Croissant: Lo-Fi Prototype Testing

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Introduction

Croissant's mission is to enable healthier relationships between fans and creators by turning fans into collaborators. Croissant gives a more structured forum for high-quality feedback and enables enriching conversations between committed fans and creators.

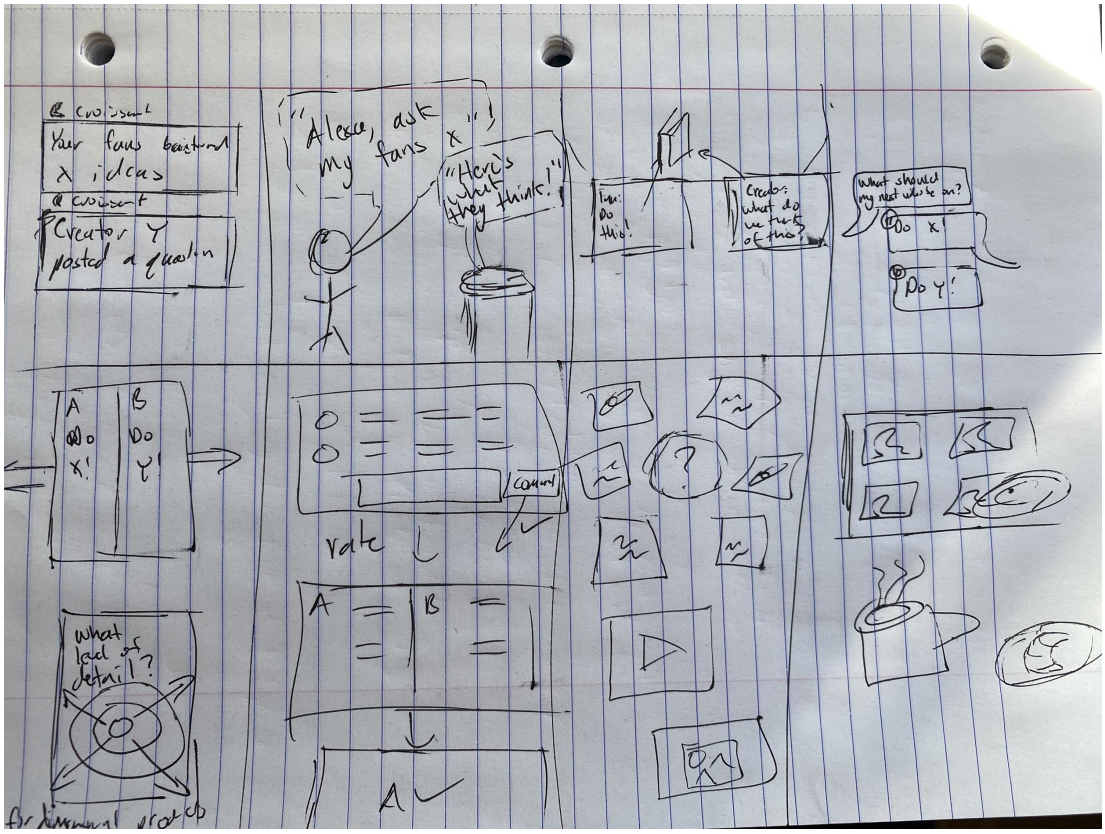
In our previous interviews, we discovered that people on both sides of the fan-creator relationship recognize its unhealthiness. Creators, despite the joys they take in producing content, often experience burnout due to the constant pressure to release new material, the barrage of negative and abusive comments, and the alienation of impersonal fan-creator relationships. On the other side of the interaction, fans, while enjoying the work of creators, often chafe at their passive status as pure consumers of content, and seek deeper interactions with creators beyond leaving rarely-noticed comments.

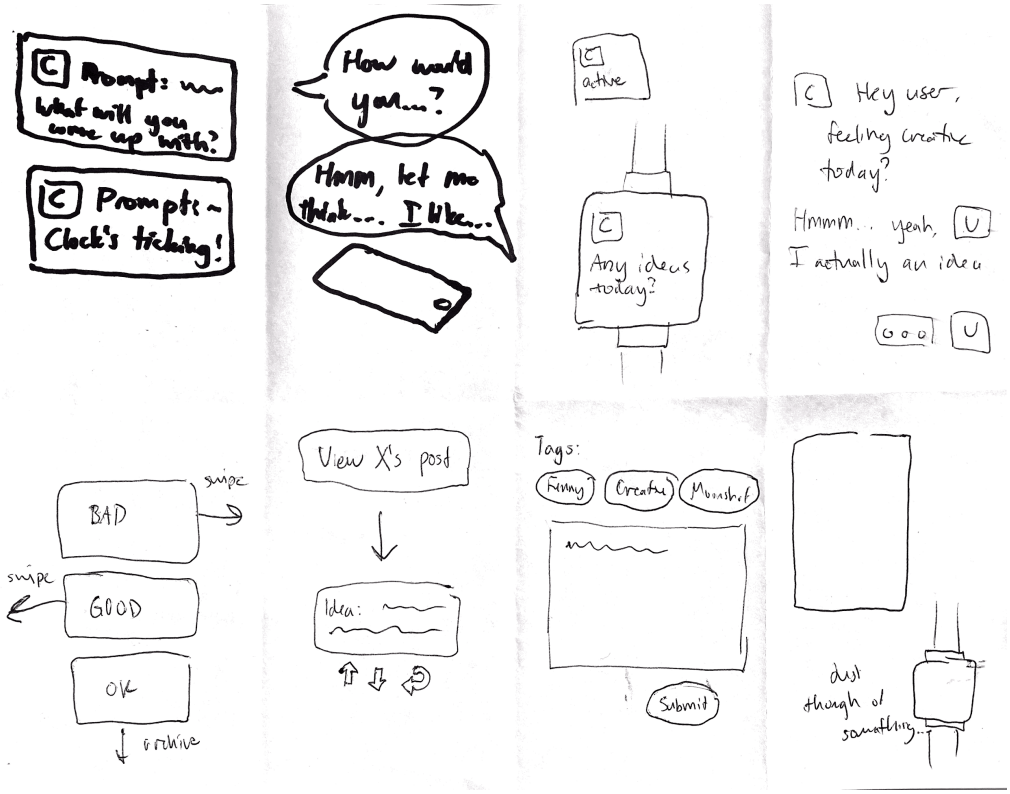
In order to enrich this relationship, our solution has three stages. First, fans respond to creator prompts for feedback in a d.school-style brainstorming board. Second, fans rank and sort ideas and creators are presented with a summary of the most useful and popular feedback. Finally, creators can talk with a subset of their fans who gave the most useful feedback in order to form deeper, healthier relationships.

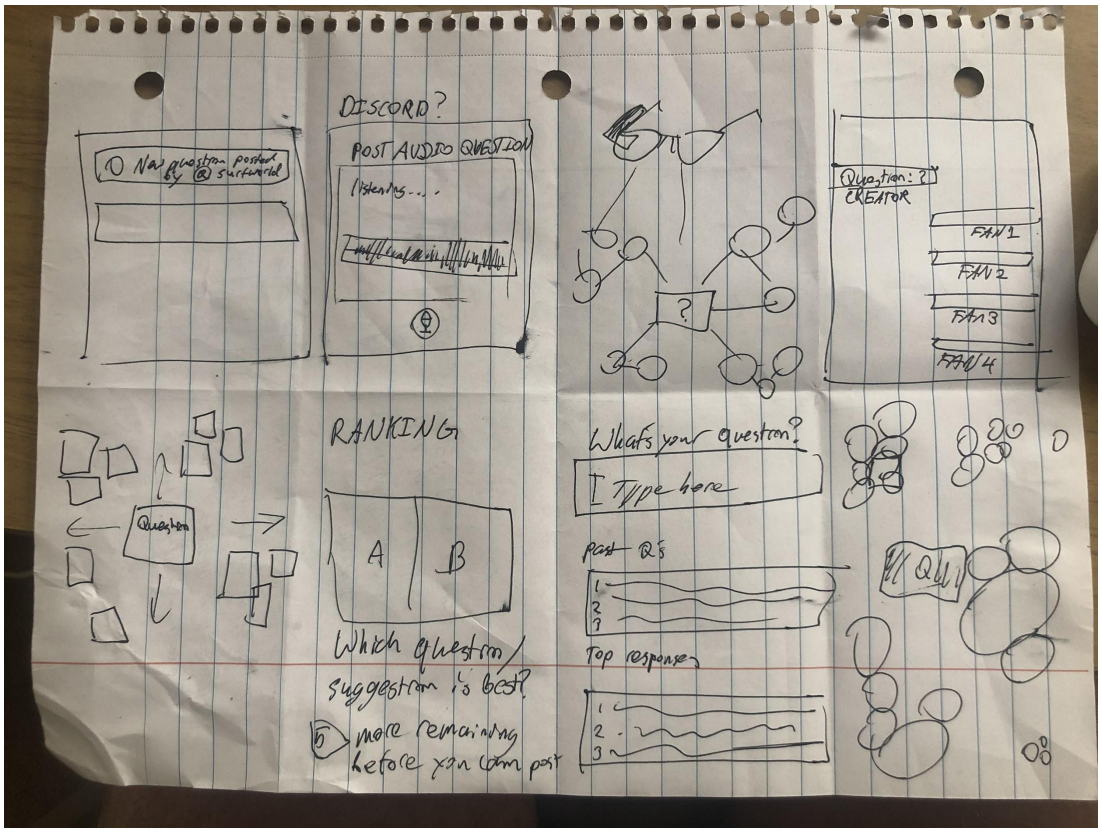
Sketches

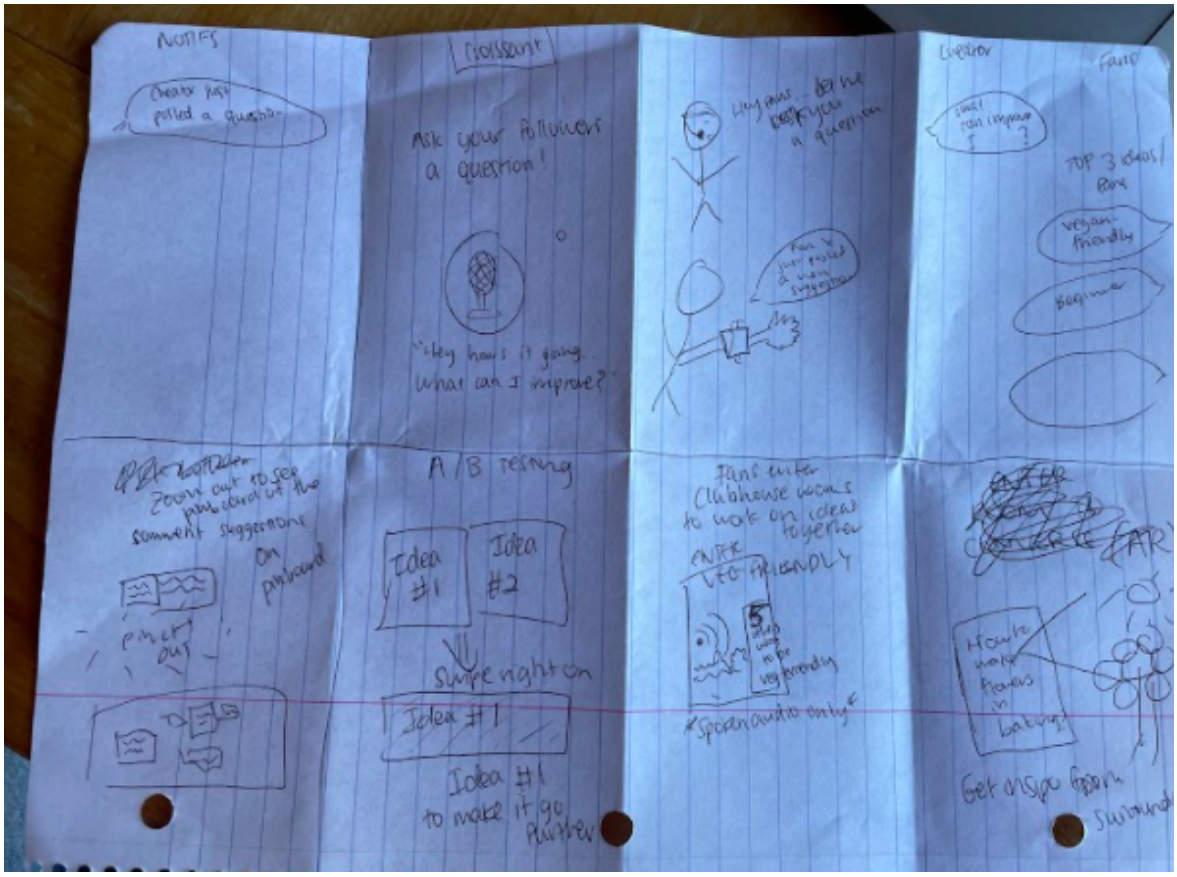
While our needfinding and experience prototyping established that creators experience burnout and want more productive relationships with their fans, we were not set on the exact interface of our product.

In our crazy eight sketches from class, we explored a whole host of different options.



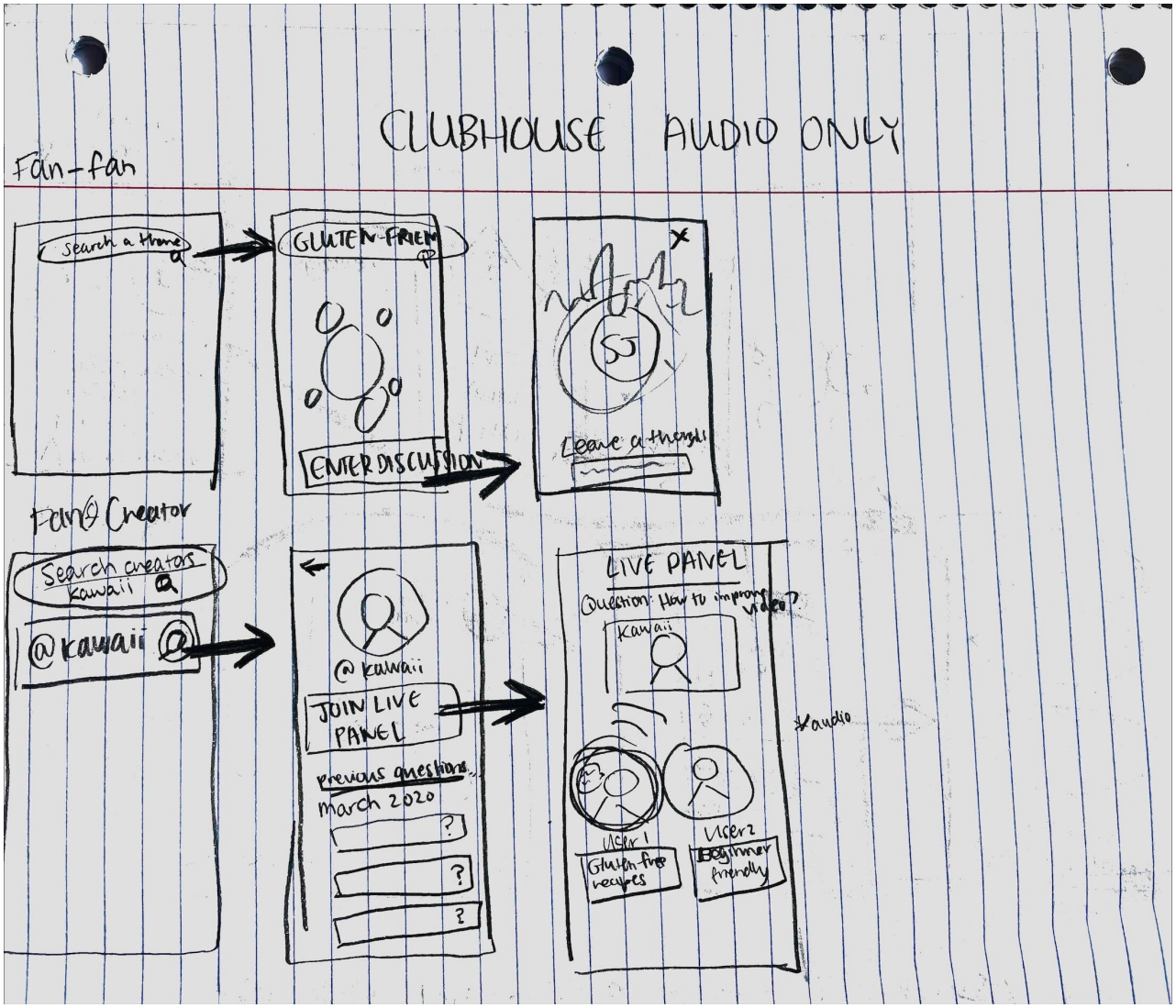

C Prompt: What will you come up with?
C Prompt: Clock's ticking!
How would you...?
Hmm, let me think... I like...
C active
C Any ideas today?
C Hey user, feeling creative today?
Hmmm... yeah, U I actually an idea
U
BAD
swipe
GOOD
swipe
OK
archive
View X's post
Idea:
Tags:
Funny
Creative
Moonshot
Submit
dust though of something...


1 New question posted by @ surfworld
DISCORD?
POST AUDIO QUESTION
listening...
?
Question: ?
CREATOR
FAN 1
FAN 2
FAN 3
FAN 4
Question
RANKING
A
B
Which question/ suggestion is best?
5 more remaining before you can post
What's your question?
I Type here
past Q's
1
2
3
Top responses
1
2
3
Q

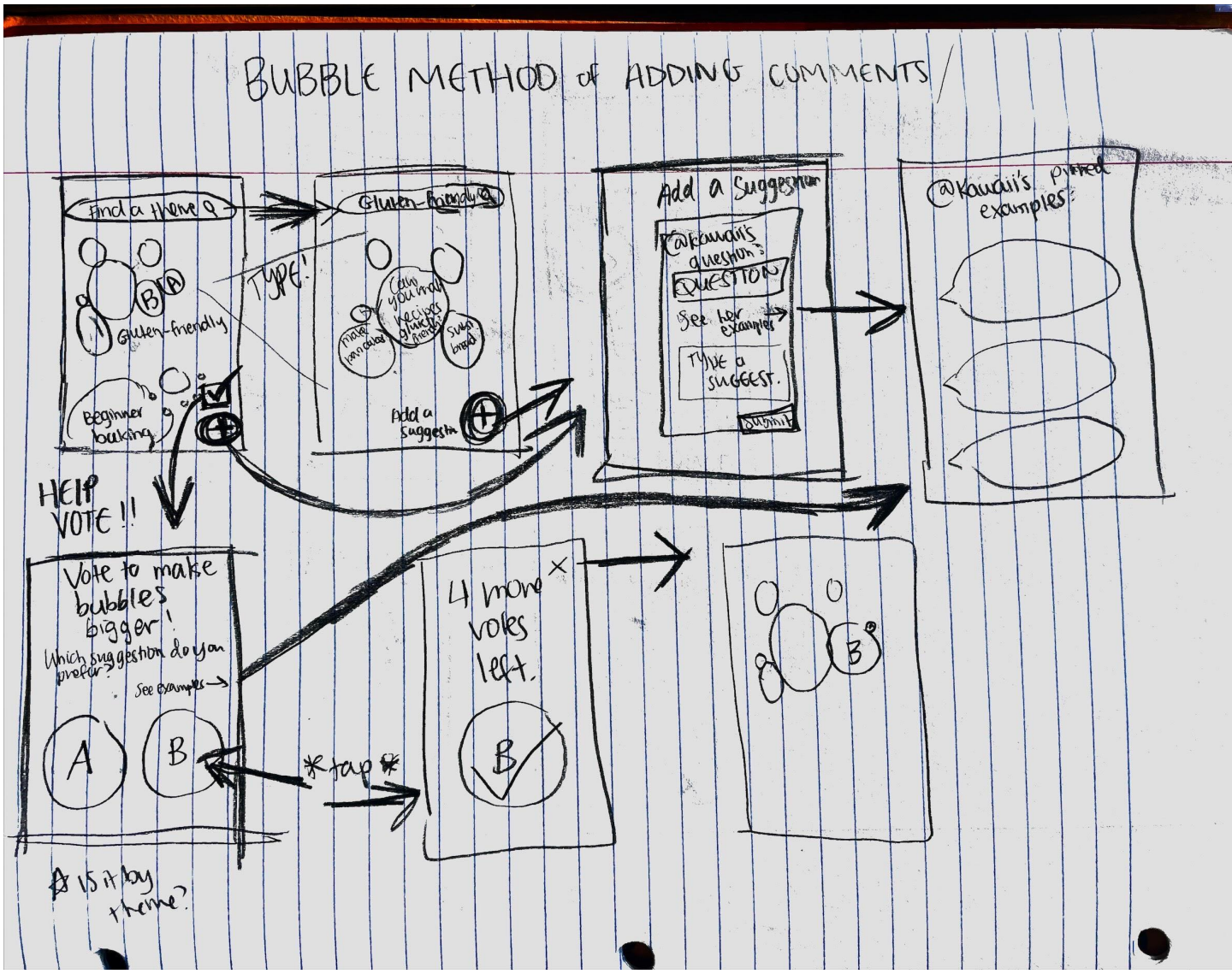


After going over the sketches, we developed three of them into more complete ideas.

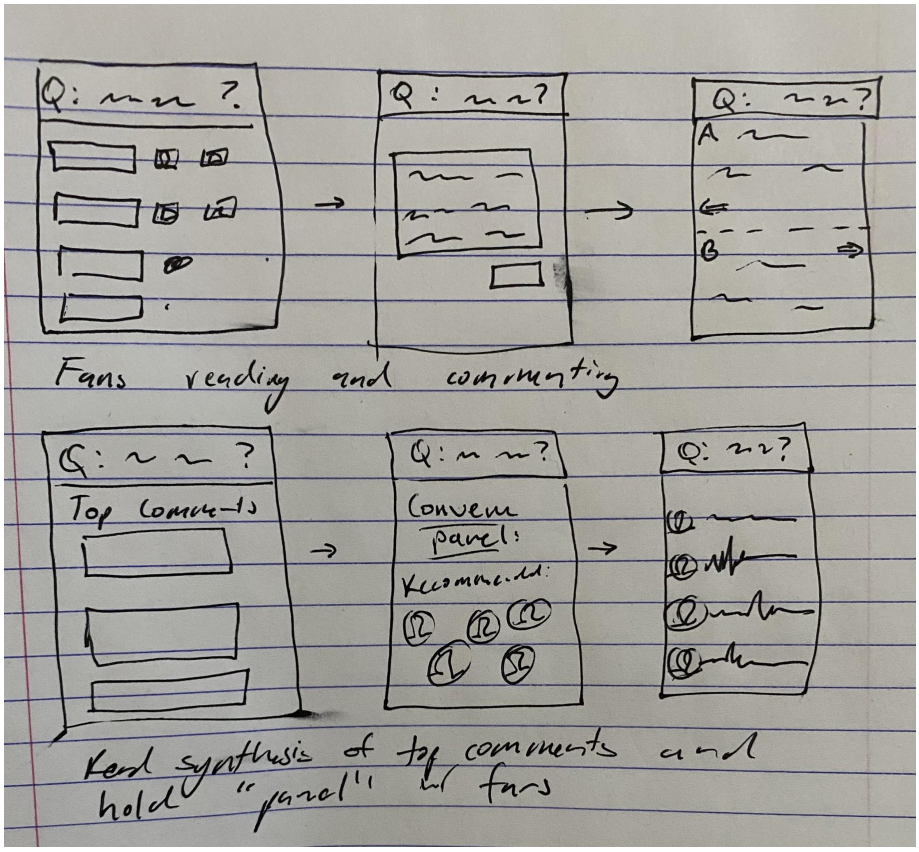
First, we considered an entirely audio-based network.



Next, we considered a bubble-based interface, in which popular ideas vied to take up the entire screen.



Finally, we considered a text-based interface for fans to leave comments.



Selected interface design

Our selected interface combines a more conventional text-based experience with synchronous conversations between creators and a selection of committed fans. We made three design decisions in settling on this interface.

First, we recognized that an audio-based network, while emphasizing the personality of each fan more than the written word, requires more commitment for fans to both post and rate an idea.

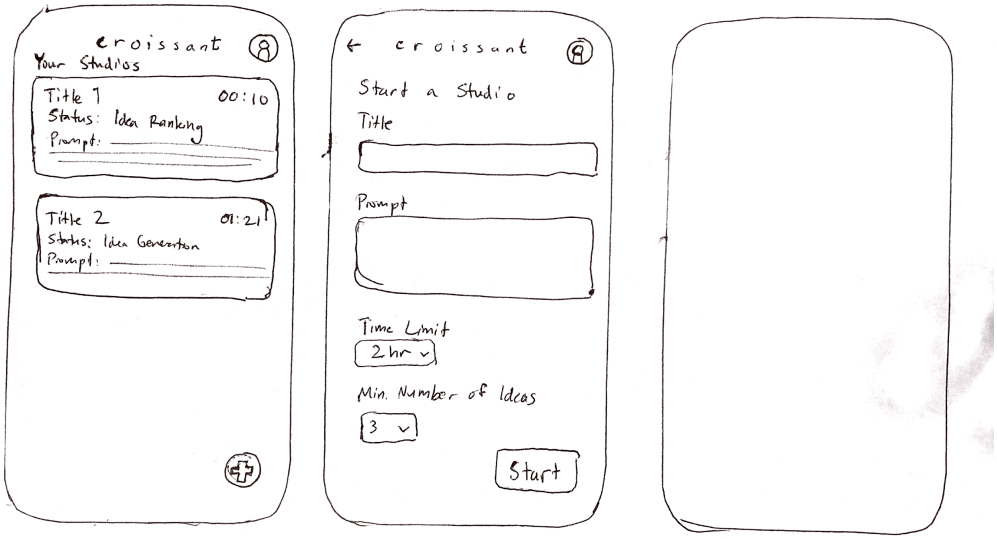
A similar calculation took place when considering the proposal to represent bubbles. While the visual of popular ideas “battling” each other excited us, we decided the chaotic visual of comments on moving bubbles within the constraints of a phone screen would take away from our focus on meaningful feedback that avoids the hectic competition of traditional comment sections.

Finally, we decided to separate idea generation and ranking into two phases. We considered requiring fans to rate other comments in order to post their own feedback, but this contradicts

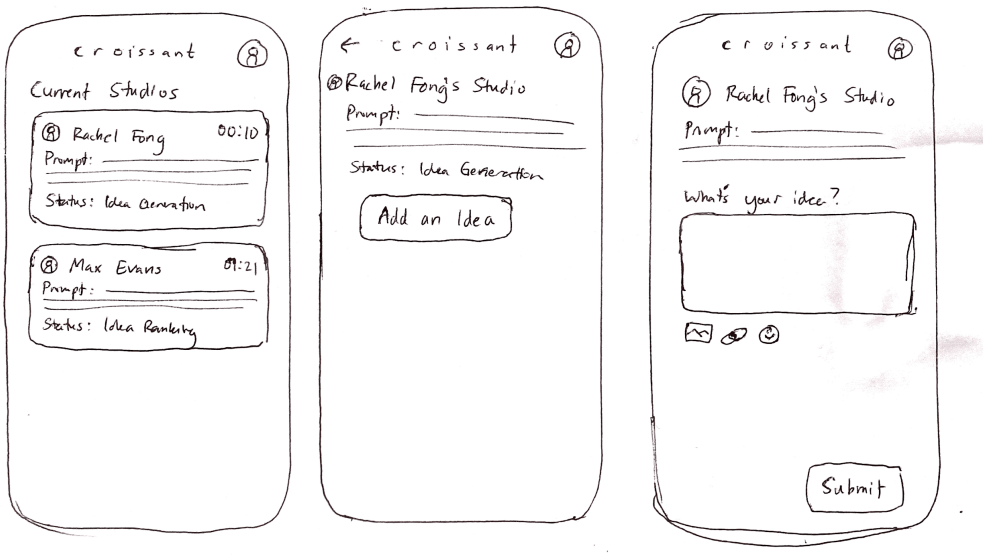
d.school practice as well as presenting a difficult prioritization problem in which we must account for the recency of comments.

With those decisions made, we focused on four tasks in our storyboarding.

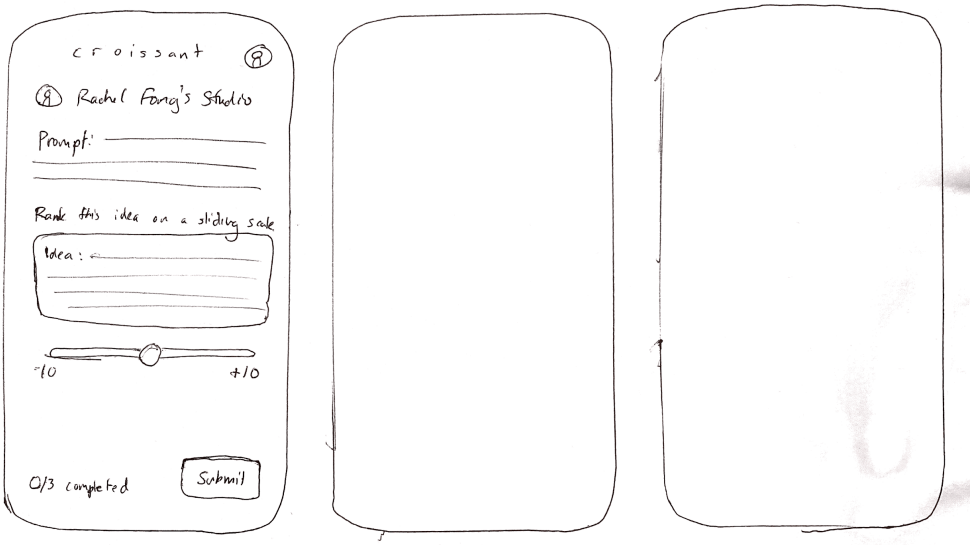
First, creators are able to pose a question to their fanbase by starting a studio.



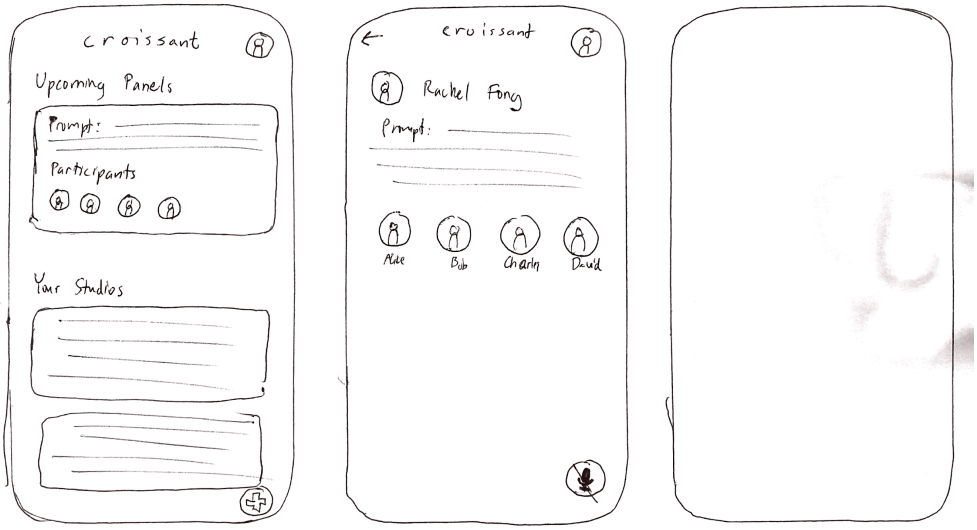
Next, fans are able to participate in a studio by responding to a creator's prompt.



Once fans have completed their idea generation, they are able to rank or rate the ideas of others. At this stage, we were not set on a particular method of rating ideas. This was a question we tested in our lo-fi prototype interview with fans.



Finally, creators are able to talk to discuss feedback with some of their top fans.



Testing methodology

Since our product is two-sided, we interviewed two creators and two fans. We used our personal networks to identify four participants, all of whom are roughly our age. We wanted to test our prototype not just on fans and creators, but on fans and creators of different types of content. As outlined in the table below, the content fell into two buckets. The first is general/lifestyle content, which is dominated by “influencers” who often have diverse interests (our interviewee, Christy, is a singer but also posts makeup and other videos) and share content that purports to offer a “intimate” look into their lives to their fans. At the other end of the spectrum is our second bucket, which is filled with niche/enthusiast content in which the creators’ lifestyle takes a backseat to their focus on a specific activity, whether it be chess (Adam) or cars (Dean).

	General/lifestyle content	**Niche/enthusiast content**
Fan	Gigi	Adam
Creator	Christie	Dean

We did not compensate our interviewees and conducted these interviews over Zoom. We had one facilitator who asked the interviewee to perform tasks while a “computer” followed the interviewee’s instructions and clicked on the Balsamiq prototype.

We transformed the sketches from the previous section into a Balsamiq mockup (see Appendix). Our immediate, low-level focus was on the ease of completing tasks but since the interviewees found completing the tasks to be relatively straightforward (see Results) we also probed their general interest in the product, their comfort level in sharing or receiving feedback, and their opinions on different ways of ranking or rating feedback.

Results and discussion

Creator tests

In terms of UI usability and task execution, the only real hitch in our two creator tests occurred while interviewing Christie, who could not find the floating plus button to create a new studio. To fix this, we plan on adding a color to make the button “pop” in our next, higher-fidelity prototypes.

The richer insights came from our discussion of the mission and value proposition of the product. Both creators expressed a general desire to get feedback from their fans, though they nuanced that need in different ways. Christie referenced how the most popular questions from her fans would most likely be intensely personal, in part due to Indonesian fans’ reputation for being particularly “pushy.” To assuage this concern, we emphasized that creators would choose the questions they answer. We also plan to allow creators to “pin” example comments to prime more productive discussions

The biggest insight from our interview with Dean was the idea of showing reputation or status on fan bios. As a freelance editor, he values feedback from commenters with technical expertise more than suggestions from the general public. Currently, creators like Donut Media handle this issue heuristically by consulting an offline “inner circle”that the team trusts to give helpful and productive feedback. As Dean pointed out, re-creating this status hierarchy within the platform risks harming the democratizing power of our product by transforming it into a Twitter-like echo-chamber where “blue checks talk to blue checks,” but we believe that some indication of commitment and/or expertise is useful for making creators comfortable with the idea of using fan feedback, especially for technical areas like video production or skills-based fields like chess.

Fan tests

Similar to our creator interviews, the fans did not struggle with fulfilling the tasks using our design, but offered incredibly rich feedback about the product. In Adam’s interview, we

discovered tensions over publicly broadcasting the panel discussions. While he was enthusiastic about chatting with his favorite creator -- he would “drop everything” to have a conversation with him -- Adam showed considerable hesitancy when we asked him about his comfort level in participating in a panel with an audience. He also did not show the same interest in watching a panel as he did in participating in one. Both of these concerns were somewhat echoed by Gigi, but to a lesser extent. In the end, she decided she would be okay with the panels being broadcast, and would consider watching other live panels depending on the topic being discussed. This indicated to us that these questions depend highly upon each specific fan’s goals, and that a high level of variability and flexibility may be necessary. These questions about fan-creator discussions are vitally important, since these conversations best realize our mission of building meaningful relationships. Our current plan is to allow creators to either publicly broadcast panel discussions or hold private conversations with fans, since each creator wants something different out of these discussions.

Our interview with Gigi pinpointed another important issue. She mentioned that if she went multiple rounds without getting to talk to the creator or any form of recognition for her feedback, she would drift away from the platform. We plan to follow her suggestion to insert a screen at the end of each studio in which fans are shown how their suggestions performed in the rating phase, and are thanked for their input.

A final take away from the fan interviews, confirmed in both conversations, was the superiority of ranking over a simple A/B test or a rating system. Adam and Gigi both believed that rating five pieces of feedback fulfilled their desire to help surface quality feedback without causing cognitive overload. Gigi also mentioned that she would prefer to see more comments in a ranking as compared to reading only two, isolated comments in an A/B test.

Appendix

Log of Critical Incidents

Participant #1

Event	**Description / Quote**	**Severity rating**
A/B testing ranking	“This is what I originally thought it would be like”	3

schemas	referring to the alternate ranking system (didn't like A/B testing"	
Joining a studio	"This seems really obvious… I just follow the buttons"	0
Finding the app	"I assume these are notifications? Or maybe the main feed in the app"	2
Staying motivated	"I feel like if I don't get picked 5 times in a row, I would stop using the app. I want to know if other people are at least seeing my comments and how I'm doing."	4
Getting the prize	"I'd love to get picked and become friends with [the creator]"	0
Publicized video panel	"I think I'd be okay with it. I don't mind if other people see" (but had to think about it)	2
Timing of panels	"I like how it tells me when the creators are doing panels… Usually live streams are impromptu and I don't know when they're happening"	0
Listening on panels	"I might listen into panels with other fans. It just depends what they are talking about and if it is interesting to me."	2

Participant #2

Event	**Description / Quote**	**Severity rating**
Brainstorm prompt	"I'm kind of confused, so I don't know what what I be asking my fans"	2
Creating a new studio	"For me, I would focus on the results because that's what I need in order to create my feature contents that's how I see it" - confusion regarding actually creating a new studio	2
Viewing synthesized findings	No issues	0
Reception to general concept of a panel	"I'm a person who would always try to find an opportunity to engage as much as I can… maybe a	0

	whole separate sort of question and answer for this more intimate group of people.”	
Start panel discussion	No issues	0
Publicized video panel	“I’d prefer” a publicized panel, where other fans can view (almost like a livestream)	2
Getting questions	“In Indonesia, fans are really nosy…” - more/clearer explanation to creators is necessary for trust in the app.	3

Participant #3

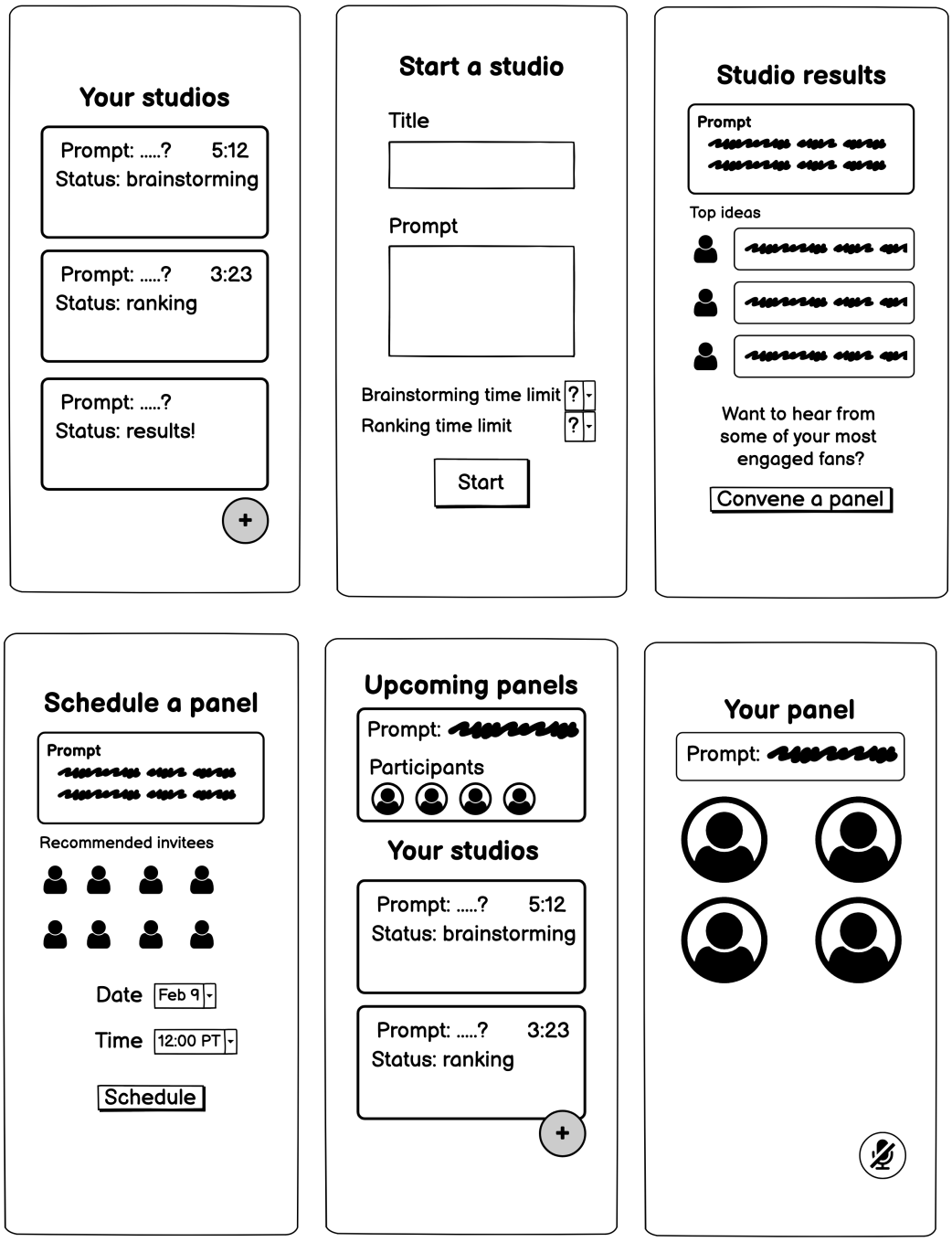
Event	**Description / Quote**	**Severity rating**
Contribute to studio	No issues finding correct studio and clicking on icon	0
Add idea and submit	No issues	0
A/B testing ranking schemes	A/B - ok Ranking - liked this one, “I would prefer to be able to see everything”, 5 is the ideal number of items Valence - “I don’t like this, because my first thought is ‘what is 10’”	1
Concept of a panel discussion	“Would drop everything to be in a panel with” Levy Rozman (chess YouTuber)	0
Prefer private or public	Some hesitancy about being broadcast; would probably get over it but initial hesitation	2
Watching a panel	Not as inclined to watch a panel with fans, although depends on the subject	2

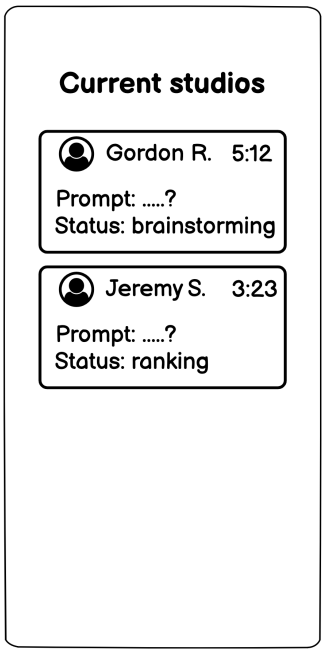
Participant #4

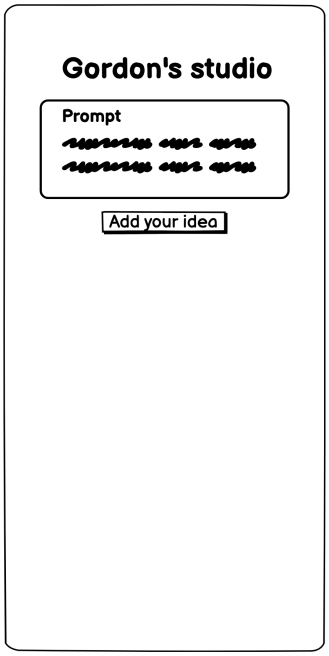
Event	**Description / Quote**	**Severity**

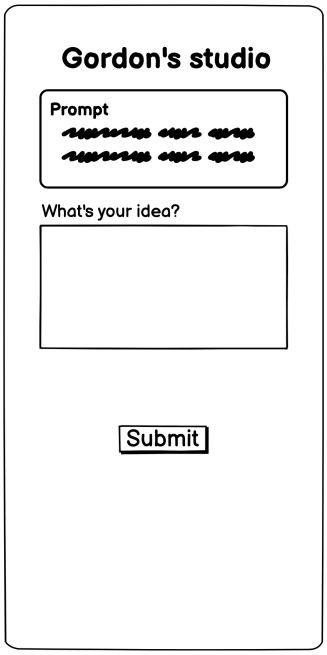
		rating
Upon viewing landing page	“These are like curated studios” - understood the purpose of landing page	0
Create new studio	No issues - would set a short time limit	0
Find completed studio	No issues - first comment “It’d be cool to see a graph of how many times a word was mentioned”	1
Start panel	No issues - first comment “I would change it to something more friendly like ‘room’” (instead of ‘panel’)	1
Viewing panel page	“I like that there’s recommended invitees… this looks awesome”	0
Composition of panel	“It would be cool to have a way… where you’re credentials are attached”	1

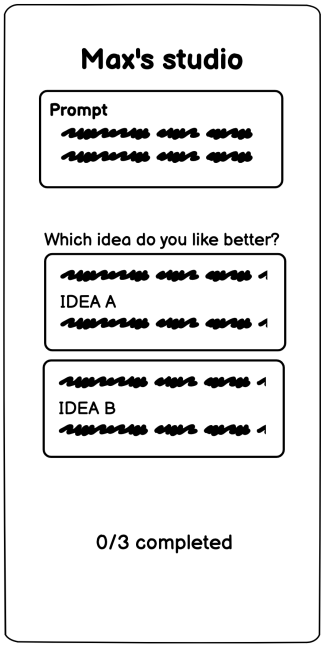
Balsamiq Screens


Your studios
Prompt: .....? 5:12
Status: brainstorming
Prompt: .....? 3:23
Status: ranking
Prompt: .....?
Status: results!
+
Start a studio
Title
Prompt
Brainstorming time limit ?
Ranking time limit ?
Start
Studio results
Prompt
Top ideas
Want to hear from some of your most engaged fans?
Convene a panel
Schedule a panel
Prompt
Recommended invitees
Date Feb 9
Time 12:00 PT
Schedule
Upcoming panels
Prompt:
Participants
Your studios
Prompt: .....? 5:12
Status: brainstorming
Prompt: .....? 3:23
Status: ranking
+
Your panel
Prompt:


Current studios
Gordon R. 5:12
Prompt: .....?
Status: brainstorming
Jeremy S. 3:23
Prompt: .....?
Status: ranking


Gordon's studio
Prompt
Add your idea


Gordon's studio
Prompt
What's your idea?
Submit


Max's studio
Prompt
Which idea do you like better?
IDEA A
IDEA B
0/3 completed