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Design *Methods*

I created the visual artifacts, notes, and descriptions in this document over the course of my work as an independent contractor and consultant designing products with early stage startup teams.

They are meant to give you some insight into my working process and introduce you to a few of the strategies and tools I tend to find useful in this work.

Establishing the business problem

I work with the product owner to determine the core project requirements/scope in the terms they are initially conceiving of them (typically in terms of deliverables).

Through interviewing multiple members of the team, I establish the starting project goals/success metrics/constraining factors/technical reqs of the project itself.

How is the team conceiving of what they are trying to build? The problem they are trying to solve?

What catalyzed this design push? How do the product vision and roadmap relate to the investment thesis, business model, technical resources available?

What are the team or product owner’s starting assumptions of what the solution will be?

If this design is successful, what are they thinking the effects will be?

What metrics does the team currently measure that we can use to track the effects of design changes we ship?

Goals and principles for making product and design decisions

Time-efficient cooking

Allow users to remotely access, understand, and control part of their everyday home cooking process.

Cooking takes a lot of time, including prep time, but also off-time and waiting time, and people have to be places.

Make everyday, quality home cooking more convenient and accessible to a variety of family structures, backgrounds, and levels of cooking experience.

Cost-efficient cooking

Remove barriers to routine household communal meals. (quality of life through democratizing good taste, nutrition, stabilizing daily rituals, improved diet, health, satisfaction, and social fulfillment).

Improve the affordability of cooking, personal empowerment, ability to make choices, and the provision of routine household communal meals.

Cooking skills education and access

Improve access to actionable information about how to cook (to provide communal meals) to attain the benefits, afford, and flexibility comes with ease as a household.

Regardless of skill level, improve ease, comfort, versatility, and confidence in kitchens and sous-vide in

Sous-vide Onboarding

Sous-vide community platform

Project Goals

Through stakeholder interviews, a review of the site’s current navigational interface, and a brief review of online user comments, blog posts, ratings, and reviews, I codified the following goals for the project.

Goal 1

Increase self-initiated student engagement with Flocabulary video content.

Goal 2

Increase teachers’ incorporation of Flocabulary videos into their lesson plans.

Goal 3

Increase the speed, satisfaction, and success of user searches for specific, known videos on Flocabulary.com.

Establishing business goals/product vision in writing to refer back to while designing. For a new IoT ecosystem: consumer kitchen appliance + mobile recipe platform

Establishing project goals in writing for a redesign of the search/discovery experience in a K-12 educational video library (desktop web experience)

Developing hypotheses about user behavior


I determine what the main use cases will be for the product or feature I am designing.

I collect insights into the target users’ life context, context of use, and current experience.

From these insights, I create descriptive documentation that illustrates my best working understanding of the experience we are hoping to replace or improve, including how it works, variation in what users are trying to accomplish and why, current pain points, and what is working well.



« I wish I could just call a bus after my shift»



Nour

Thoughtful parent

Age: 38

Location: Borås, Sweden

Occupation: medical technician

Family: husband and three children

Nour is a radiology technician who works in the urgent care department of Borås Hospital. She works night shifts, while her husband and three children go to work and school during the day. The family owns one car, and they have to coordinate across varied schedules, often meaning some of them have to take the bus. Two days a week, Nour gets to take the car to work, but two days a week Nour's husband drives her to work in the evening so he can bring the kids to evening appointments, and she has to wait at 4am for at least an hour until the first bus back in the early morning, after her shift is over. Nour uses a **mobile 30-day ticket** (which her kids accompany her on for free the rare times they ride together). She pays and checks bus status in the **Västtrafik app**, but she still feels she might as well wait at the bus stop because the precise timing of the bus feels too unpredictable and she has nothing else to do as she waits.

Regular family outings, such as to religious services, are manageable because they all take the car together. One frustration for Nour is grocery shopping, keeping the kitchen stocked, and making sure her family has regular access to fresh food. She is the one who cooks for the family, but she often does not have access to the car and needs to put in a lot of energy planning meals in advance so that she makes sure she has coordinated to pick up the right groceries either by delegating to someone else in the family or stopping at the market when she has the car another time in the week. If

Goals:

- Let her children to go to activities and hang out with their friends without worrying too much about logistics
- Share an affordable transportation package with her family members that is easier to pay for
- Provide a safe way for her children to get around when she can't drive them
- Be able to travel around the city quickly, cheaply and easily

Frustrations and pain points:




- Nour has to wait for the first bus to leave after her shift is over when she is exhausted and wants to go home
- She has to plan the whole week, including meals and who will have the car when, a long time in advance
- She sometimes has to refuse if one of the younger children wants to go to something if transportation has already been planned for the week and she does not feel it is safe for them to ride alone
- When she takes the bus to get groceries it tends to be

Persona document I created (among many others) for a Swedish public transit passenger, synthesizing user insights to design a mobile app for a demand-responsive public bus service for a European startup

What population will be using the [tool, service, feature, information] I have been tasked with designing? What will they use it to do?

Why are they trying to do the thing? Under what circumstances will they try to do the thing?

How will they access the [tool, service, feature, information] I have been tasked with designing? What platform, device, etc.

		
<p>"As a gadget person, I love experimenting and seeing oh can I do a roast with the circulator, can I do brisket, how long does it take, how well does it perform. I like running comparisons, I can get competitive but I also like helping people – I think it could be really cool to see how other people do on some of the stuff I've come up with to cook sous-vide. I'd like to see that."</p>	<p>"As a working parent of small children with, thank god, some money to spend on doing right by them, I need a way to make cooking less time-intensive, while still making sure our family has home-cooked meals and control over what we eat (especially my 2-year-old, who has a mild nut allergy). I wouldn't consider Blue Apron or anything like that because it's important to me to set a good example for the kids. I don't want to turn into one of those families that reverts to frozen prepared food all the time or where the wife does all the cooking, but there's quite a learning curve right now. I'd be open to trying out a new method."</p>	<p>"As a recent convert to the sous-vide life – I've been mostly loving my Joule and even recently hosted a dinner party with mostly Joule-cooked food – I would like to share and get feedback on new recipes I adapt for it, and I would love to learn how other people are doing all sorts of things. I'm going to try to do more things with interesting vegetables this summer – I've seen some delicious-looking photos and I'm getting brave, maybe one of those eggplant dishes."</p>
<p>Self-Challengers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ for recreation+ for a challenge+ to figure out systems+ for a satisfying solution	<p>Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ out of a sense of duty+ to manage time+ for health/nutrition+ to build a necessary skill	<p>Cooks (Creatives/Eaters)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ to enjoy good food+ for recreation+ to get cooking ideas+ to express oneself
<p>would-be recipe builder would-be social profile would-be recipe rater would-be badge collector</p>	<p>would-be remote cook would-be recipe follower</p>	<p>would-be recipe follower would-be recipe discoverer would-be recipe sharer would-be recipe builder</p>

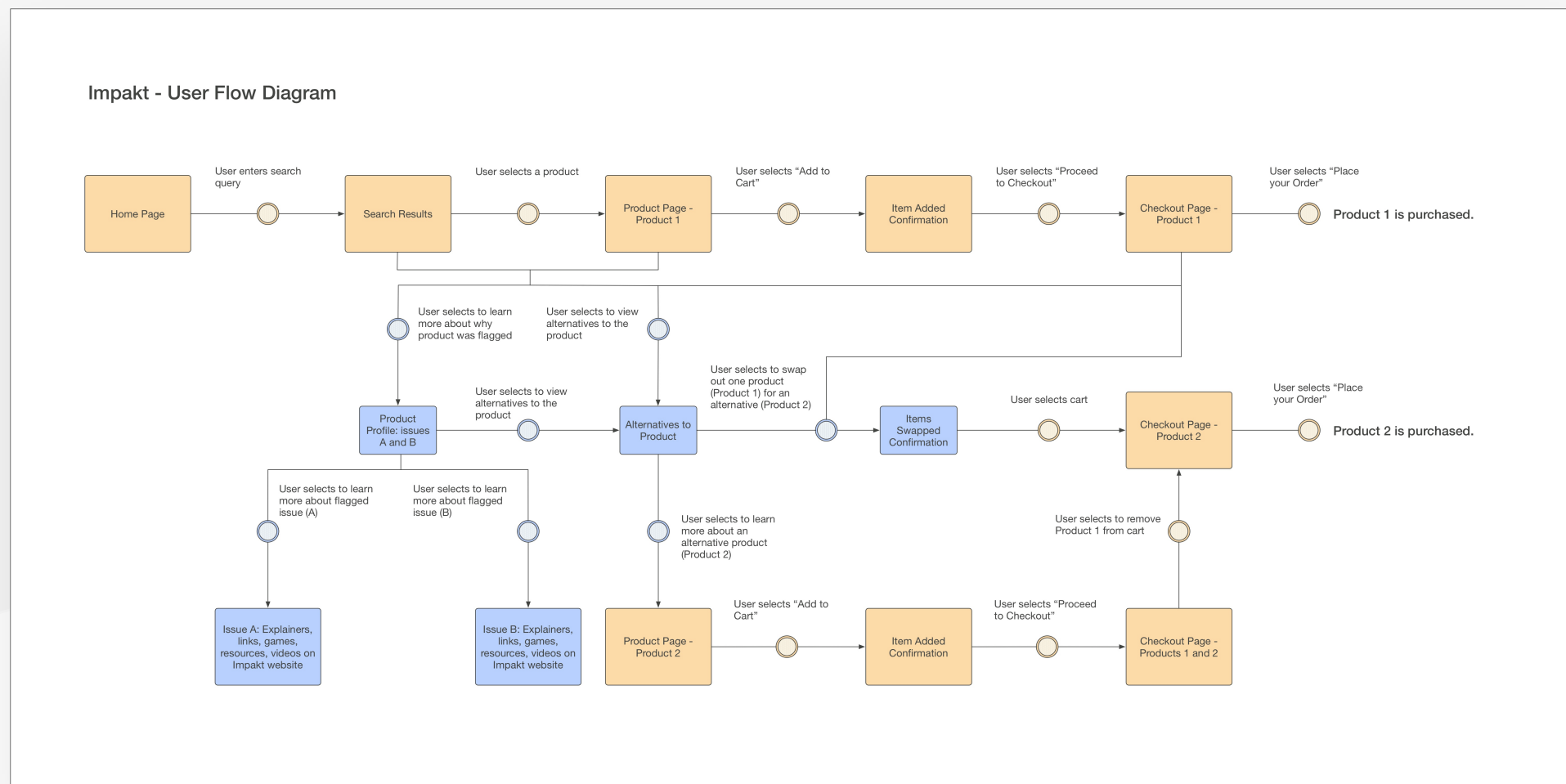
I created three broad user typologies for a sous-vide cooking startup, to design for the variation in reasons for learning the sous-vide method of cooking

Early stage high-level solutions

I choose one of the core use cases and generate ideas for alleviating pain points in the step-by-step sequence of user actions. I brainstorm and map out divergent possible solutions by reenvisioning the steps users might take to complete this task with a new tool to help.

I walk through the proposed redesigned flows with the team (or on my own) and we evaluate each in relation to each other, against UX heuristics and pre-established metrics, with engineers weighing in on technical considerations.

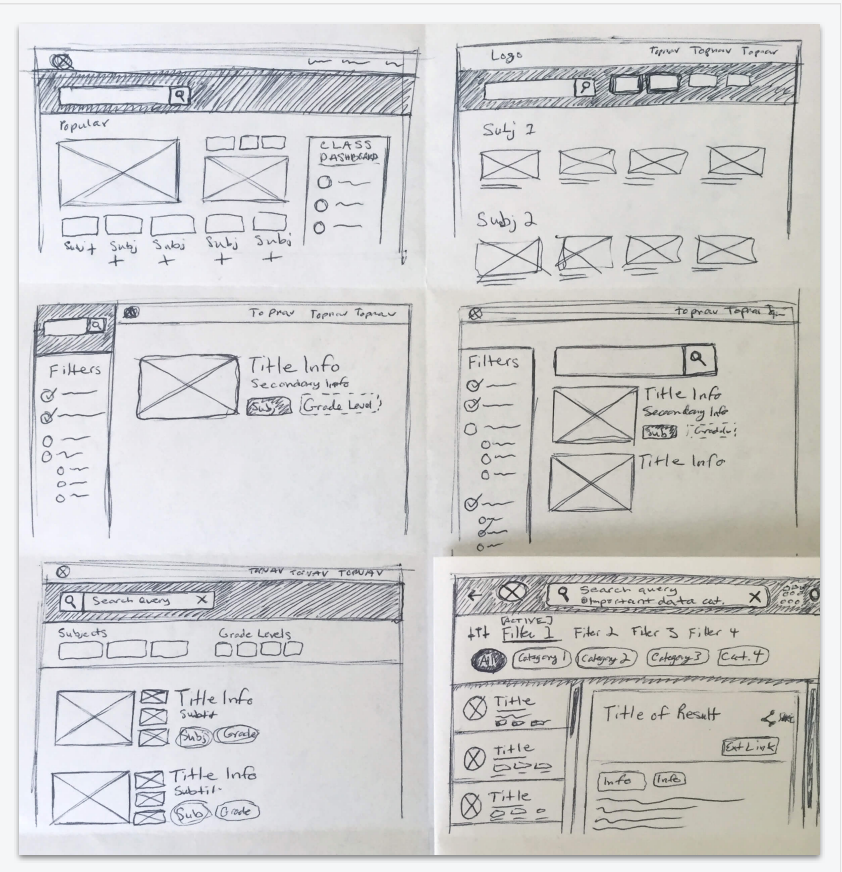
After consulting with the team, I decide which design directions to take to the next level. I will likely come back, iterate, and refine this flow later.



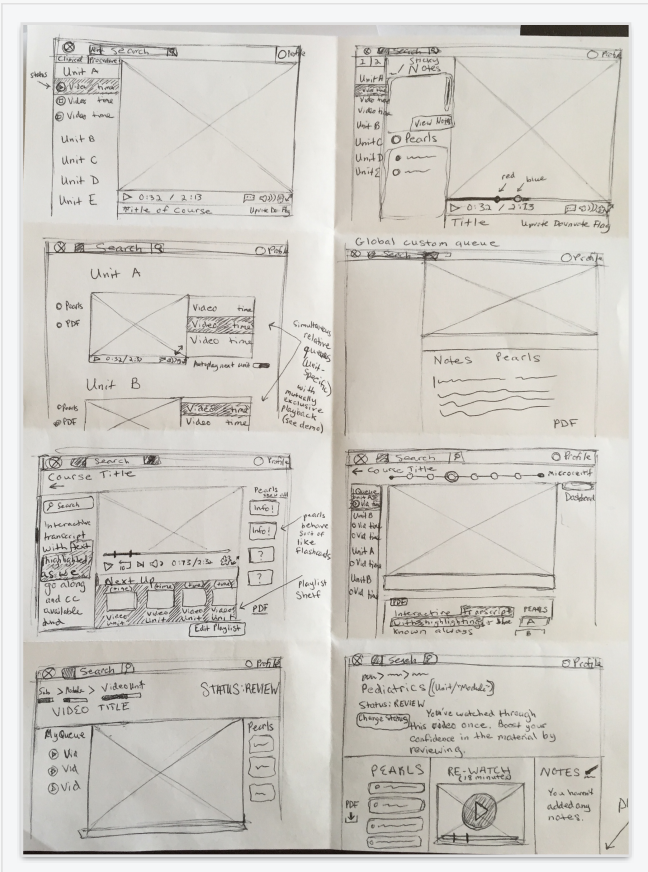
Flow diagram mapping a user journey through new kind of ecommerce checkout experience on Amazon.com, for the design of a Chrome extension helping users incorporate ethical factors into their purchase decisions

Exploring divergent UI interaction possibilities

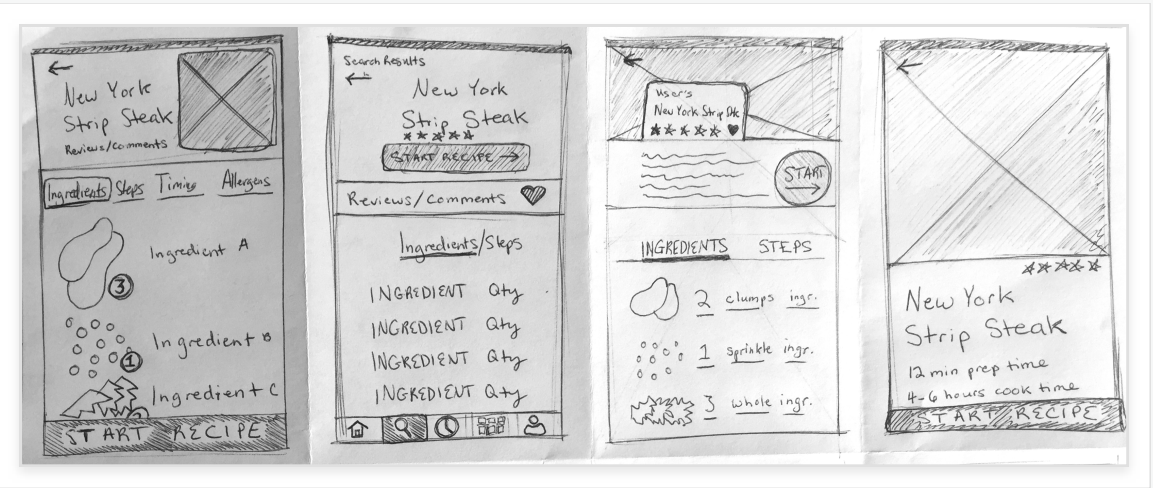
Through paper-and-pencil thumbnail sketching, I start to roughly sketch and fill in out details of the interactions possible on each specific screen that comprises the target flow.



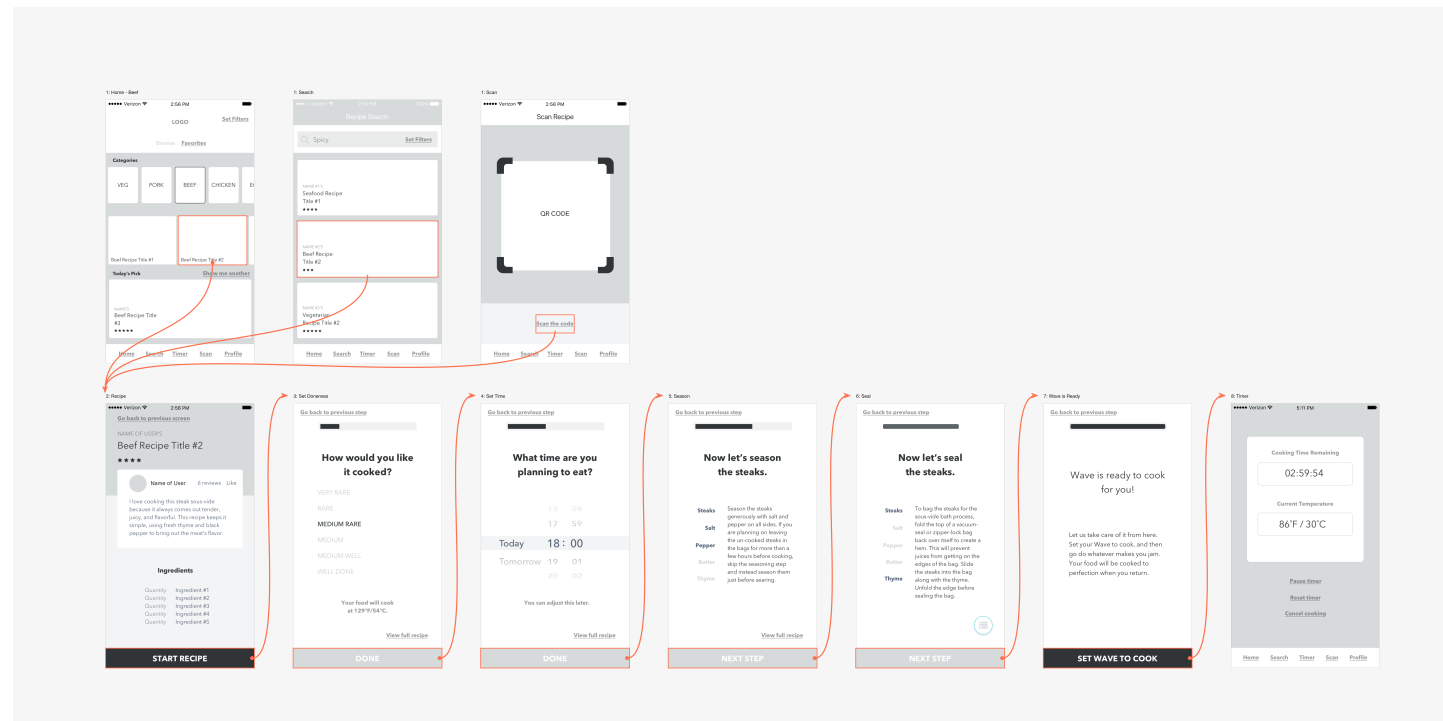
UI sketches for a redesign of the search/discovery experience in a K-12 educational video library (desktop web experience)



UI sketches for a redesign of the video course experience in a clinical e-learning platform (desktop web experience)



UI sketches for a sous vide recipe platform (mobile app)

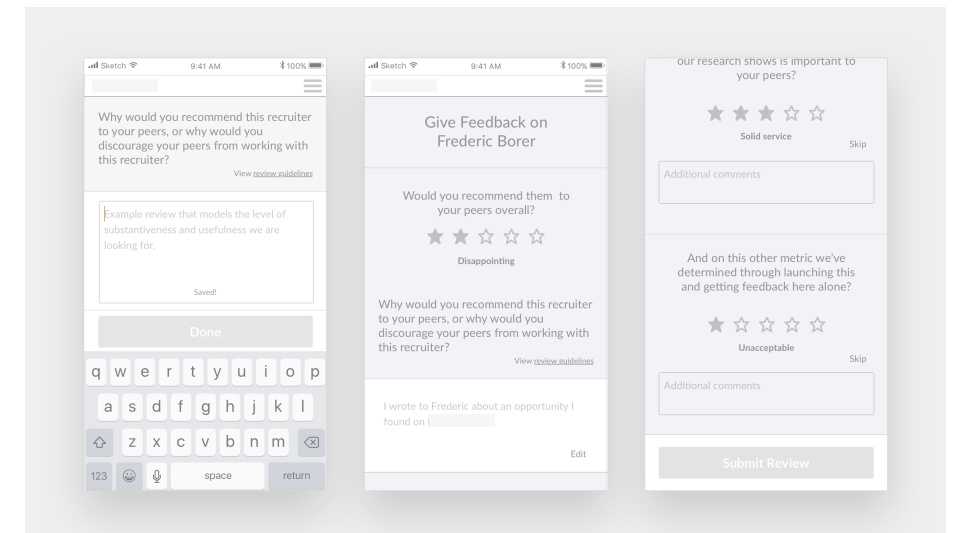


Wireframes organized into a flow in which a user discovers and follows a recipe, for a sous-vide recipe platform (mobile app)

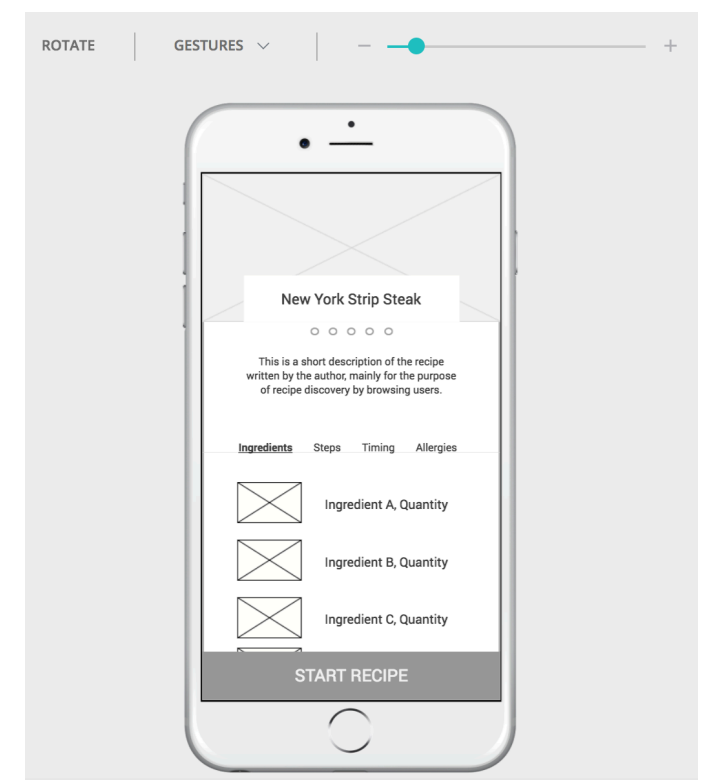
Wireframing content and layout

I build content and layout wireframes from the chosen sketches, continuing to adjust my understanding of the many problems I'm solving as I work. I often go back and get more data or to sketch a new idea, evaluating possible solutions based on heuristics and our established goals.

If the team has determined that testing a particular hypothesis is a priority at this stage, I turn specific finalized wireframes into a low-fidelity prototype with HTML/CSS, Justinmind, or Invision. This can also be useful for early products just getting a feel for their users.



Wireframes for a recruiting platform (web app, min. breakpoint)



A low-fidelity interactive prototype created with Justinmind

Building a visual design system from modular components

To build out the overall visual design system, I start with an important modular component of the interface (sometimes this can be as large a component as a recurring screen type) and create style tiles to explore different ways of styling and communicating the interaction of ordered by that particular component.

I begin visual designs in grayscale, determining the most functional, then structural choices first: layout and typographic hierarchies of the module and those of the smaller individual components. Then I extrapolate and constrain out from there. At this point in designing I've created a style guide of nested, reusable symbols which I'll clean up for external collaboration later.

Color System

#199D7E	#FFFFFF
#137961	#F9F9F9
#01644D	#F2F2F2

Primary Green

Brand color.

Whites/Off-Whites

For neutral surfaces.

#707B81	#415058	#1F292E
#5D686F	#324149	#101C22

Greys and Blacks

For neutral text, and the background of dark neutral elements.

#426CB2	#7D9F1C	#BF7F3A	#2B969D	#964796
#24519A	#628304	#A45E13	#137A80	#862E86

Channel Accent Colors

These accent colors are "theme colors" to code elements associated with different channels for easy categorization.



A Note on Color Usage

Due to the prevalence of color-blindness in nearly all populations of users, we should be especially wary of using color as the sole vehicle of conveying any information. Even for non-color-blind users, multiple cues help ease and efficiency of identification of elements and comprehension in a communication system. Color should always be used as one of a number of redundant cues to aid cognitive sorting.

In these chips, channel color coding is used in addition to the name of the channel being expressed in words. An illustrated icon may be used in addition in other contexts to further strengthen the channel association.

(Above and below) Style guide to a visual brand I created for future designers to refer to and evolve with their own work.

Typography

In the design language I created for this project, **Gibson** is featured as the typeface, primarily in regular and semibold weights in the two lighter greys (**#707B81** and **#415058**) on surfaces of white (**#FFFFFF**) and – only when bold and dark enough to meet web accessibility standards – on the two varieties of off-white (**#F9F9F9** and **#F2F2F2**).

True bold in Gibson is beautiful but has a thick, weighty editorial feel and should be used sparingly and with purpose. In this design system it is used primarily in our darkest grey for text (**#1F292E**) for the titles of conversations when featured

Heading 1
24pt

Would you please help pack my box with these five dozen liquor jugs?

Would you please help pack my box with these five dozen liquor jugs?

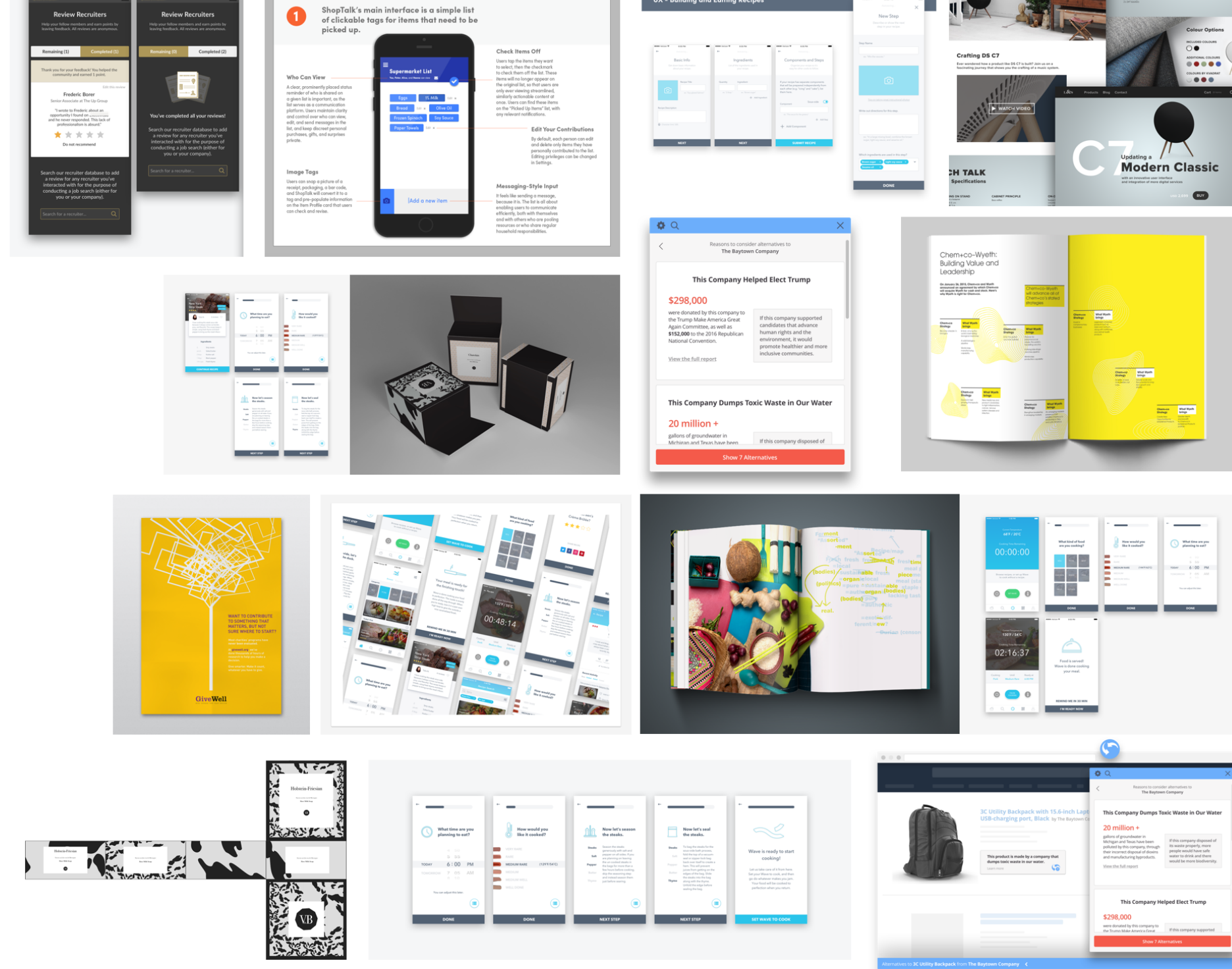
Heading 2
18pt

Would you please help pack my box with these five dozen liquor jugs?

Would you please help pack my box with these five dozen liquor jugs?

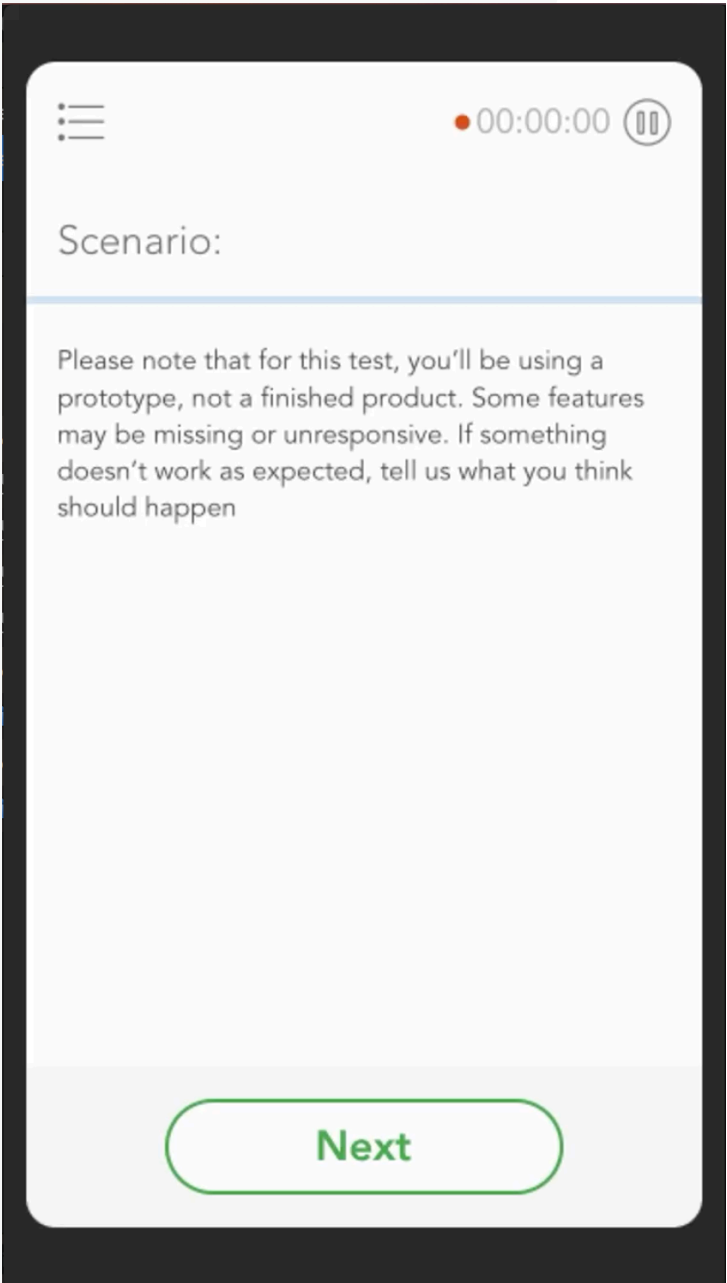
High-fidelity graphic comps

I create finalized, detailed high-fidelity comps, both for external communications if necessary and for the team to refer to. Sometimes I will also create a high-fidelity interactive prototype of part of the design in Invision or Framer, if the scale and strategy for the design is conducive to testing with a prototype prior to launch, or if there are marketing or communication needs. For the occasional graphic print or packaging project, this is the point at which i prep files for delivery so I can work with the printer to do a test run.



User testing with high-fidelity prototypes

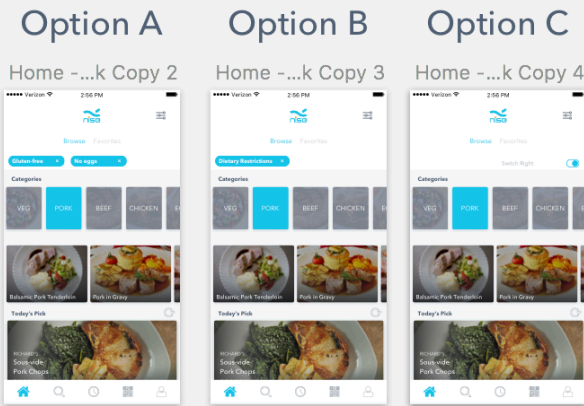
With a prototype I've designed to "feel real" to users, I work on my own or with UX researchers to conduct usability tests either in remote or in-person sessions and to synthesize our findings into improved hypotheses about user behavior, notes for metrics to track post-launch and proposed design adjustments to address usability issues pre-launch. We start with strong hypotheses and questions we want to answer during the session. I may need to design a few different versions of the prototype as part of designing different tests.



Starting screen for a remote user testing session (for Nise Tech)

User said they did not know whether filters they had applied in the Search would apply to the Home, how long the filters would apply, etc.

SOLUTION: Make sure that it is clear from both Home and Search which filters are on and off, giving priority to important filters such as allergy information, rather than requiring users to rely on faith.



ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION: Restructure so that search and home are integrated as the same experience, with Categories and Filters reconciled.

Insights from user testing session synthesized into design solutions (Nise Tech)

Design delivery + build

In most cases, as I begin the next sprint or project I also stay available to work with the team's developers to prep, help explain, troubleshoot, and give feedback as they take the designs into production. In ideal cases the developers have been contributing their perspective to design decisions from the start, are aware of how things have progressed, and we already have a shared strategy for implementation. Depending on the nature of the project, the technical and UX complexity, the team's budget, resources, needs, and level of comfort with different tools, I assess whether to share code-based prototypes or to create annotated specs from UI source files via Zeplin, Figma, or Gallery. If the project has involved building a brand system, I create usage guidelines and other visual documentation of to be usable by future designers.

