We’ll go with naming the issues 1 2 3 instead of 1 1A 2.

Intro

Welcome to SOCHI News! It’s midterm week, which means it’s more than ever important to prioritize your mental wellness, so try to go to bed at 1am instead of 2. In any case, winter will officially be over on Thursday! In anticipation of the emergence of the Diag squirrels, Steven will be stocking up on peanuts.

-Reuben Crasto, Steven Liu

# Events

[Rescheduled to Thursday, 5pm, Room TBD] Just like in UX, effective communication is about understanding your audience and adapting to their needs. We're hosting **Designing Your Conversations** to help you identify your own communication style and learn how to collaborate with different personalities. You’ll gain valuable skills not just for UX research but also leadership in any business environment!

# Body

**Discord in talks to go public**-- Discord, a prominent social chat app, is in early [stages](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/05/technology/discord-ipo.html) of taking itself public. Users are not happy; in the [words](https://www.reddit.com/r/discordapp/comments/1j4g47g/nytimes_discord_in_early_talks_with_bankers_for/) of one user: "Whelp! It's been fun, but anytime someone decides they want to 'make a public offering' then the company \*everything\* goes to shit."

Discord's IPO would shift power away from founders Jason Citron and Stanislav Vishnevskiy to public investors, who prioritize short term profits over long term vision. Discord currently runs on a "freemium" model, which allows users to join a variety of community spaces for free while offering a subscription to Nitro for premium features such as high resolution video streaming and animated Pepe emojis. If Discord decides to go public, some free features like unlimited voice chat could become exclusive to Nitro in hopes of boosting revenue, in a phenomenon endearingly known as enshittification.

**Everything gets worse**-- A term coined by Cory Doctorow, enshittification doesn't refer to bowel movements but rather a gradual worsening of a product in pursuit of pleasing shareholders. During its early days, Facebook prioritized connecting people with friends and family but has now become dependent on advertising and algorithms to drive profits and engagement.

**Fundamental shift**-- Sara Brown, a writer at *MIT*, [argues](https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/case-new-social-media-business-models) that the business models of free social media platforms like Facebook are fundamentally unhealthy as they compete for users' attention insteading of delivering quality information. Shifting from an attention economy to subscriptions or enforcing a robust identity verification policy could improve the state of things; companies would be incentivized to provide a good service and people would be on their best behavior if their boss can see their Facebook posts.

**Does it get browner?**-- It may seem we're doomed to a capitalistic death cycle, but there are examples when the user experience improves despite public shareholders. Since Apple's IPO in 1980, its devices have continued becoming more seamless and Apple has developed many privacy and accessibility features such as App Tracking Transparency and VoiceOver. Some companies, such as [Bluesky](https://www.wired.com/story/big-interview-jay-graber-bluesky-2024/), are aware of enshittification and are actively working to maintain a smooth, un-frustrating user experience.

**How WHOOP is Redefining Wearable UX**

Whoop is rapidly transforming the wearable tech industry, known by its intentional omission of a screen. Founder Will Ahmed articulates the strategy clearly: “Once you have a screen, you tell the time. Once you tell the time, you’re a watch. I didn’t want to compete with watches.” Instead of competing with smartwatches or cramming more functionality into its device, Ahmed said developing a screenless device helps WHOOP stay focused on its mission to be the best health monitoring wearable.

From a user experience perspective, this minimalist approach simplifies interactions, eliminating distractions associated with screen-based wearables. WHOOP's UX prioritizes seamless integration into daily life, requiring minimal user interaction and promoting a more passive, unobtrusive tracking experience. This allows users to fully concentrate on their fitness goals and health insights, rather than navigating complex interfaces or dealing with notification overload.

However, simply removing a screen isn't what makes WHOOP stand out. Its sophisticated tracking capabilities and cutting-edge analytics truly differentiate it. While other wearable companies overload devices with numerous smartphone-like features, WHOOP caters specifically to users dedicated to serious fitness and comprehensive health tracking.

Does WHOOP’s success signal the end of smartwatches? Certainly not. The smartwatch industry continues to thrive, with revenue projections reaching an impressive US$32.05 billion by 2025 (Statista Market Research). Nevertheless, WHOOP has effectively carved out its own market segment. It demonstrates a clear demand among health-conscious consumers who prioritize precise and insightful health data delivered through thoughtfully crafted minimalist design rather than smartphone convenience or watch functionalities.

WHOOP doesn't threaten the smartwatch industry but rather complements it, providing a targeted solution for those passionate about fitness and health tracking. This innovative, focused approach highlights the diverse needs within wearable tech and points toward a future where specialized wearables coexist with multi-functional smartwatches.

# Game