Seth Shober

User Experience Designer

Skills

User Experience Design

Responsive design

Wireframes / Mockups

Research & Analytics

Screen Design

HTML/CSS/JavaScript

Web Application Architecture

What I Believe

Start with WHY.

Be passionate.

Do something that matters.

Be different.

Never stop learning.

Help others.

Teach.

Listen.

Anything is possible.

Get outside.

"If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions."

Hi. I'm Seth. I was raised in the fields of Amish country, where somehow I found a fascination with technology instead of a tractor. I've made it my mission to improve the experience between humans and machines. I enjoy reading, running, coffee, my 1980 VW camper van, and have a fond fascination for learning and teaching. Here's my story.

The year: 2012. It was a life changing year for me. I spent 156 days backpacking the Appalachian Trail (AT) from Georgia to Maine. It was a testament to my mental and physical capacity, and the experience altered my perspective and solidified the foundation for my character and discipline.

Coming back to the "real" world was a hard transition, but I was able to see very clearly what was important to me. I needed to do something that mattered. So I decided to build my own product that stood for more than just the bottom line. It would be a place that put its users first and gave them a voice. It would be something I truly believed in.

The Problem: How do I build a successful product?

Armed with a degree in computers and business and an "I can do anything" attitude that would not be stopped, I made it my goal to learn as much as possible about all the pieces that go into making a product. I read a book every week ranging from bios of leaders like Steve Jobs, to web design and development, to how be a leader and motivate, to company culture. Being able to speak on each aspect would differentiate me from others and increase my chances for success.

I became focused on startups, and not just what it takes to build a successful product, but a successful business, and in the fall of 2012 I co-found Donation Digital.

Donation Digital (DD) was a digital marketplace that shared half of their profits with charities chosen by users. It was built on the belief that users should come first, and we were responsible for doing the right thing on their behalf. *"Donation Digital is a place to buy music and feel good about it."*

The year was 2012. It was an exciting time as music was just beginning a massive shift to streaming. Spotify had only just landed in the US and Apple Music didn't even exist.

The Problem: Now that music is a commodity, how will we differentiate our experience?

Being a co-founder meant I had my hands in a little bit of everything, though with one backend engineer and one frontend engineer/designer, my focus was on the business strategy and UX research. I did everything from industry research, competitive analysis, wireframing, user flows, to identifying usability issues and setting up meetings with record labels.

In the course of a day I would go from being on the phone with Warner Brothers, to negotiating licensing rates, to discussing page layouts and mockups, to finding answers to questions like, "Who are our users?"
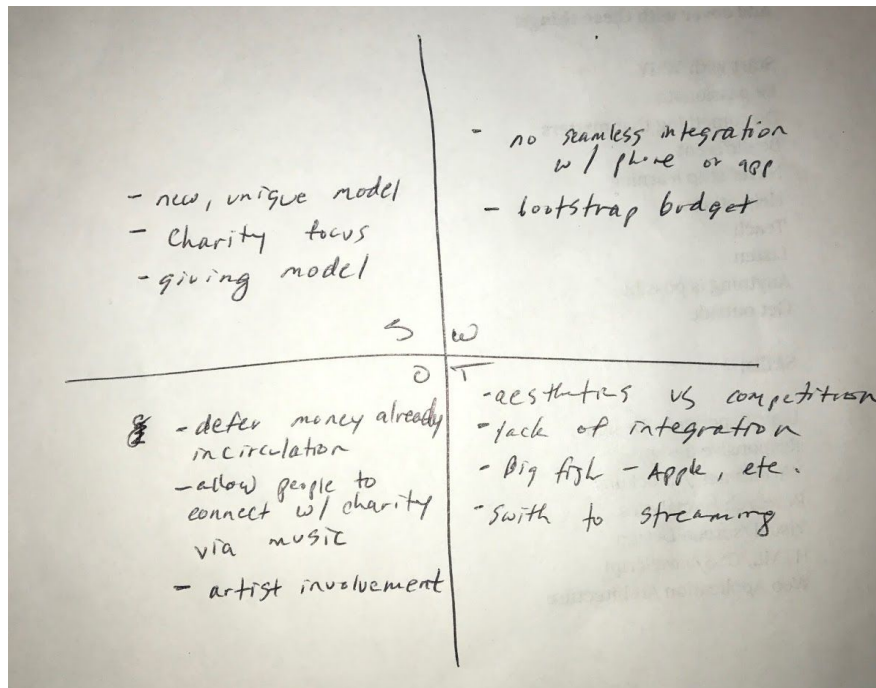
SWOT analysis

From our research we found that there was a company in the UK with this same model of sharing profits with charities. The giving model, which is where something is given away when you purchase something was also becoming popular with companies like TOMS shoes and Amazon Smile. All this was validation that we were on the right track.

The Result: We built a fully functional prototype.

A prohibitively expensive license prevented us from launching, but I fully consider this a success, as this experience allowed me to plant my roots and see tremendous growth. I got my first experience working with a remote team, learned how to cold call people, and how to take chances in things I believe.

We learned that people don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it, and we could stand out by selling a feeling.

"It's the same feeling people get when they donate money or help somebody. If we can replicate this experience to purchasing music, we will be very successful."

2013 came quickly, and with it my first hackathon. My goal was to put myself in uncomfortable situations and immerse myself, which would hopefully foster more growth. I signed up for Startup Weekend, a 48 hour event that goes from a 60 second product pitch on Friday night, to a five minute pitch to a panel of judges on Sunday. In just one weekend teams must get real user validation, build a prototype, and present a viable business strategy. It's essentially launching a company in a weekend and is a tremendous learning opportunity.

This is where **Ride Shotty** was borne. Ride Shotty was a rideshare service catered to college campuses. At this time Uber and Lyft were relatively unknown, and taking a cab was still considered "normal".

The problem: College kids need rides, because let's face it, the shuttle service provided isn't cool. Essentially, there is no cool or affordable way to get around.

User issues identified include: no access to car, the shuttle service is lame, and rental service is too expensive.

While getting my hands wet in user research, business strategy, development and design, my focus was market research and UX strategy, which included going out into the field and talking with potential users, conducting surveys, and ensuring we were creating the simplest experience as part of our minimum viable product.

From our research we found that 60% said they would use the service and 25% would pay $9.95 a month to be a driver. Out of 18 million undergraduates in the U.S., that's $324 million in potential annual revenue.

The Result: We won the competition.

I came into the weekend very uncertain about myself and left feeling like an accomplished product developer.
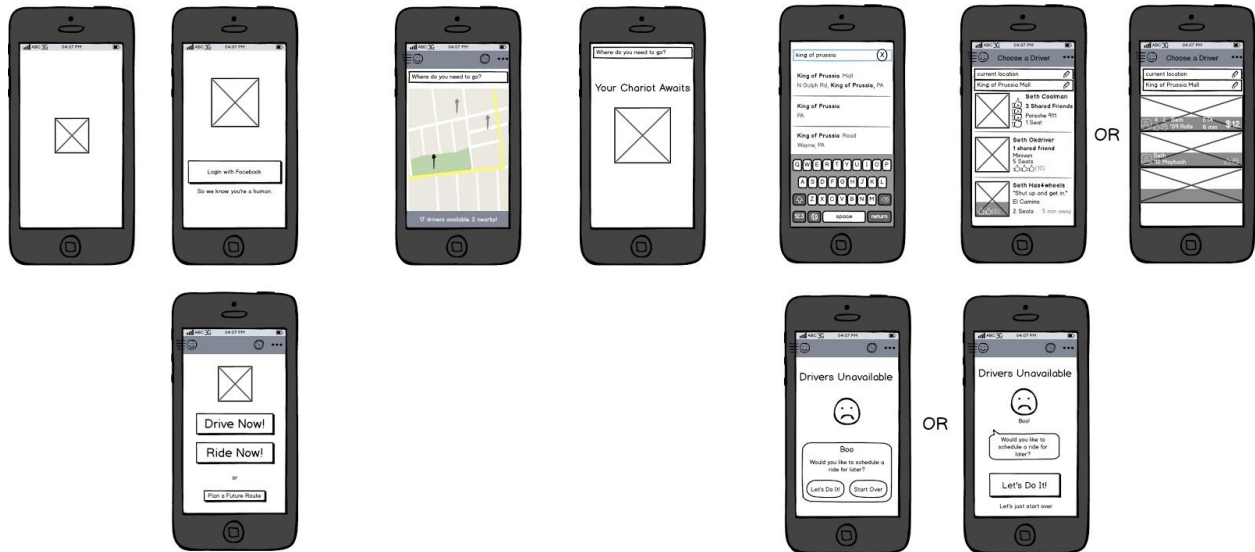
Shotty wireframes: Using "rough" looking wireframes instead of more polished ones allows things to seem less "final", and inhibits more variation to take place.

It's 2014! I continued my studies and skill building daily, and in 2014 I decided to move to Portland, Oregon, to put myself in a better position of joining a great product organization where I could learn and grow.
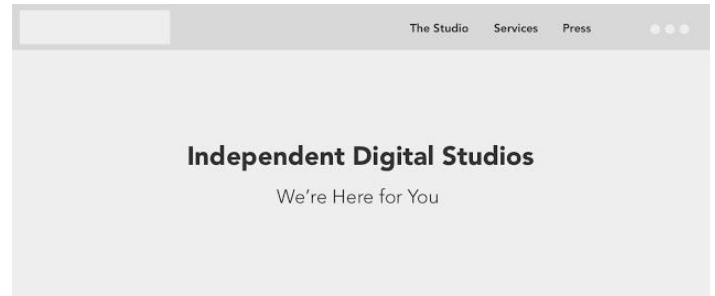
I always seek to understand the problem
before discussing solutions.

I believe in creating content first, simple designs.

I arrived with a newfound freedom and excitement. I went to tech meetups almost every night, and conferences including TechFest NW and PDX Design Conf. This allowed me to continue my immersion strategy, stay focused, and meet like-minded people.

I was able to field some web design work. One project included providing mockups for an independent digital studio to introduce their mobile presence. They needed a professional introduction to customers via the web.

Gray scale mockups are a great way for clients to confirm placement without getting distracted by images or colors.

Independent Digital Studios
We're Here for You

The Studio   Services   Press

Feature 1
swag skateboard cardigan sartorial mixtape banjo before they sold out pop-up. Irony master cleanse vegan small batch XOXO cred, organic tilde authentic. Blog swag keytar, cliche XOXO single

Learn More →

Feature 2
anse vegan small batch XOXO cred, organic tilde authentic. Blog swag keytar, cliche XOXO single-origin coffee narwhal mumblecore kale chips

Learn More →

Feature 3
selfies Marfa flexitarian stumptown vegan jean shorts. Next level YOLO DIY McSweeney's kale chips. Sustainable dreamcatcher art party, Cosby sweater pug meh vegan. Austin Odd Future selfies literally Carles, Bushwick leggings

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Talk To Us

Independent Digital Studios
123 Movie Boulevard
Hollywood, 12345

1-800-CALLNOW

The Studio   The Independent Family   Social
Services   Office   Facebook
Contact   Studios   Twitter
Press   Labs   YouTube
Careers
Legal

2014 brought with it another Startup Weekend project, **Follow Me**. Follow Me was created as an alternative to traditional fixed point GPS navigation. Follow Me allowed a user to set their location and have somebody else follow that point, which may move. It was meant to solve those "follow me" moments, where somebody in the party inevitably gets lost or separated.

I was in charge of user experience, which included doing market and user research, user surveys, and designing the overall experience of the app, which I decided was only allowed to have one feature outside of the core functionality, in order to allow us to focus. We were really going to sell our user validation, and were able to get that by going out into the field and talking to people at the Saturday Market (Sunday's too!).

It's imperative not to use leading questions for genuine answers, and it was immediately found that almost everybody we talked to had been in this situation and shared the frustration. This didn't necessarily mean we were building what they wanted yet, but we were definitely in the right direction.

Why Follow Me had one feature
Snapchat is a very successful photo sharing mobile application. One of the keys to the success of Snapchat is that they improved the user experience of sending pictures. Nothing they did was new. Sharing pictures on a mobile phone had been around for years, but previously the experience was clunky. It required a camera app, photo viewer app, and texting app, all used separately just to send a picture. That's enough friction for somebody to decide not to take or send a photo. Snapchat removed all that friction by keeping the entire experience in the app and essentially built their success on the foundation of improving the user experience of sharing media.

Follow Me's "detour" feature followed the same principle of eliminating friction points, and keeping the activity simple and in the app.

The project assets for Follow Me have been lost, but I wanted to share it because it was a good experience, and there is a video of the pitch, where I present the interaction and experience of the app, which in itself is a valuable experience and skill.
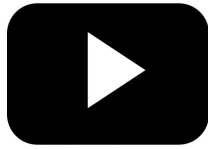
Never stray from the core functionality by getting distracted with features. You'll lose control of the experience. Do only one thing, and do it very well before adding features.

2014 raced into 2015 and after extensive research into the Portland market, I accepted a job at New Relic because I believed in the culture. This was a huge point in my efforts to join a Product organization where I could learn and grow. The people who work at New Relic are the elite of what they do, and I jumped at every opportunity to meet new people, ask questions, and learn.

Startup Weekend came again, and you bet I was there! My team created **The Chill**. We went from concept to mobile app, including user research and validation in only 24 hours.

The Problem: People spend too much time finding something to do.

Every time Jane looks for something to do, she spends 26 minutes doing so, and she gets quite frustrated. Willamette Week, then facebook, messaging friends, yet she still can't find anything to do. Jane knows there must be a better solution. What if we could cut down that 26 minutes of madness to 2 chill minutes?

That's *The Chill.*

During our research we identified the top two problems for "finding things to do" were finding interesting events and being overwhelmed with choices, and they spent 26 minutes on average going through this unpleasant experience.

I came up with the concept and made all the design decisions, as well as design and development of the prototype. The goal was to be fun and simple.

The Chill

10 miles

The Chill

Portland Banana Bunch
Wear a banana suit. Drink.
7:00pm - 10:00pm   Tonight

Fun Time Bar
1234 SE Division St,
Portland 97202

Brewvana Tour
Pedal for your drinks.
7:00pm - 10:00pm   Tonight

Brewery District
The Pearl,
Portland 97202

PDX WTF Tour
Keepin' it weird.
7:00pm - 10:00pm   Tonight

The Streets
Portland 97202

The Chill

PDX WTF Tour
Keepin' it weird.
7:00pm - 10:00pm   Tonight

The Streets
Portland 97202

Description

Kombucha authentic keffiyeh kogi freegan church-key. Vinyl kinfolk pug, direct trade sartorial lomo viral fashion axe. Irony godard fingerstache, intelligentsia chillwave banh mi before they sold out locavore ennui food truck ugh. Irony tousled listicle heirloom blue bottle, small batch mlkshk. Small batch neutra tousled cornhole migas XOXO dreamcatcher

Pro Tip

Don't stand too close to the bagpipes. They'll singe you!

I'm Going

The Chill

The Result: *The Chill* was always just meant to be for fun, and we capitalized on that by winning the "audience choice" award.

We were even able to get three businesses to sign letters of intent to pay us for advertising and to partner with us on events, all before the app was built.

At this point I started to realize most of my experience had been around mobile web applications, and I wanted to try something different. At the intersection of my learning and teaching interests, I started a JavaScript blog where I would learn and teach simultaneously.

Learn JS With Me is a blog I created and co-wrote with a friend to solve the problem we experienced learning development skills.

The Problem: Documentation and tutorials are too difficult for beginners. Everything seemed to be written for people that already knew what they were doing.

In reality, I had been inadvertently doing research on this for years, as I had been reading blogs and articles on web development and design for a few years now. I knew what my own experience was and had discussed this with others of similar experience level, who seemed to share the same feelings.

I sought to create the voice that I never had. *Learn JS With Me* would be an open place to learn, and it would speak at such a level that made no assumptions of skill, yet did not demean by talking down and wouldn't over-explain things. By launching multiple posts a week I was able to refine and iterate the blueprint for my articles and the voice I was conveying.

The copy/content was also aesthetically clean and easy on the eyes to view and consume, as this aligns with my design beliefs. Where other sites presented cluttered and overly complex solutions, we did the opposite, and the user feedback was solid!

Taken from

The Result: Our FizzBuzz article made the first page of Google search.

"Digestible chunks that are easy to understand."

"You've hit the nail on the head!"

FizzBuzz switch

Some may prefer the switch statement to clean up some of the if checks. It may be a better option for maintainability of you intend to add more cases later, and it potentially could be faster.

```javascript
function fizzBuzzSwitch() {
  for (var i = 1; i <= 100; i++) {
    switch (true) {

      case i % 3 == 0 && i % 5 == 0:
        console.log('FizzBuzz');
        break;
      case i % 3 == 0:
        console.log('Fizz');
        break;

      case i % 5 == 0:
        console.log('Buzz');
        break;

      default:
        console.log(i);
        break;
    }
  }
}
```

At this point I had done a variety of real world projects, though some were on a condensed time frame, yet I now had the opportunity to work with a team at a local code school to produce a project over a period of weeks. The team wanted to produce a proof of concept for a website that focused on full scale, full resolution photos. The app was called **Full Pixel**, and I was in charge of design and frontend development. At this point my skills were becoming refined, I had experience under my belt, and this was an opportunity for me to lead.

The Problem: There aren't any photo sites for enthusiasts that allow full resolution and scale.

I had a key part in the early stages, which included many whiteboarding sessions and discussions with the team, as we discussed the vision of the application and how we were going to make that come alive.

Our focus was going to be on the photos. The photo always had to be the main focus. Text and everything else would be secondary. Users already have an abundance of sites to showcase their photos, and focusing on the photo was going to be our differentiating factor.

The splash page is the page for unregistered/signed out users, and the first thing a user is likely to see. We want to catch their attention and invite them in. On each page there should be one clear thing to do, and here that is **sign up**.
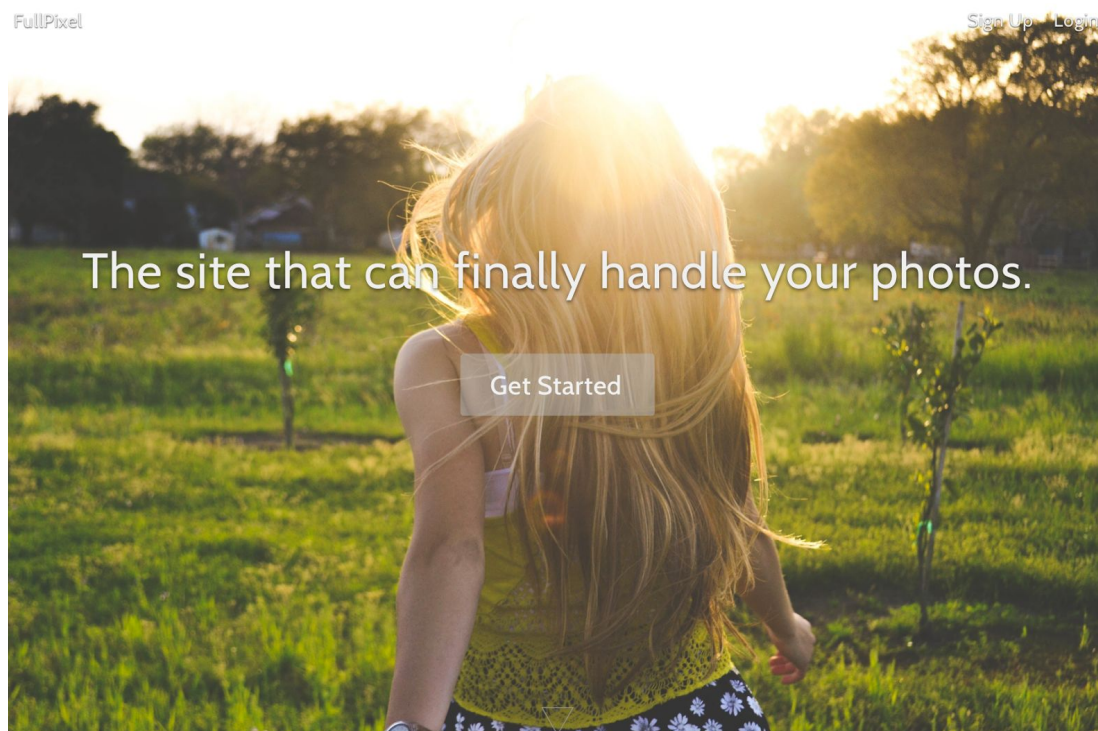
The choice of image has never been more important. Because we are a premiere photo site, our image must be too, but it should also communicate properly with the user. The girl in the previous image, without words, is saying follow me, come on in. It feels very safe, almost magical, and leaves out almost any excuse not to click the "Get Started" button.

If instead the user scrolls down, they get their first taste of user images, and are reminded again to sign up.
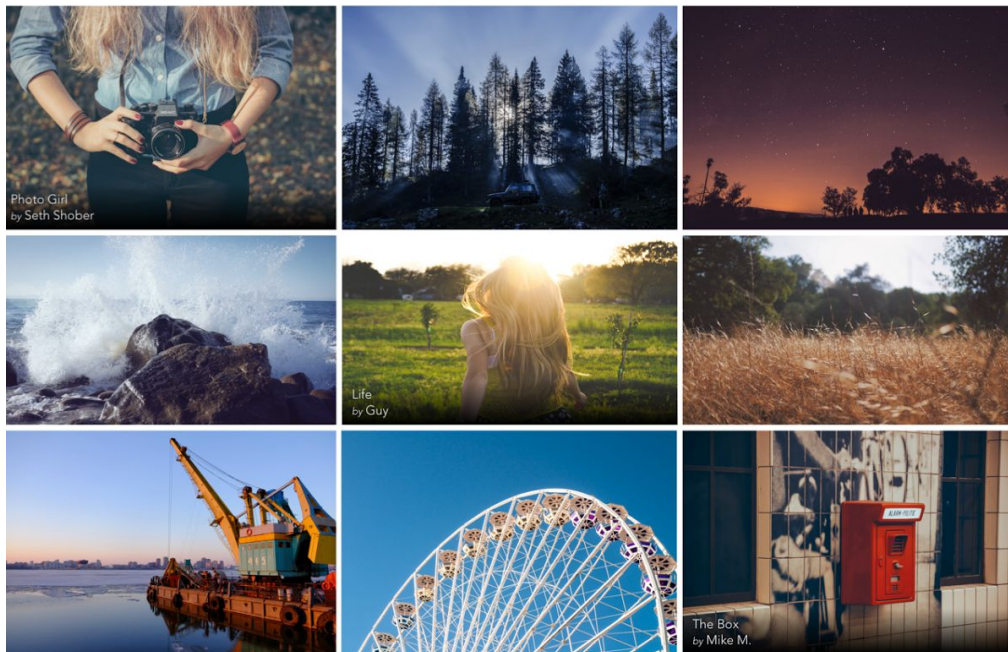
Once a user is signed up we want to get them active right away, in order to show them the value of the service. In our case, that means uploading and sharing a photo. Browsing is good, but sharing is better. So, we're going to prompt the user with this upload form.

It's important not to overlook the design of a form. It should be clear what the user is expected to share. Good design is one of the first places for building trust with a user, and if overlooked, can be a friction point for a user to share data.

Upload Your Photos

◯ Choose Photo

TITLE
My Beautiful Photo

CAPTION
This photo is a bowl of awesome sauce!

TAGS
nature x

EXIF
Camera	Nokia Lumia 920
Shutter Speed	1/460
Aperture	f/2
ISO	608
Taken	2014:11:26 13:20:24
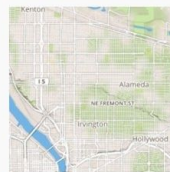
If the user uploads a photo we'll take them to the photo page, and if not, we'll go to their profile page.

FullPixel   Discover

⬤ Profile   ⬤ Upload

The Great Outdoors
Seth Shober

Caption

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.

#mountains #beauty #lakes #nature #outdoors

Details

Camera
Lumia 920

Shutter Speed
1/460 s

Aperture
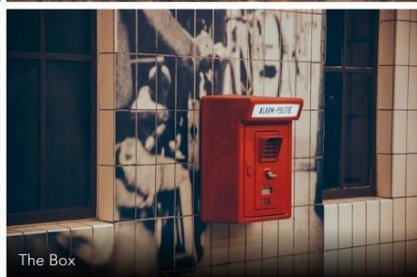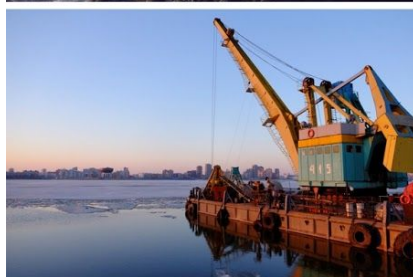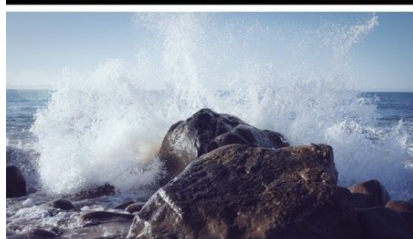f/2

ISO/Film
100

Taken
Nov 1, 2014

Location

Mountains, Earth

FullPixel   Discover   ◯ Profile   ◯ Upload

Seth Shober
The Americas
Nokia Lumia 920

Photo Girl

Life

The Box
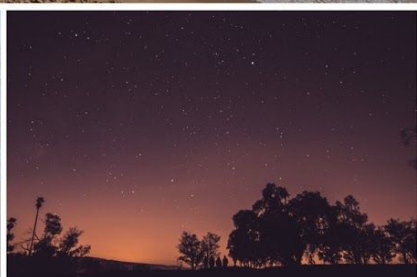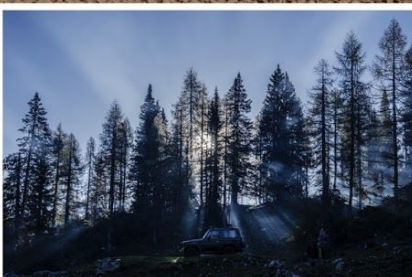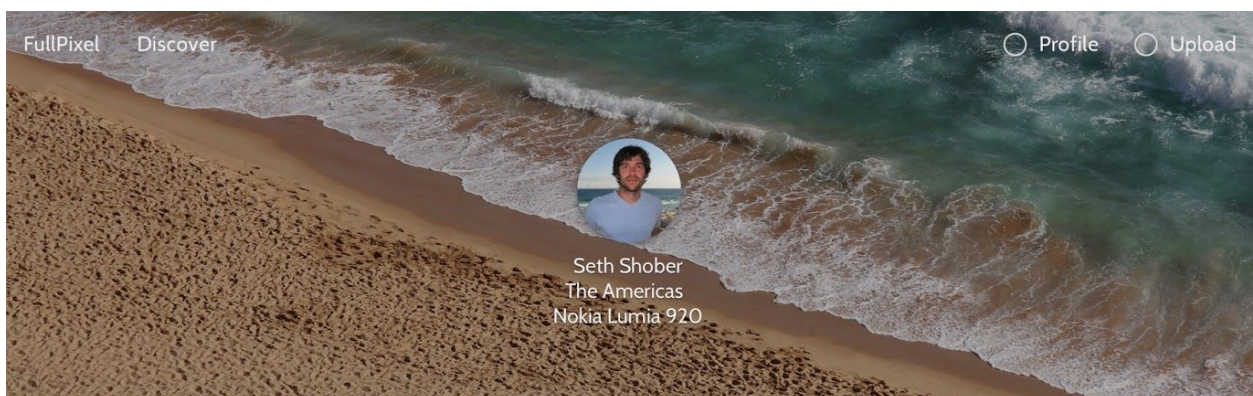
Load More

At any time a user can go into fullscreen mode to view photos, and this is the real beauty of the site, where we show full resolution photos, unaltered.

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.
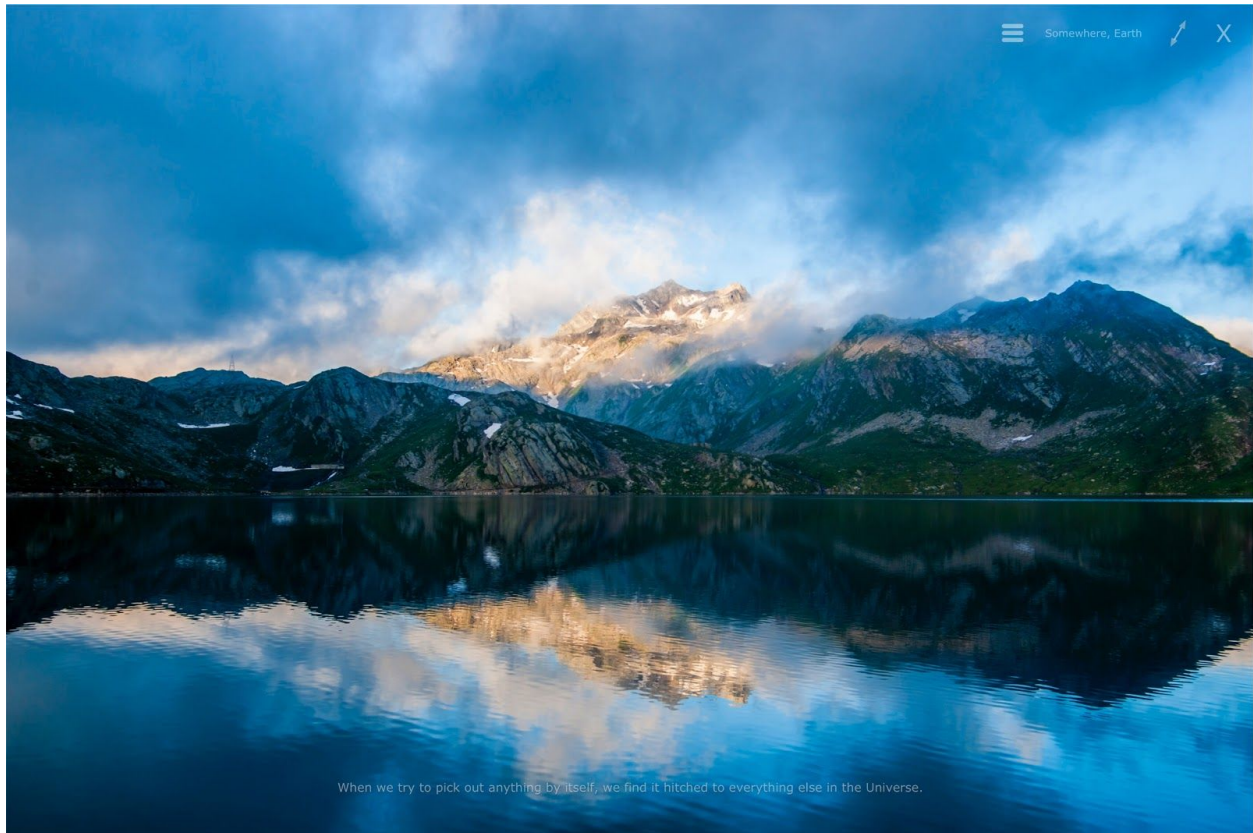
All page elements stay transparent until hovered over, keeping the focus on the image.

The Result: A learning experience on par with that of the industry.

That brings us to today, and back to our original problem of, "How do I build a successful product?" There really isn't a turn key answer for that. Just keep creating. Always use a feedback loop. Listen to your users, and focus on the relationship you're creating between them and you're product.

The real magic behind a great product, or a great company, is in the relationship we form with it.