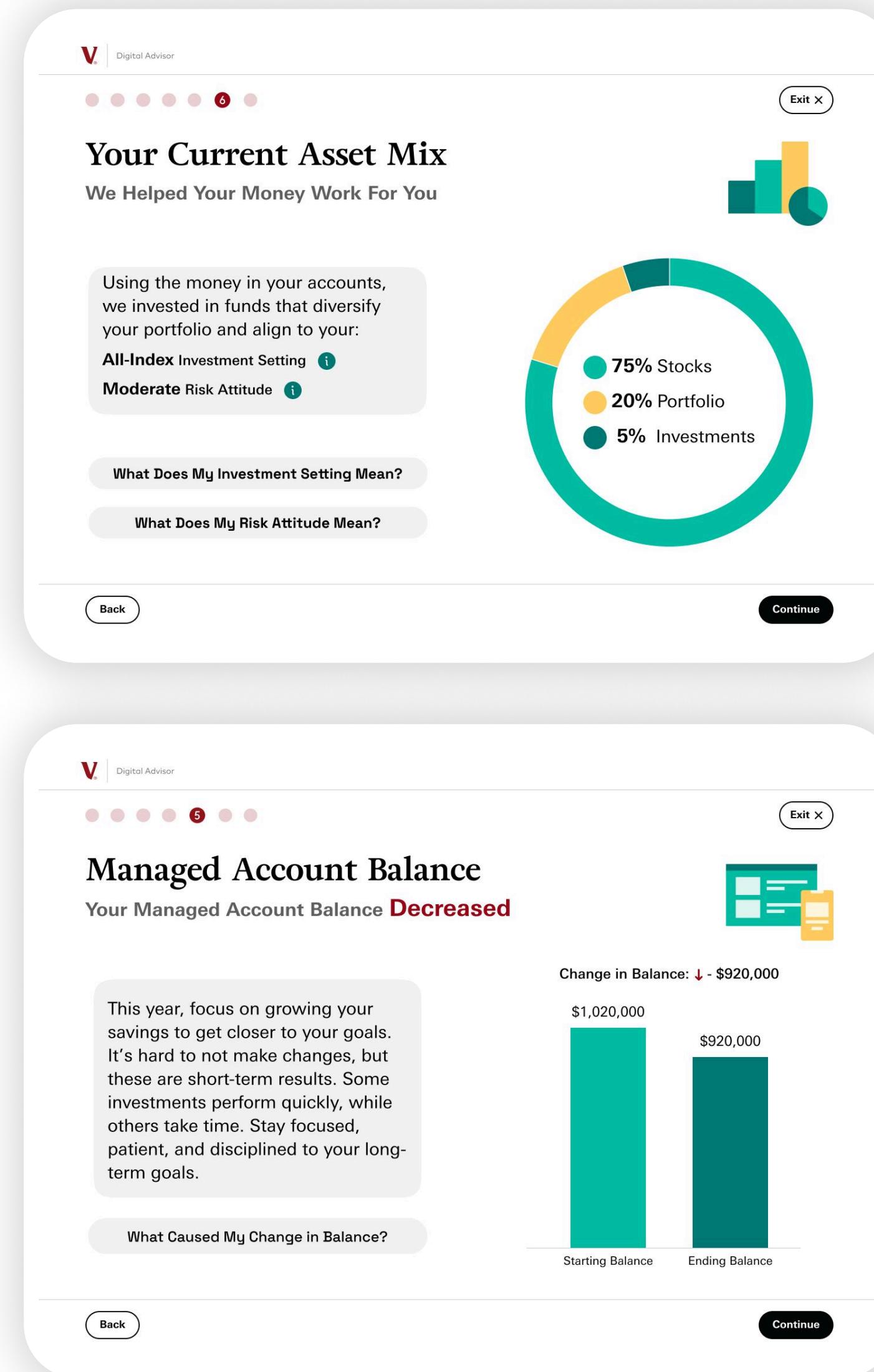
A button labeled 'Back' in a white circle.

Start Over

A button labeled 'Start Over' in a dark blue circle.

Why Vanguard Should Adopt This Approach

- Gives 50+ users the clarity, guidance, and depth they repeatedly asked for
- Creates a more professional, trustworthy interface aligned with Vanguard's brand
- Reduces confusion and anxiety, leading to stronger engagement and higher satisfaction
- Supports both novice and experienced investors



Thank You
