The Engagement Project

What is keeping people from contributing on professional-networking platform?

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Project Overview

Problem Statement

Novice users are holding back from contributing content with their professional circle on networking platforms.

Objective

Increase user engagement for a professional-networking platform by design an experience that would help novice users overcome the barriers to share and target their content to the right audience.

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Study Existing Design & Research

- N = 12
- Formal & Informal Interviews
- 45-60 min (formal)
- Opened new accounts to explore the entire journey
- Collected data individually and then put notes into stickies
- Combined our research onto a large board to identify themes

Affinity Mapping and Problem Definition

- Organized and grouped data to narrowed down themes with affinity mapping
- Redefined problem using fishbone diagram

Develop Persona & Involve Stakeholder in Process

- Understood what groups of emotions and behaviors set users apart
- Presented persona and research findings, including the stakeholder in the process
- Honed in on a primary persona, while still considering effects on secondary, as we brainstorm solutions

Ensure Alignment on Problems, Themes, Personas & Focus for Solutions
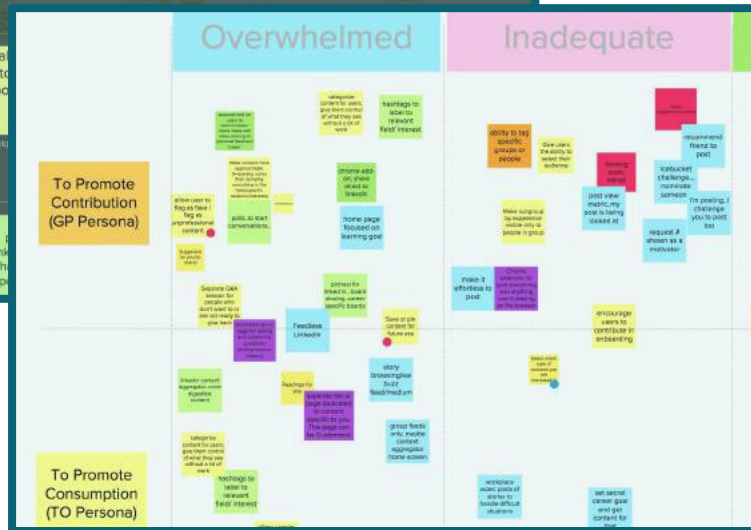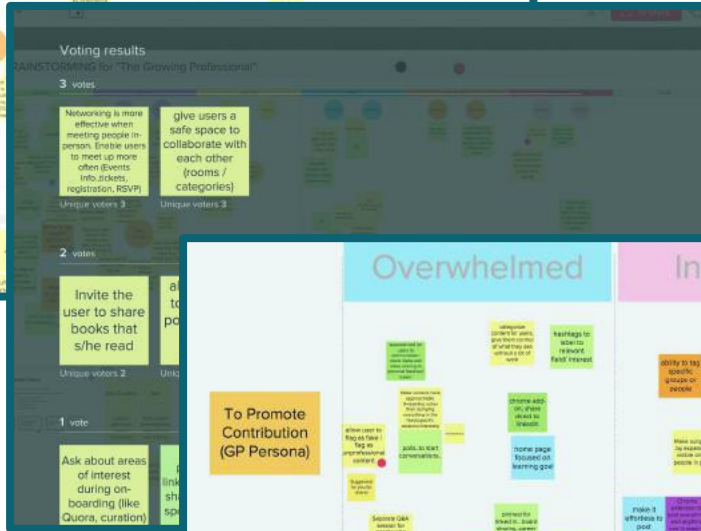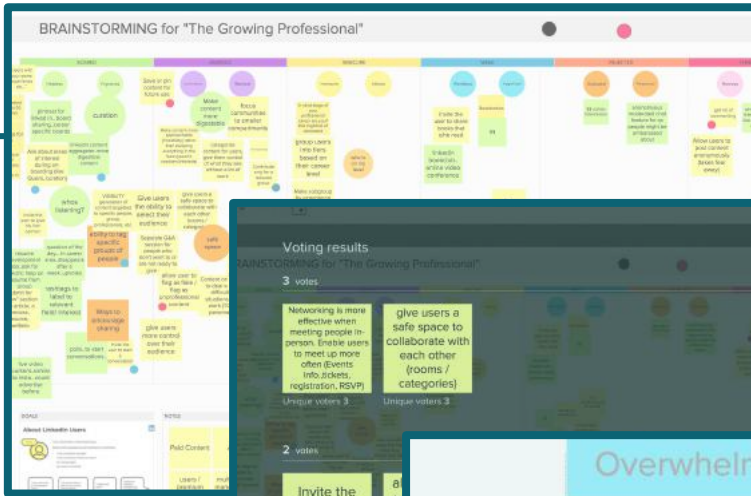
- Aligned brainstorming with feeling Exposed, Inadequate, and Overwhelmed as well as considering users mental model of the platform / product
- Voted on a number of themes and then solutions to present since every idea cannot be implemented
- Made Decisions keeping user needs and business goals / feasibility in consideration

- Developed a number of unique solutions to help cultivate an engagement ecosystem where Consumption, Contribution, and Reaction feed off of themselves

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Primary User Group

Emotion
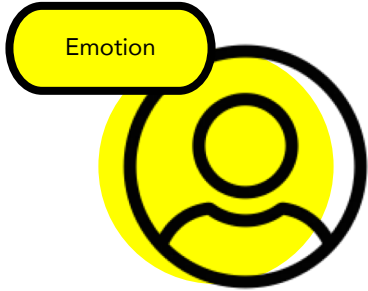
THE GROWING PROFESSIONAL (Primary)

Doesn't feel empowered and confident to contribute.

- Is this contribution valuable?
- Is this contribution relevant to others?
- Am I being judged?
- Am I safe to contribute?

"I take a lot of care on curating what I share."

"You should make an effort to be out there, and participate."

"I need a safe space."

"Content is sometimes too unprofessional."

Secondary User Group

Mental Model
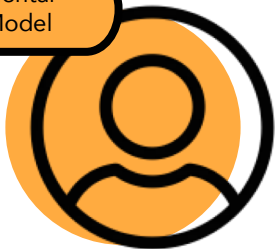
THE TASK-ORIENTED USER (Secondary)

Doesn't find value in consistent engagement with the platform.

- Why should I care to use the platform?
- Is this content relevant to me?
- Why should I contribute?
- Will contributing help me achieve my objective?
- Would I be judged?

"When I decide to change jobs, I'll get back on the platform."

"I don't have a reason to be on the platform. My [professional] network is at an arm's reach."

"There are other sites/apps more relevant to my profession."

"It is a playground for recruiters."

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Barriers and Detractors
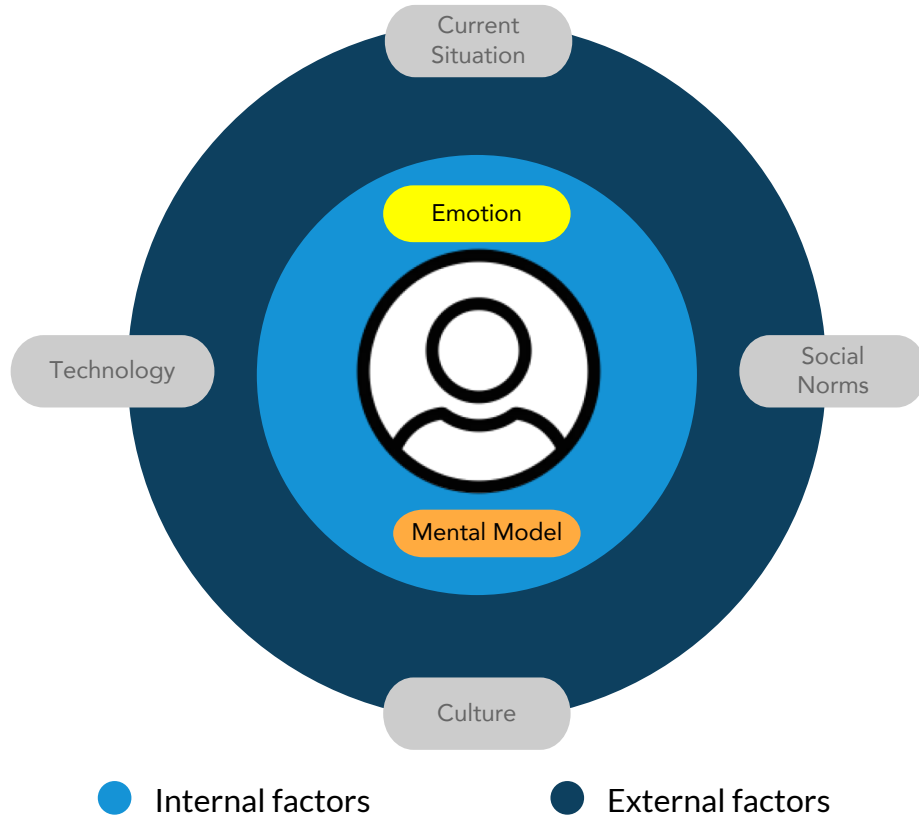
Emotion

A few emotions commonly associated with using professional-networking platforms are feeling overwhelmed, inadequate, and exposed

Mental Model

Some users do not view professional-networking platform as a "community", rather they use it sporadically throughout their career for very specific purposes

Barriers and Detractors
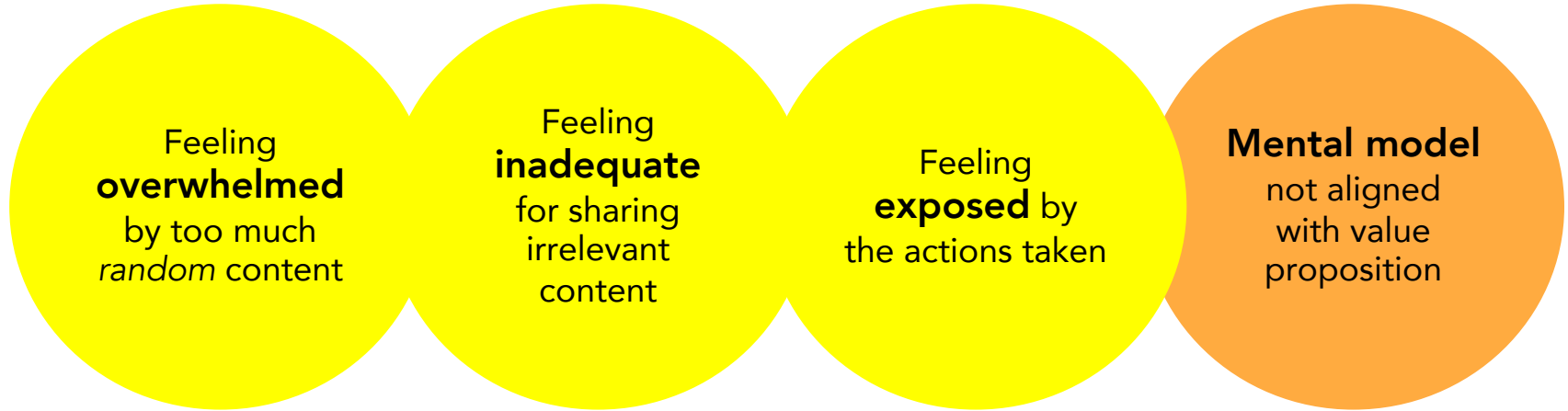
Feeling **overwhelmed** by too much *random* content

Feeling **inadequate** for sharing irrelevant content

Feeling **exposed** by the actions taken

Mental model not aligned with value proposition

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Mitigating Barriers to Engagement

Barriers & detractors

- Feeling **overwhelmed** by too much *random* content
- Feeling **inadequate** for sharing irrelevant content
- Feeling **exposed** by the actions taken
- **Mental model** not aligned with value proposition

Solution

- Curation
- Empowerment
- Control
- Motivation

Features

1. Curated Home
2. Post Requests
3. Targeted Posts
4. Anonymous Posts
5. Unlock Content
6. Micro-contributions

1. Curated Home Page

Users feel overwhelmed by the amount of content on the platform

Emotion: Overwhelm

"I already selected which companies, industries, I'm interested in but I keep getting random things on my newsfeed that I don't care about."

Recommendation:

Provide users with

- Simplified curated content on their home page
- A space to organize and save content about topics of interest

Expected Results:

- Users will be able to see content that is tailored to them without being overwhelmed by their feed
- Users will spend more time consuming content.

1. Curated Home Page

Analogous experiences

1. Pinterest allows users to curate own content.

2. Medium home page provides digest of most relevant stories.

2. Post Requests

Users sometimes feel paralyzed by the desire to post valuable content.

Emotion: Inadequate

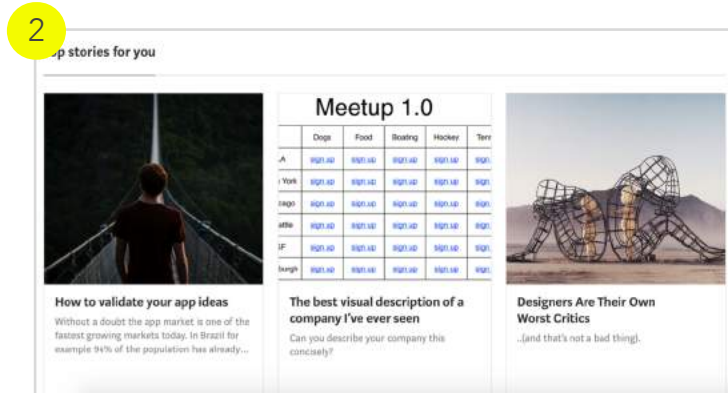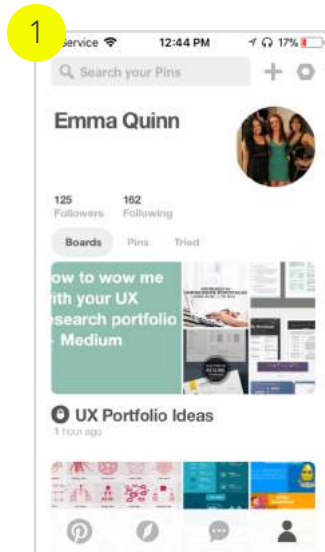*"When I feel like it's not something I'm going to do well in, I won't start."*

"I don't have any feedback to know if it's ok."

"I want to post things that are relevant to my network."

Recommendation:

Implement a post request feature that will allow users to nominate others to post about useful or in-demand topics.

Expected Results:

- Users will be "nudged" to post by the encouragement and "pressure" of others.
- Post requests will inspire users to post because they'll know what topics people find useful.
- Growing Professionals and Task Oriented Users will feel empowered by the encouragement of others.

2. Post Requests

Analogous experiences

1. Ice Bucket Challenge participants nominated others to participate in challenge. Challenges create "healthy" peer pressure.

3. Targeted Post

Users sometimes feel they are not qualified enough to post content.

Emotion: Inadequate

"At this point in my career I don't think I'm in a position to write or share domain specific content."

"I'm not sure if people will find my content relevant."

Recommendation:

Allow users to target their posts to specific users or groups.

Expected Results:

- More secured and relevant postings will help engage content contributors as well as consumers.
- Targeted content from a known contributor (friends, colleagues, family) will help invoke a sense of belonging and promote content relevance.
- Also, Content consumers will feel privileged and will be obliged to engage since the content is specifically targeted towards them.

3. Targeted Post

Analogous experiences

1. Facebook allows users to to choose who can view their posts.
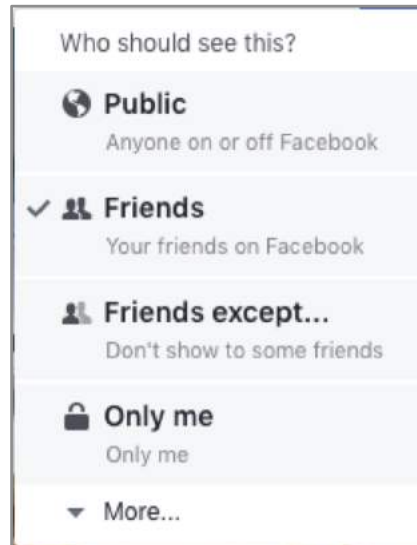
4. Anonymous Post

Users sometimes feel they'll be judged by the content they post.

Emotion: Feeling Exposed

"I don't want my boss or future boss to judge me."

"I'm not confident enough to post. Will start posting after I have gained more experience and knowledge."

Recommendation:

Allow users to post content anonymously with an option to reveal their identity any any given point of time.
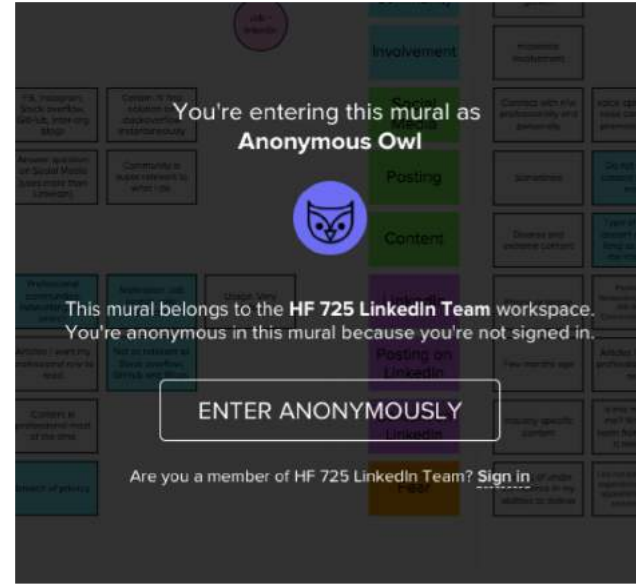
Expected Results:

- As users start getting more likes and comments on their anonymous post, they will feel confident which can lead to posting of more content.

4. Anonymous Post

Analogous experiences

1. Mural allows users to post anonymously. Thus, giving opportunity and comfort to the users who don't like to shout-out ideas or opinions.

5. Unlock premium content

Users sometimes feel shared content is superficial.

Align Mental Model

"You grow when getting to know best practices in the business."

"You grow listening to standard setters."

"I usually look at content originated from sources, other than my friends."

Recommendation:

Reciprocity "first give in order to receive". Ask users to post, share, and react in order to unlock the content.

Expected Results:

- Users start sharing suggested content. Virality of posts might increase.

- A database of user interests could be obtained.

- Growing Professionals can see value in guides, standards and reports that will help them discover new insights.

5. Unlock premium content

Analogous experiences

1. Pay with a Tweet enables paying back with virality instead of money.

6. Micro-contributions

Users sometimes feel professional-networking platforms are very professional space.

Align Mental Model

"I never engage with any content on professional-networking platforms, I never ever read the feed."

"I see it as a recruiter's playground."

Recommendation:

Create spaces for users to interact and participate. I.e.. Quizzes, polls, giveaways. This can be a fun way to engage while receiving valuable content.
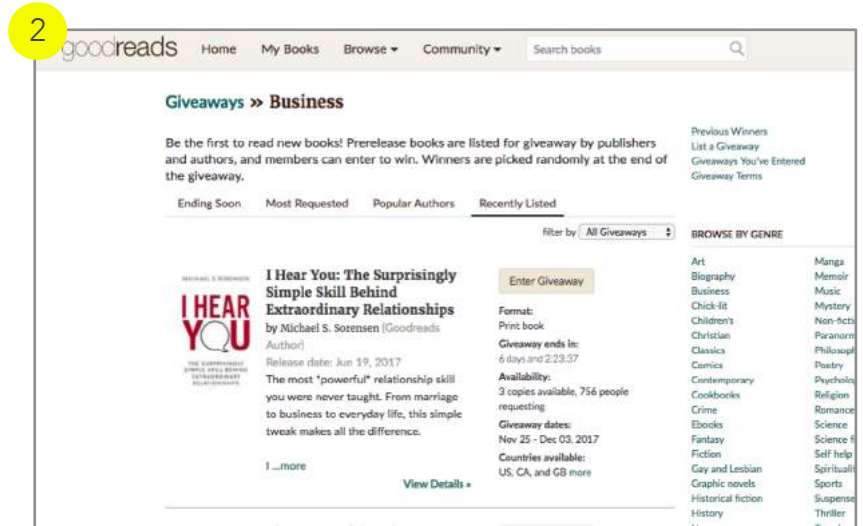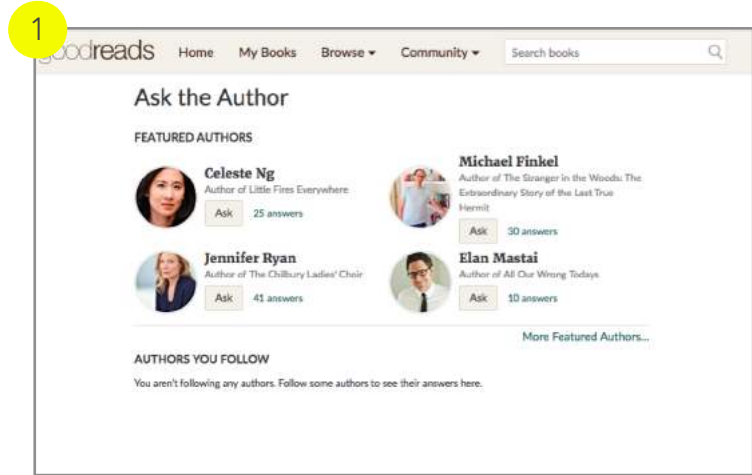
Expected Results:

- Users start interacting more.
- Growing professionals might see this as a tool to participate and learn something new about themselves or others.

6. Micro-contributions

Analogous experiences

1. Goodreads has "Ask the author" forums to engage with the users.

2. Goodreads also used giveaways to engage with the users

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We suggest

Conducting more detailed research to in order to:

1. Gain more insights
2. Prioritize ideas
3. Check feasibility of each idea

Thank You