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A Virtual Conference Platform that Promotes Meaningful Social Interactions, Engagement, and Networking for Attendees

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1.0 Abstract

In this project, we aimed to understand how a conference attendee's experience could be improved through the use of a technology-based solution by providing better opportunities for social interactions, engagement, and networking. Our goals included identifying and evaluating the features, interface design choices, social interaction initiation affordances, and motivational elements that were effective in a virtual conferencing platform.

We began by conducting five interviews to discover important aspects of in-person conferences and understand participant's preferences on facilitating person-to-person engagement in conference settings. These topics discussed revolved around four themes: in-person conference experiences (the motivations, expectations, and obstacles surrounding in-person conference attendance), networking (the activity of talking to and making professional connections), virtual platform values and concerns (any element that may have a positive or negative effect on the user), and virtual platform features (functionality elements). We then surveyed 28 recent conference attendees to confirm, nullify, and refine our interview findings on a larger scale. Notable findings included all 28 survey participants selecting "to learn something new" as a reason for attending a conference, and only 3 participants ranking networking as "not at all important" to them during a conference. The interview and survey information were then used to understand the typical users of the product and drive the creation of our three personas: the conference attendee focused on the overall conference experience, the attendee most interested in networking, and the attendee looking to be educated. These interviews, surveys, and personas were referenced when developing a priority feature matrix. The matrix helped organize potential platform features in terms of ease of implementation and user value, as well as their necessity to our minimal viable prototype for user testing. Our top three prioritized feature categories surrounded profile, privacy, and presentation features.

We then created the first iteration of our mid-fidelity prototype, running usability sessions with four participants. During the first round of usability testing, our participants commonly had difficulty identifying where they would go within the platform to find certain elements (two out of four participants). This design received an average SUS score of 68.75. The insights gained from these sessions regarding overall layout changes and hierarchy were then applied to the second iteration of our mid-fidelity prototype, which was then tested with four more participants. During this test, two out of four participants had difficulties understanding how to connect with another conference attendee, however, the design's SUS score improved significantly (18%), receiving an average score of 86.87. Takeaways from this second round of testing included evaluating the usefulness of the homepage versus the agenda and refining the initiation of key interactions with other attendees, such as connecting and messaging. Future design implications were then identified and noted.

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All project goals were met during the course of designing this platform. Limitations to the project included small sample sizes and short turnaround times when creating deliverables. Opportunities for future work include incorporating feedback from the second usability session and re-testing, and further exploring video conferencing features.

2.0 Introduction

As technology continues to evolve, the ability to connect, interact, and engage in online digital environments is becoming ubiquitous. Virtual conferencing is growing rapidly and becoming popular for hosting events and seminars. However, the experience between in-person conferences and virtual events differs. In-person conferences provide an element of social interaction focusing on engagement and networking that's absent from digital conference environments.

One of the largest benefits of attending an in-person conference is the ability to meet and interact with other attendees. Virtual conference platforms also capitalize on participant interaction since user engagement is enhanced when participants have the ability to connect with and receive feedback from peers and other participants (Hokanson et al., 2019). Several virtual conference platforms use strategic features to enhance the digital experience. Rogers et al. (2018) have proposed using word clouds to help attendees find conversations they want to join or initiate with others. In another study, researchers explored using game-based elements such as badges, missions, and leaderboards to enhance participant interaction, while also utilizing social matching and profile sharing between attendees to facilitate online networking opportunities (Paasovaara et al., 2016).

A review of the current competitors in the virtual conference space has revealed several limitations in terms of opportunities for social interaction and networking experiences for attendees. Many of these products are chat-based where two-way conversation between the speaker and attendees is the primary means for participant interaction. Several other products allow attendees to speak to one another individually or in groups, but they do little beyond putting attendees in a separate video or chat window. Based on the gaps observed in other virtual conference platforms, our solution aims to use a combination of video and chat to help enable social interactions and take these experiences a step further to help attendees benefit more fully from their time at a virtual conference.

The results of this project were guided by the primary question: How can a technology-based solution enhance the virtual conference experience by improving opportunities for social interactions, engagement, and networking for conference participants?

In the following sections we outline our overarching goals, methods, findings, and implications for user needs in a technology-based virtual conference platform designed to improve social interactions, engagement, and networking opportunities.

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3.0 Goals

Goal: Identify wants and features surrounding a virtual conference platform and identify barriers to person-to-person communication.

Measure: Conduct interviews that focus on gathering qualitative data surrounding user needs and concerns in relation to features, learning, networking, and person-to-person communication.

Revisions or adjustments: This goal and its measures have stayed the same.

Goal: Evaluate the effectiveness of our interface's ability to allow attendees to locate other attendees to start conversations and network.

Measure: Conduct usability testing sessions with users to see if they can identify other attendees within the space with similar interests.

Revisions or adjustments: Removed 78% task completion measurement.

Explain changes: We wanted to remain consistent to the level of specificity in our other goal measurements. Additionally, we were not confident on the validity of a 78% task completion rate equating to an effective interface.

Goal: Evaluate the effectiveness of the affordances to initiate social interactions between people.

Measure: Measure the satisfaction rates, replies in post-task questionnaires, and comments in the usability test to see if the participants found the affordances effective in initiating social interactions with others and that it was beneficial in helping them achieve their conference goals.

Revisions or adjustments: This goal stayed the same, however we adjusted one measure.

Explain changes: We evaluated this goal through task success rates instead of satisfaction rates.

Goal: Gauge user responses towards gamification to motivate them to engage in social interactions.

Measure: Evaluate survey responses about the use of gamification to promote social interactions. If implemented, this would be followed by measuring the usability test results on satisfaction rates, and replies in post-task questionnaire, and comments to see if it was beneficial in helping users achieve their networking goals for the conference.

Revisions or adjustments: This goal and measures stayed the same. However due to limited positive responses towards gamification in survey responses, gamification elements weren't incorporated into the design of the prototype.

Explain changes: Our survey responses did not reflect a need or desire for gamification, so we did not implement that in our designs.

4.0 Methods

4.1 Method: Interviews

This section briefly describes our interview participant characteristics, data collection methods, and data analysis.

A. Participants

We recruited participants through our social and professional networks. A total of five participants were interviewed. All participants were over the age of 21 and had attended an in-person and/or virtual conference within the last two years. All participants also consented to having the interview audio recorded. The following table summarizes additional participant data for the study.

#	Pseudonym	Age	Profession	Location	Tech-Savvy	Interviewed by
1	John	62	Comptroller/Form erly CFO	Salt Lake City, UT	Yes	Gabriela Wyffels
2	Jane	45	Psychotherapist	Salt Lake City, UT	Somewhat	Gabriela Wyffels
3	Elenor	27	Emergency Medicine Resident	Philadelphia, PA	Somewhat	Katie Anderson
4	Kevin	39	Creative Director at Web Design Agency	Chicago, IL	Yes	Chris Poynton
5	Sarah	35	Naturopathic Medical Student	Portland, OR	Yes	Diana Speicher

Table 1 - Interview Participants

B. Data Collection Methods

All interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom. Each interview started with a brief introduction of the project, followed by the participant verbally consenting to participating and having the interview recorded.

We started the interview with initial warm-up questions. These were used to make the participant feel comfortable and to gain initial insights into the frequency and background information on their conference attendance. These questions were followed up with general questions aimed at gathering information about previous conference experiences. A series of deep focus questions targeted engagement and networking during in-person and virtual conferences, and addressed needs, motivations, and incentives towards networking. The interview concluded with retrospective questions, final thoughts, and participant demographics (see Appendix: 9.2 Interview Protocol).

The interview sessions lasted 60 minutes and were audio-recorded.

C. Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed, followed by individual open inductive coding using Atlas.ti. The insights from the initial coding exercise were synthesized as a group into themes and subthemes using an Affinity Diagram in StormBoard (see Appendix: 9.3 Affinity Diagram).

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After aligning on themes and subthemes, transcripts were re-coded using Dedoose (see Appendix: 9.4 Interview Codes).

D. Goal

The purpose of the interviews was to identify important aspects of in-person conferences in order to recreate these elements in a virtual setting. The interviews also identified preferences for facilitating person-to-person engagement in conference settings.

1. Revisions or adjustments

There were no revisions/adjustments made to our interview goals.

4.2 Method: Surveys

This section briefly describes our survey participant characteristics, data collection methods, and data analysis.

A. Participants

We recruited participants through our social and professional networks, an in-class activity, and DePaul's CDM Participant Pool. A total of 29 participants were surveyed. All participants were over the age of 21 and had attended an in-person and/or virtual conference within the last two years. The following dashboard summarizes participant data for the study.

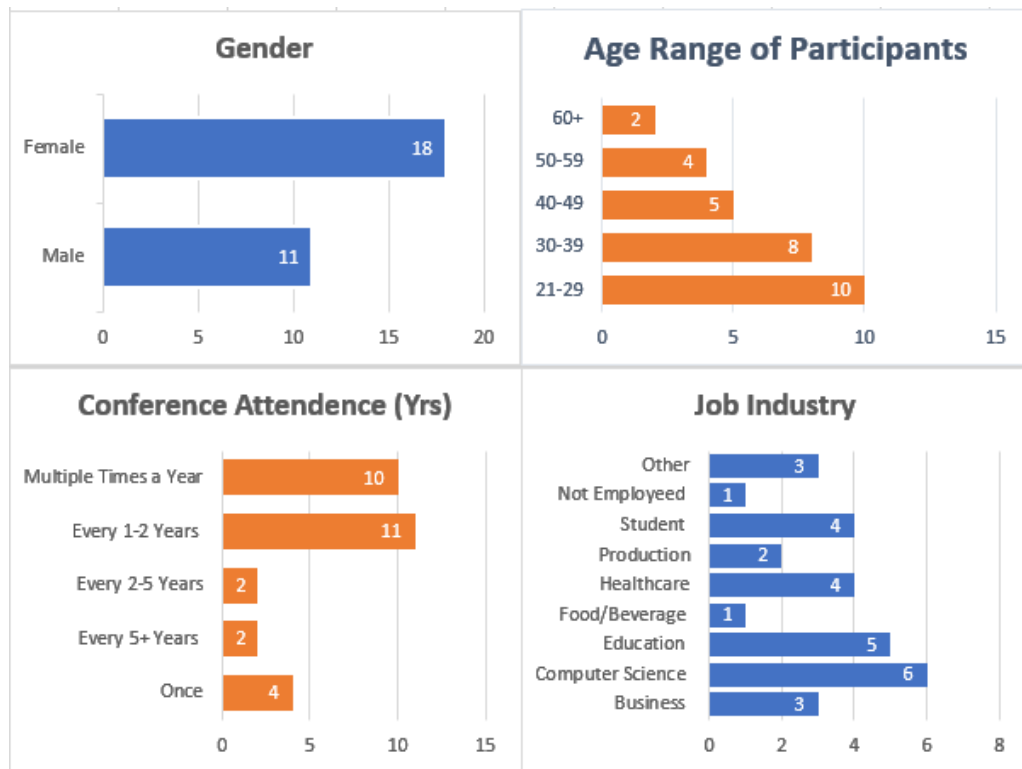


Table 2 - Dashboard of Survey Participant Data

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B. Data Collection Methods

The survey was available from April 30 - May 7, 2020, was hosted by Qualtrics, and distributed through link sharing and DePaul's CDM Participant Pool. Prior to beginning the survey, participants were briefed on the parameters and requirements of the survey and consented by proceeding with the survey.

Survey questions followed a systematic approach (see Appendix: 9.5 Survey Questions), starting with a series of warm-up and general questions about conference attendance frequency. This was followed by more detailed questions around networking and social interactions at conferences. A final series of questions revolved around specific virtual conference platform features that would enhance interactions and facilitate connections with other attendees. The survey concluded with capturing participant demographic data.

C. Data Analysis

Survey data was analyzed using the built-in reporting feature within Qualtrics. Primarily, data point distribution around networking, challenges when attending a conference, and feature requirements were used to inform decisions when creating the personas, the feature matrix, sketches, and prototypes.

D. Goal

The goal of the survey was to confirm, nullify, and refine the findings from the interviews on a larger scale to help narrow the focus of features and drive insights into virtual interactions and networking.

1. Revisions or adjustments

There were no revisions/adjustments made to our survey goals.

4.3 Method: Personas

A. Data Synthesis Method

Data gathered from the interviews and surveys was used to identify three target user groups for the virtual conference platform. Individual personas for each of these groups were created based on the differences between their goals, motivations, pain points, characteristics, and behaviors. These three specific user groups were conference attendees who are focused on networking with other conference attendees, the conference experience, or the educational/professional development aspects of attending a conference (see Appendix: 9.7 Personas).

B. Goal

The primary goal of the personas was to assist in understanding the typical user of the product, their pain points, and beneficial platform features based on their goals and motivations.

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1. Revisions or adjustments

There were no revisions/adjustments made to our persona goals.

4.4 Method: Feature Matrix

A. Data Synthesis Method

A Feature Matrix was created in Google Sheets using interview and survey data. Each feature was evaluated based on three criteria: effort, user value, and priority. They were then ranked using a three-point scale: low, medium, and high. Features were prioritized according to ease of implementation, user value, and necessity in creating a minimum viable prototype (see Appendix: 9.8 Feature Matrix).

B. Goal

The goal of the feature matrix was to develop a prioritized list of critical features that accounted for implementation effort and user value. The feature matrix assisted in creating a shared mental model that allowed us to align in a direction as we moved into the sketch ideation and mid-fidelity prototype phases.

1. Revisions or adjustments

As the project proceeded, a feature matrix was found to be more beneficial in terms of developing an initial minimum viable product and creating a shared mental model of the prototype rather than using a journey map to illustrate a timeline of an attendee's experience during a virtual conference.

2. Explanation of changes

It was determined that a feature matrix added more value by facilitating discussion around prioritizing features for the first iteration prototype. The original goal of displaying a timeline and possible user paths throughout the virtual conference platform was found to be a less critical step due to the non-linear nature of the platform and differences in goals identified in our three personas.

4.5 Method: Mid-Fidelity Prototype 1

A. Data Synthesis Method

The primary screens for the prototype were derived from the feature matrix. Initially, individual sketches were used to align on ideas and layouts for the primary screens (see Appendix: 9.9 Prototype Ideation Sketches). After streamlining ideas, the layout and architecture of the site was designed. There were several iterations of the initial prototype that were revised prior to creating the interactive prototype to be used for user testing. The prototype was created using Figma and two wireframe kits: Wireframe Component Library v1.0 and Wireframy v2.4 (see Appendix: 9.10 Mid-Fi Prototype 1).

B. Goal

A mid-fidelity prototype was created in order to gather insights and feedback from users. The information was used to verify if the design was aligned with user needs as well as to gather additional feedback to drive future design iterations.

1. Revisions or adjustments

A Mid-Fidelity prototype was created rather than a Low-Fidelity prototype.

2. Explain changes

Rather than creating a lower fidelity prototype for user testing, it was determined that a mid-fidelity prototype would provide more context in terms of detail and content during user testing, leading to better feedback and insights from the user test.

4.6 Method: Usability Testing for Mid-Fidelity Prototype 1

This section briefly describes our mid-fidelity usability test participant characteristics, data collection methods, and data analysis.

A. Participants

A total of four participants were recruited through social and professional networks. Each participant was required to be over the age of 21 and have attended an in-person and/or virtual conference within the last two years. All participants verbally consented to having the study recorded. The following tables summarizes additional participant data.

#	Pseudonym	Age	Profession	Conference Experience	Tech-Savvy	Interviewed by
1	Rich	35	Finance	High	High	Chris
2	John	64	Comptroller	High	High	Gabriela
3	Michael	36	IT Specialist	High	High	Diana
4	Tim	Mid 50s	Project Manager in Financial Industry	High	High	Katie

Table 3 - Usability Test 1 Participants

B. Data Collection Methods

The usability test was scheduled for 30 minutes and was conducted via Zoom. It began with a brief introduction about the purpose of the study, a discussion of think-aloud procedures during the tasks, and participant consent (see Appendix: 9.11 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 Test Plan).

The test began with warm-up questions centered around participant's conference

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attendance frequency, reasons for attending conferences, activities they found engaging during conferences, and areas where their conference experience could be improved.

Following the warm-up questions, a screen-share was initiated, and participants were given a link to the prototype. The participants were prompted with three scenarios, each with three to four tasks. The three main scenarios targeted tasks relating to selecting a presentation to attend, networking within the platform, and social engagements within the virtual lounge space. At the completion of each of the scenario tasks participants were verbally asked two post-scenario questions (see Appendix: 9.11 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 Test Plan).

At the conclusion of the usability test, participants were asked additional post-test questions about their experience with the prototype and given a link to a SUS questionnaire via Google forms.

C. Data Analysis

Usability test tasks were evaluated based on the following scale:

- Fully successful: completing the task using the expected path
- Partially successful: deviating from the expected path, but completing the task
- Needed help: unable to complete task on their own, needed assistance from moderator
- Unsuccessful: did not complete task

Participant comments during the think-aloud procedures were captured as notes. At the end of the usability study, each participant's success rate and comments for each task were aggregated, analyzed, and discussed (see Appendix: 9.12 Mi-Fi Prototype 1 Test Results).

In addition to the usability test, participants were provided with a link to a 10 question SUS questionnaire. The SUS questionnaire was calculated and evaluated by assigning a score to each participant response, scores were then summed to find individual participant SUS scores and then averaged to find the overall SUS score (see Appendix: 9.13 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 SUS Results).

D. Goal

The mid-fidelity prototype was user tested in order to gain data and feedback from users. This information was used to inform the design decisions applied in the second iteration of the prototype.

1. Revisions or adjustments

There were no revisions/adjustments made to our persona goals.

4.7 Method: Mid-Fidelity Prototype 2

A. Data Synthesis Method

The second iteration of the prototype was based on data and feedback gathered from the

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initial usability test. A general consensus was achieved in terms of which screens and elements to change. Several of the primary screens were updated to enhance navigation, streamline interactions, and reduce cognitive load by limiting the elements/icons available for the user to select. The prototype was updated using Figma and corresponding wireframe kits: Wireframe Component Library v1.0 and Wireframy v2.4 (see Appendix: 9.14 Mid-Fi Prototype 2).

B. Goal

A second iteration of the mid-fidelity prototype was created in order to gather insights and feedback from users. The information was used to verify if the design was aligned with user needs as well as to gather additional feedback to drive future design iterations.

1. Revisions or adjustments

There were no revisions/adjustments made to our mid-fidelity prototype goals.

4.8 Method: Usability Testing for Mid-Fidelity Prototype 2

This section briefly describes our mid-fidelity usability test participant characteristics, data collection methods, and data analysis.

A. Participants

A total of four participants were recruited through social and professional networks. Each participant was required to be over the age of 21 and had attended an in-person and/or virtual conference within the last two years. All participants verbally consented to having the study recorded. The following tables summarizes additional participant data.

#	Pseudonym	Age	Profession	Conference Experience	Tech-Savvy	Interviewed by
1	Phil	42	Data Scientist	High	High	Gabriela
2	James	34	Doctoral Student	High	High	Diana
3	Ellie	34	Finance	High	High	Chris
4	Susan	27	Unemployed	High	High	Katie

Table 4 - Usability Test 2 Participants

B. Data Collection Methods

The usability test was scheduled for 30 minutes. Two tests were conducted via Zoom, and two tests were conducted in-person. It began with a brief introduction about the purpose of the study, think-aloud procedures during the tasks, and participant consent (see Appendix: 9.15 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 Test Plan).

The test began with warm-up questions centered around participant's conference

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attendance frequency, reasons for attending conferences, activities they found engaging during conferences, and areas where their conference experience could be improved.

Following the warm-up questions, a screen-share was initiated for remote participants, and all participants were given a link to the Mid-Fidelity Prototype 2. The participants were prompted with two scenarios, Scenario A had six tasks, and Scenario B had four tasks. The two main scenarios targeted tasks relating to scheduling/registering for an event, viewing/interacting during a presentation, networking, and socializing in a virtual environment. At the completion of each of the scenarios, participants were verbally asked several post-scenario questions (see Appendix: 9.15 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 Test Plan).

At the conclusion of the usability test, participants were asked additional post-test questions about their experience with the prototype and given a link to a SUS questionnaire via Google forms.

C. Data Analysis

Usability test tasks were evaluated based on a scale ranging from Fully Successful to Unsuccessful, and participant comments during the think-aloud procedures were captured as notes. At the end of the usability study each participant's success rate and comments for each task were evaluated. Then feedback and data from the usability test were aggregated, analyzed, and discussed (see Appendix: 9.16 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 Test Results).

In addition to the usability test, participants were provided with a link to a 10 question SUS questionnaire. The SUS questionnaire was calculated and evaluated by assigning a score to each participant response, scores were then summed to find individual participant SUS scores and then averaged to find the overall SUS score (see Appendix: 9.17 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 SUS Results).

D. Goal

The mid-fidelity prototype 2 was user tested in order to gain data and feedback from users. The information gathered can be used to inform future design decisions and prototypes.

1. Revisions or adjustments

There were no revisions/adjustments made to our persona goals.

5.0 Results

5.1 Interviews and Surveys

From our interviews and surveys, we identified four themes surrounding participant attitudes towards (A) conference experience, (B) networking, (C) virtual platform values and concerns, and (D) virtual platform features. The four themes are described as follows.

A. Conference Experience: We defined conference experience as the motivations, expectations, and obstacles surrounding in-person conference attendance. Participants noted aspects of cost, subject matter, planning and scheduling as important factors to

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both their research process and final decision-making criteria when attending conferences. Participants also noted planning and scheduling, and the general experience while attending the in-person conferences as major obstacles that prevent a successful in-person conference experience.

- B. Networking:** We defined networking as the activity of talking to and making professional connections with other conference goers in both a physical and digital environment. We explored attitudes toward the importance of networking, participant motivation around taking part in networking activities, locations networking occurs at an in-person conference, and the challenges users face around networking.
- C. Virtual Platform Values and Concerns:** We defined virtual platform values and concerns as any element of a potential virtual platform that may have a positive or negative effect on user views when adopting or using this platform. This includes benefits around efficiency and social pressure, social concerns around distractions and individual interactions, and technical concerns around devices and connections.
- D. Virtual Platform Features:** We defined virtual platform features as functional elements of a potential virtual conferencing platform. Users mentioned the importance of profiles, activity feeds, privacy settings, note-taking, messaging, group discussions, metrics and stats, gamification, and general conference immersion.

The first two themes are intended to identify preferences surrounding in-person conference and networking experiences to help create a model of a traditional conference experience that we can then apply to a virtual setting. The next two themes focused on what could happen in a virtual experience, gathering attitudes and feature needs that we could combine with our in-person takeaways to help build a full model on a virtual conference system. These takeaways were intended to drive persona creation, feature prioritization, and design concepts.

A. Conference Experience

1. Interviews

All five participants discussed the motivations, expectations, and obstacles surrounding in-person conference attendance. We refined our initial definition of conference experience into four sub-themes: (a) Cost, (b) Subject Matter, (c) Planning and Scheduling, and (d) Experience.

a. Cost

Jane, Kevin, and Sarah mentioned elements of cost as a major factor when making their decision to attend a conference. Jane, Kevin, and Sarah all mentioned both the cost of the actual conference, and the cost of traveling. Sarah also mentioned the desire and motivation for discounts to help bring the overall price down. Jane and Kevin both mentioned how more popular conferences are also the most difficult to attend. Jane commented:

"The ones that are interesting and cool are also expensive...I very rarely travel for conferences because that I mean that just adds on to me you're paying for the conference, you are paying for travel, you are paying to stay somewhere. And usually

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this just becomes too much.”

b. Subject Matter

All five participants mentioned the subject matter as an important aspect when considering which conference to attend. Jane referred to individual sessions and discussed the emotional impact of certain topics. Jane, John, and Kevin spoke about how conference presentations tie into their specific line of work, and how they are looking for a specific takeaway from the conference. Jane also mentioned the importance of continuing education credits. Kevin told us:

“I actually would prefer to know that firsthand that the sessions and the topics they’re going to cover are going to apply directly to the things I’m directly looking for inspiration on or could go back and get direct takeaways to improve my work.”

c. Planning and Scheduling

All five participants also mentioned the idea of planning and scheduling as an important factor in deciding if they would attend a conference. John, Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah discussed planning and scheduling in terms of what presentations they could attend at the conference, especially when presented with busy schedules, multiple presentation options, and conference navigation. John told us:

“When you attend a conference like that, that is complicated with convoluted programs and 100 sessions at the same time. Literally. You have to plan in advance. That takes hours.”

John and Kevin also discussed strategically dividing up which team members attend specific sessions to allow for more knowledge sharing. Kevin told us:

“I think most companies find that they're going to get more value out of having more than one person go, so that they can get different perspectives. But also so those folks can then kind of compare notes to different sessions so cover more ground.”

John and Jane mentioned planning in terms of academic preparation by reading papers relevant to the conference. Jane commented:

“I know who the speaker is, then I will look. I will research that person and see what I can find about them. If they have written something then I'll see what they may have published before their experiences.”

Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah mentioned the logistics around fitting the conference into their personal and work schedules and traveling to the conference. Kevin mentioned:

“So, you know dates, location, cost. Those are probably going to be some of the huge criteria. After those things are in a good spot, then it's whether or not you want to attend.”

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d. Experience

Jane, Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah discussed motivations and difficulties when being at the actual conference. Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah discussed the importance of engaging topics and presentations, and the difficulties around paying attention for long periods of time. Elenor said:

“Sometimes, it’s so boring I am not paying attention.”

Jane discussed her dislike of crowds at in-person conferences. She told us:

“I really don’t like large groups of people. In a smaller group, I feel more like I could get to know people or say something or ask a question. In a larger group, it feels intimidating. It turns into a sort of like a sea of people and I just shut it out there is too much noise. It’s overwhelming.”

Kevin discussed the differences in engagement between being in-person as opposed to in a virtual setting. He told us:

“If I’m sitting in a conference hall surrounded by a bunch of other people with everyone watching this one person, I’m probably going to pay attention 10 times more than if I’m in my house and there’s other things going on.”

2. Surveys

We were interested in capturing what reasons attracted conference goers to attend. All 28 survey participants identified “learning something new or gaining new perspectives” as a reason for their attendance. The second highest choice chosen by 16 participants was “meeting people from my community,” followed closely by 15 participants choosing “meeting experts” and “networking.” Only two participants chose “exhibiting” as a reason for attending, along with three participants “finding new clients” and “selling products/services.”

To expand further on our knowledge surrounding conference attendance, we asked survey participants to select what they considered when thinking about attending a conference. Just over half of the participants (20 of 28) noted that logistics, such as traveling or scheduling barriers, created challenges for attendees. This was followed by concerns surrounding cost, with 13 participant selections.

B. Networking

1. Interviews

All five participants discussed networking in a conference setting. We refined our initial definition of networking into four sub-themes: (a) Importance, (b) Reasons & Expectations, (c) Locations, and (d) Challenges.

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a. Importance

All five participants mentioned the importance of networking, though to varying levels. John and Sarah both felt the idea of networking was important to achieving their conference goals. Sarah said:

“On a scale of 1-10, it’s a 9.”

However, Jane, Kevin, and Elenor all felt that networking was less important to their overall experience, nothing that it was not a large part of their motivation or goals when attending a conference. Kevin told us:

“I think that’s a bonus versus a draw.”

b. Reasons & Expectations

All five participants discussed their reasons for networking. Jane, John, Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah all mentioned the desire to learn from and get new perspectives from other conference goers. Jane told us:

“I just like hearing about other people’s perspectives on things. So that’s really interesting to me. Just like yours what I thought about that. What did you think about it? I like trying on other people’s perspectives and ideas to see how it feels.”

Kevin, and Sarah discussed goals around recruiting new coworkers. Sarah told us:

“My goal in the past several conferences has been primarily to look for people.”

John and Sarah discussed a desire to connect with peers and clients they had not seen in a while. John told us:

“If you take like the conference we were going to with [my company], and obviously [the goal] is to have conversations with clients, past present or future clients, in 3 days, face-to-face. With the clients coming from all over the world. You can only do that in the conference like that. Right?”

c. Locations

John and Kevin mentioned the settings that networking opportunities generally take place at a physical conference. Both participants mentioned common areas (hallways, lunchrooms, SWAG tables), session areas (lectures and workshops), and after parties. Kevin told us:

“It’s when you get food, when you walk into an exhibit hall, when you see people , it’s when you wait to get into the next Workshop session which one you sit right next to somebody you know. So it’s all of the above or it’s even you know, when you will have thousands of people going to the same restaurant, you still talk to them because the line is long here and the conversation just starts.”

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d. Challenges

Jane, John, Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah all noted challenges around finding opportunities to initiate conversation with people they do not know. Kevin discussed this challenge in relation to the energy of the conference goers, telling us:

“I think the challenges would be mostly around a lack of opportunities...I think the energy of a conference also sort of plays into how people feel sort of open to kind of chatting with their peers and things like that. So, if the conference is super serious or super boring or not interesting or quiet, then I feel like you're less inclined to kind of have that high energy coming out of it.”

John and Kevin mentioned challenges around gauging response once a conversation is initiated. John told us:

“So you end up talking to a bunch of people that have absolutely no interest in talking to you. But they still talk to you because they don't know until they talk to you if they have interest or not.”

Jane and Sarah discussed challenges from a personal perspective, noting fear or apprehension in approaching other people. Sarah told us:

“Approaching people is kind of nerve wracking.”

Elenor mentioned how some of the challenges surrounding networking were out of their control, specifically when people did not want to talk to them. Elenor told us:

“When I went to conferences as a med student, I was just a med student. And people don't hear you or want to talk to you as much. There's a hierarchy.”

2. Surveys

To expand on the networking themes identified during our interviews, we asked survey participants how important networking at conferences was to them. The spread of responses between “extremely important,” “very important,” “moderately important,” and “slightly important” was about the same, each receiving six or seven participant selections. The opinion that networking was “not at all important” was only selected by three participants.

We then asked participants to identify how important certain aspects of networking were to them. “Gaining new perspectives” received the highest importance rating from the most people (nine participants), followed closely by “learning about the industry” and “learning about people.” “Recruitment” was ranked lowest by the most participants (seven).

Next we asked survey participants to choose how frequently they encounter certain challenges when networking. Almost half of respondents (13 of 28) mentioned that they often had difficulties meeting the right people. This was closely followed by participants somewhat often having difficulties having meaningful conversations (12) and initiating conversations (11).

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Survey participants were then asked to rate how they liked to meet new people. The majority of people (22 participants) chose that they “liked a great deal” to meet people during activities or via introductions by friends or clients. Six participants said that they “disliked a little” simply approaching others.

C. Virtual Platform Values and Concerns

1. Interviews

All five participants discussed the value and concerns surrounding a potential virtual conferencing tool. We refined our initial definition of virtual platform values and concerns into three sub-themes: (a) Virtual Tool Benefits, (b) Social Concerns, and (c) Technical Concerns.

a. Virtual Tool Benefits

All five participants discussed the benefits of a potential virtual conference platform. John, Jane, and Kevin discussed the benefits of cost savings around the conference itself and travel.

“I think a lot of folks would be cautious if the cost was similar to an in-person conference. They probably wouldn't want to pay as much to go to something virtually because there are all those other things.”

Jane and John discussed the benefits of being able to connect more people at one time, specifically in terms of geographic location. Jane told us:

“When you can get people together from all over the world and to be able to share things that they have in common, the common interest in common topics. I think it is a really beautiful thing.”

Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah discussed the benefits in terms of participation, noting a virtual platform would make it easier to participate with less confusion. Elenor told us:

“You can type in your question and you don't have to sit there thinking about the question in your head the whole time until it's an appropriate time to ask. You can just type it when you think of it and it gets asked eventually.”

Jane and Elenor discussed the benefits in terms of helping with social anxiety. Jane told us:

“I'm so introverted and I don't like going places in the first place. I would probably be a lot more comfortable and more likely to attend the conference if it was a virtual conference.”

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b. Social Concerns

All five participants also mentioned social concerns when using a virtual platform. Jane and Kevin discussed apprehension around being forced to interact in the conference setting. Kevin told us:

"It put a dirty taste in my mouth. I don't like forced interaction. I don't feel like I have to check this box, and only if I check this box and do something I don't like."

Elenor and Kevin discussed these social concerns in relation to group discussions, both noting that it is difficult to curate virtual situations where multiple people are speaking at one time. Kevin told us:

"I feel like I've definitely learned from this whole situation we're in now that any time you have more than 3 or 4 people, everyone starts talking over one another, so that can be a hurdle too."

Elenor and Sarah discussed an apprehension around messaging strangers. This apprehension included both sending messages and getting ignored. Elenor told us:

"I feel uncomfortable sliding into their DMs. It feels a lot less natural than walking up to them."

John mentioned a lack of social concern because he felt a sense of trust in the other attendees by just being a part of the conference. He told us:

"I don't have a concern talking to somebody at AGU because everyone has a reason to be there, coming from a University or other organizations. So by definition, they are pre-selected to be there, so I'm happy to talk to them."

c. Technical Concerns

John, Jane, and Elenor discussed technical concerns surrounding internet connection and video quality when using a virtual platform. John also noted that this was not always the fault of the platform. John shared a previous experience in a virtual setting, saying:

"The main frustration with it was just that I didn't have good Wi-Fi and had good reception and in the video went in and out and it wasn't the fault of the tool."

2. Surveys

To further understand people's opinions surrounding virtual conferencing, we asked survey participants how they would rate their level of comfort reaching out to a stranger in an online environment. 11 out of 28 participants stated that they would feel somewhat comfortable; on the contrary, eight participants stated that they would be somewhat uncomfortable. Five participants said they would be extremely comfortable, and one participant said they would be extremely uncomfortable reaching out.

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When asked the reverse, how participants would rate their level of comfort being reached out to by a stranger, the responses changed. 13 participants said they would be somewhat comfortable and only four survey respondents said they would be somewhat uncomfortable. No participants said that they would be extremely uncomfortable.

D. Virtual Platform Features

1. Interviews

All five participants discussed specific features they would like to see in a hypothetical virtual conferencing platform. We refined our initial definition of virtual platform features into nine sub-themes: (a) Profile, (b) Activity Feed, (c) Privacy Settings, (d) Presentations and Notes, (e) Messaging, (f) Group Discussions, (g) Metrics and Stats (h) Gamification, and (i) Immersion.

a. Profile

John, Jane, Kevin, and Sarah discussed the importance of having an individual user profile on a virtual conference platform. Elements of profiles that participants discussed included photos, bios, work experience, education, social media, business cards, and introduction videos. Kevin described the importance of these features in terms of networking, saying:

“If I could virtually go out and stalk them a bit, then I feel like I am more inclined to understand who they are. So anything that would give me more insights as to professionally who they are, personally who they are. Those are sort of the two sides of the coin...[D]oes this person seem like somebody that I could talk to?”

b. Activity Feed

Kevin mentioned the importance of having an activity feed in a virtual conference tool. He discussed the benefits of both tracking your engagement, saying:

“I also think the idea of some sort of log or something to see if...I did a lot. I accomplished a lot. Look at all the things I did. I think that that makes me feel like the warm, fuzzy after the conference of that was worth the money”

Kevin also discussed this feature in relation to networking, saying that an activity feed may help improve reconnecting with attendees after the conference. He told us:

“I don’t want to get like creepy, or big brother. But knowing that like on Monday you talked to these six people. These are those six people, and this is how I can get a hold of them. People do like the convenience factor of it. “

c. Privacy Settings

John, Jane, and Kevin discussed the importance of including privacy settings to toggle the ability to send and receive messages. Kevin discussed this, saying:

“Like I don't know if you guys would go as far as to have a thing in your profile, “Yes or

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no. I'm open to networking" or something. I don't know if that's too far, to black and white, but if there is some sort of indication that these people here are open to chatting, then I think I would be more inclined to do it."

d. Presentations and Notes

Kevin mentioned the importance of creating a seamless experience around presentations and note taking as a way to provide context around important takeaways after the conference. Kevin told us:

"I think that would also be really interesting if there were ways where I'm watching a session somehow or not, maybe my notes are tied into that?...I found this part interesting, and being able to reference and go back and get value after the conference out of what I did attending the conference I think would be an incentive for me. To know that I really enjoyed that talk, but then how do I go back to my notes and pull value out of that later?"

e. Messaging

John, Elenor, Kevin, and Sarah discussed messaging in a virtual platform. However, John also noted some apprehensions based off of previous experiences, saying:

"There are some apps with programs for conferences that offer the possibility for you to communicate directly with some participants. I have never been able to use that efficiently."

f. Group Discussions

All five participants mentioned the idea of group discussions, which would allow multiple attendees to have conversations in real time. Kevin told us:

"I also like the idea that there would be virtual rooms where you could listen and watch other people, and some people choose to turn on or something. I don't know if that is like there are 6 people in a room and they all have video on. Or if you would want to allow like 10 other people to be there and they're listening, but they're not on as well."

Elenor also discussed the desire to be selective in group chats, saying:

"[I would prefer personal] group chats so I could exclude people."

g. Metrics and Stats

All five participants discussed metrics and stats as a way to provide insight into the conference experience, and boost engagement. Kevin told us:

"I think people like data and things like that in general. It's like people use step counter apps and people look at their iPhone to see how much time people spend on apps and stuff like that. So I feel like that would be cool for like a social perspective, but I think that in general it would also help people set goals and measure how well they did at attending the conference right? So I think it's an incentive to participate more and to go to more sessions and things. If you feel like I paid for this or the company paid for this,

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and looking at what I did yesterday. Like I didn't do a very good job at being a good attendee. So I think that it could be motivational. Definitely."

However, John discussed some hesitations around the effort and logistics of providing metrics on conference goers, specifically noting that metrics may be misleading due to the lack of clarity around certain intentions or interactions. He told us:

"Typically we were tracking the number of visitors that came to the booth that we interacted with, you know, nobody really tracks that because people just show up and why would you track someone that is just interested in finding a job."

h. Gamification

All five participants discussed gamification. Kevin, Sarah, and Jane both liked the idea of gamification, and felt that it might be a positive motivation to interact with other conference goers. Sarah told us:

"I think games could be used as good ice breakers."

However, John, Elenor, Sarah were also skeptical of the value of adding game-based elements. John and Sarah discussed feelings that including elements of gamification may result in a false sense of quality connections that may result in approaching the objective from a numbers perspective. He told us:

"It seems childish. Because of the network... you are motivated by the results of the network. I mean, you don't need to have points or rewards for that. That may work for young people who are not yet used to networking in to motivate them to talk to people but also you have to be careful with this because quantity is never a good measure of an efficient networking effort."

i. Immersion

Jane, Elenor, and Kevin all discussed the idea of immersion in the virtual environment, with a focus on recreating real-life group settings to make it feel like you are actually at a conference. Jane said:

"If you could see yourself with other people in some kind of setting together. It would give you a sense of being together or they will give you a sense of the size of the group or someone laughed or came in. Maybe there will be some indication of that."

2. Surveys

Participants discussed a variety of potential virtual conferencing features during the interviews, so we used the survey participants to gain further insight into their importance. 13 out of 28 participants ranked "individual/group messaging" as "very important". 11 participants ranked having an "activity feed," "in-platform note taking," and "your connections with other attendees" as "very important". Ten participants ranked "having the option to turn on/off messaging functionality" as "moderately important". Ten participants ranked gamification, rewards, and badges for conference contributions as "not important at all".

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Several features received mixed rankings. Eight participants considered viewing metrics and statistics on conference activities very important and eight thought it was only slightly important. However, five respondents thought this feature was not important at all. Additionally, the “attendee endorsements” feature received a variety of rankings from participants: seven ranked it high importance, six moderate, and 12 low. Similarly, the option of “having the option to show/hide your attendee profile” was also spread: nine ranking it with highly important, five moderately, eight low, and three having no opinion.

We also allowed participants to openly suggest features, as well and received three responses. Two of those responses surrounded safety and privacy policies. One participant suggested maximum privacy settings be enabled and data collection be opt-out by default.

Finally, we asked participants how we can help connect them with other attendees during/after the conference. The most popular choice to ‘bring people together that know each other in smaller events or social hours’ was selected 21 times. The least popular option to ‘send reminders to get in touch’ was selected 8 times.

5.2. Personas

We created three separate personas to gain a better understanding of our user base. These three personas were based on the information gained from the interviews and surveys, and focused on the main reasons people attend conferences. These personas were:

Networking: Users focused on engaging with their peers. Experience and education factor into the conference but are not as important as the specific networking goals (ie - recruitment, forming partnerships, catching up with industry peers, etc).

Experience: Users focused on the conference experience as a whole. This includes elements of education, individual networking, and becoming part of the broader community.

Education: Users focused on the conference subject matter. These users are attending a conference to learn, sometimes as a professional requirement (ie - continuing education credits).

Full Personas available in the appendix (9.7 Personas).

5.3. Feature Matrix

We created a Feature Matrix to prioritize a list of “must-have” features to be included in the first iteration of the prototype. Many of these features began to emerge during the interviews and surveys. The feature matrix identified and defined key features, and ranked these features by development effort, value to the user, and overall priority.

The features we identified to include in the initial prototype focused on synchronous and asynchronous networking opportunities, elements of user profiles that provide the proper

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context for making decisions around networking, and elements of presentation watching and user engagement.

Full Feature Matrix available in the appendix (9.8 Feature Matrix).

5.4 Mid-Fi Prototype 1

We created a prototype that included 6 key pages and various alternate states. These pages included Home, Profile, Event Detail (Register), Event Detail (Live Session), Connections, and Lounge. We used three scenarios to test the usability of these pages that focused on the three main elements of the tool; Presentation Selection, Networking, and the Virtual Lounge.

Full usability test results available in the appendix (9.12 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 Usability Test Results).

A. Scenario A: Presentation Selection

Users were presented with the following scenario: It is just before 9:00 am on the first day of the From Day One conference, and you just logged into the virtual conference platform on your computer.

1. Task 1: On the homepage, you want to find an event that starts at 9:30am and view it. How would you find out more about the event?

Michael, Rich, and John were fully successful in completing the task. Rich clicked the "View All" link in the presentation slider on the home page, but it was not linked up. He then successfully navigated using the menu. Tim was partially successful, exploring a few "off-the-path" features on the page, but was ultimately successful in completing the task.

2. Task 2: You're interested in attending this workshop session that has a set capacity. How would you register for this workshop?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task. Tim noted a specific navigational inefficiency that was later echoed in other user feedback, saying:

"I would have clicked the icon at the top to go home."

3. Task 3: You want to see the entire conference schedule so you can plan your day around the events you might be interested in attending. Where would you find the full schedule?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task. Michael, Rich, and Tim all made additional comments around the possibility and execution of displaying overlapping presentation times. Michael and Rich were more interested in the presentation, while Tim expressed concern around registering for two events that overlapped.

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4. Task 4: You're excited to attend the event you just registered for. It's now 9:30am. How would you view that event?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task. Rich and Michael mentioned concerns around registration confirmation. Michael said:

"It would be nice if there was a little notification icon here that could show me what events/talks I was already registered for so I don't have to remember the name of the event."

Tim also mentioned the desire for the schedule to show time zones to make it clear for attendees all over the world.

5. Post-Task Question 1: How would you rate the ease-of-use of this platform to locate a current presentation?

All four participants said that the tasks were easy. John expressed concerns about too much scrolling on the home page.

6. Post-Task Question 2: How did you feel about the level of detail surrounding a specific event?

Michael wanted to see which presentations he registered for on the listings. Rich commented on an inconsistency between the event detail page and the presentation, saying that he wanted more context around the presentation and the speaker. John and Tim liked the level of detail provided.

B. Scenario B: Networking

Users were presented with the following scenario: You've just finished registering for an upcoming workshop, and you'd like to connect with and meet the other conference attendees.

1. Task 1: You want to see who is attending the conference to make new connections. How would you find other conference-goers to network with?

Michael and Rich were fully successful in completing this task. John was partially successful, initially checking attendees for an event he registered for and then moving to the Connections section of the application. Tim was unsuccessful, navigating to the lounge and then giving up.

Michael and Rich also brought up concerns about the accuracy of the tool's attendee matching function. Rich said:

"I know that it's offering me recommendations, but I have no experience why I would trust the AI's recommendations. I am better off filtering by myself."

There was also a contrasting opinion on the usefulness of seeing all attendees. Michael and John both made comments around the large number of attendees, and how it may not be logical to go through that many people. However, Rich expressed the opposite opinion, saying that he valued this feature and would

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even like a way to export this data to use for his own use.

2. Task 2: You've found an attendee that you'd potentially like to connect with named Sally Morais. How would you learn more about them?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task. Tim noted some confusion around the prototype, saying that he was unsure if there was a difference between clicking the participants name as opposed to clicking "View Profile". Tim also was not sure if the common connections meant interested or common network.

3. Task 3: You have seen some of the attendees and made a few connections. How would you find someone that is recommended for you to meet at this conference?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task. Micheal mentioned that he was aware that content could be found in multiple areas. John mentioned the need for being able to see and connect with other attendees in a specific presentation.

Rich and Tim noted additional usability issues. Rich said that he though the menu felt like an inefficient way to navigate, saying:

"The menu feels like an extra click. Every time I want to change something I have to click the menu rather than it being fully available."

Tim was unsure what the top right number (matching score) of the attendee card meant.

4. Task 4: You noticed Jack Russo's information and would like to potentially find and speak to him during the conference. How would you spotlight this person to find them later on?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task, but all four participants were also unclear around the functionality and use case of the spotlight feature. However, Michael and Rich commented on the usefulness of the tool tip in figuring out this feature.

5. Post-Task Question 1: What information did you find useful when selecting someone to network with?

All four participants were satisfied with the level of detail presented. Michael, Rich, and Tim all said that the Job Title and Role were the most useful criteria in assessing who they wanted to network with. Michael also mentioned the importance of location.

Michael and Rich also provided positive feedback on the activity feed. Rich expressed the desire for additional functionality around aspects of both the feed and scheduling, saying:

"I like the activity feed. If you want to run into someone, you can see what they

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registered for. Would be nice to see everything and have it highlight anything we both signed up for like seminars or break out rooms."

However, John felt the opposite, saying:

"This is a little weird. I don't want to know who joined the session."

6. Post-Task Question 2: What were your thoughts on the idea and execution of spotlight functionality?

As noted in Task 4, all participants expressed some degree of confusion around the concept of the Spotlight functionality. However, Michael and Tim felt that it was a useful feature, once they understood what it was. Michael said:

"I wasn't familiar with that term so it was a little new to me. I think the idea makes sense to indicate people that I'd like to follow/reach out to."

C. Scenario C: Virtual Lounge

Users were presented with the following scenario: You have a 20-minute break between presentation sessions, and you're interested in engaging in group conversations with other attendees.

1. Task 1: You want to find a group to join. How would you find and join a group conversation talking about meditation?

Tim was fully successful in completing this task. Michael and Rich were partially successful in completing this task. John needed help to finish the task, initially navigating to the activity feed and the connections area before getting help to go to the Lounge. However, John noticed the Lounge option on the Home Page, but there was an error in the prototype and this link was not clickable.

Michael and Rich expressed uncertainty around the word "Lounge". Rich said:

"Honestly I am just guessing at this point. Nothing really popped up. I guess it's Lounge. I'm only clicking because it's one of the only things available. I wouldn't know what that is."

Michael and Rich also expressed concern about selecting a group, both noting they wanted additional context to make a decision. Michael said:

"I wouldn't base my choice of a group off a hashtag though, I'd want to learn more about the group before I decide to join."

Rich also expressed not caring about the subject matter, and caring more about the opportunity to meet people. He said:

"If it's just to meet with people, I don't care what the group session is anyway so I can chat with people I want to network with."

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2. Task 2: You are in a group conversation, and you are interested in networking with Benjamin Howe in the group. How would you add this person to your network?

Rich was fully successful in completing this task. Michael, John, and Tim were partially successful in completing this task. Michael and Tim both did not notice the dropdown selector for this functionality. This was something also mentioned by Rich, but this did not cause complications in completing the task. John clicked to the home page first, before navigating back to the Lounge section to complete the task.

Michael and Rich both expressed confusion around the icons over the video screen. Michael found the icons distracting and hard to differentiate. Rich questioned the usefulness of both the emoji and the spotlight feature, saying:

"I don't see how connecting and spotlight are two different things. I think they are slightly different things in the way I would use them. If I am looking to meet Tracy Bishop, I would click this add connection. So maybe there's a way to type a message when I add a connection. If I add her without her any message why not just do that?"

Both Michael and Rich expressed a desire for individual networking, and a more formal, direct connection. Michael said:

"Part of me just wanted to send this person a direct message to connect, rather than just an 'informal' add connection."

John also expressed additional concerns around the contrast of elements in the prototype.

3. Task 3: You want to randomly join a group based on recommendations around your profile. How would you join a group using random matching?

Rich was fully successful in completing this task. Michael, John, and Tim were partially successful in completing this task. Michael and Tim did not initially see the dropdowns. This was echoed by Rich, who successfully completed the task, but noted he would not have found this feature without being directed to look for it. John initially navigated to the home page, but then returned to the Lounge.

4. Post-Task Question 1: What did you think about the concept and execution surrounding the Lounge?

John and Rich again expressed the desire for one on one networking. Rich said:

"Personally, I think a lot of networking is more one on one and smaller groups than this. At some point, if i want to get to know someone, it needs to be a separate conversation outside this group."

John and Tim liked the level of detail, though John expressed concerns around

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usability, saying:

"I think I need to use it to really understand how it works."

5. Post-Task Question 2: What did you think about the level of detail surrounding specific groups in the Lounge?

Both Michael and Rich expressed concerns over the logistics of this experience, specifically questioning both the use of the hashtag and the level of moderation in a specific group. Michael had additional questions around group creation. Rich had concerns on participation. Rich said:

"Last point, if there is nobody in any of these rooms, it's hard to get critical mass. The first click can be tough and if there is only one person, it's hard to get the second person. It probably gets easier to get people to join, but it's hard to get people to join an empty room. If I am in an empty room for 10 mins and nobody joins, I'm going to leave. So that enhances the problem."

D. Post Test Questions

Users were asked three additional questions about their experience.

1. Question 1: What is your impression of the virtual conference platform after using it?

All four participants made positive comments about the prototype, and its potential for real-world application. Rich noted additional value for speakers, but expressed concerns around one-on-one networking situations, saying:

"If I'm going to network with some people, I think that is going to be the one struggle in how you provide a platform that is essentially one-on-one interactions."

2. Question 2: What feature(s) of the platform would you say you found to be the most useful? Least useful?

Michael and Rich said that the list of attendees was the most useful part of this platform. Rich requested additional functionality around this feature, saying:

"Most - Attendees are the most useful. Hands down. That's what I value. Do you want to make this exportable to CSV? Also what column you show in your export."

Tim found the schedule as the most useful part of the experience.

The least useful element of the application varied per-participant. Michael again discussed concerns around the algorithm that matched attendees. Rich said that the home page was very busy. Tim said he found the spotlight functionality to be the least valuable.

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3. Question 3: Is there anything else that you observed during the completion of the tasks that you would like to discuss?

Rich provided the only answer to this question, questioning the name of the conference, and reiterating the desire for a home link in the header. He said:

"The only other thing is my question is it says FROM DAY ONE. I am not sure if this was meant to be a return to home button. Every time I had to go to the menu and that was a bit much."

E. System Usability Scale Survey

Participants were asked to fill out a System Usability Scale survey. All four participants completed this survey. The prototype received an average score of 68.65, which matches the generally accepted standard at 68. This score qualifies for a rating of "B" or "Good" based on general SUS guidelines (Alathas, 2018).

5.5 - Mid-fi Prototype 2

Our updated prototype included 8 key pages and various alternate states. These pages included Home, Event Detail (Register), Event Detail (Live Session), Schedule, My Agenda, Presentation Detail, Social Hour (formerly Virtual Lounge), and Social Hour Event (formerly Virtual Lounge Event). We used two scenarios to test the usability of these pages that focused on the three main elements of the tool; Scheduling, Presentations, and Networking, and reassessing the updated Social Hour page.

Full usability test results available in the appendix (9.16 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 Test Results).

A. Scenario A: Scheduling, Presentations, and Networking

Users were presented with the following scenario: It is just before 9:00 am on the first day of the From Day One conference, and you just logged into the virtual conference platform on your computer.

1. Task 1: Your college told you the Opening Up Your Network presentation sounded interesting. How would you find that?

All four participants were successful in completing this task. All four participants took the expected path. There were no additional comments.

2. Task 2: Even though you are registered for an event at the same time as this event, you think this event is interesting. How would you register for Opening Up Your Network?

All four participants were successful in completing this task. Phil, James, and Ellie commented on the usefulness of this feature. Ellie discussed her previous difficulties when planning her schedule, saying:

"I think it's kind of nice. It's hard to remember my schedule. Every time I attend a conference, it's...the whole day is full and they dont give you a lot of time between events to choose your next location. When I first attended, when I never

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did it before, I always had to figure out where to go next and I would frantically be finding what to choose and be late. Now the day before, I plan my whole day out."

Susan expressed some additional concerns surrounding conflicting times, questioning the requirement to register for a session. She told us:

"Would this happen with all events? Even ones that don't have a max capacity? ...Yeah, I wouldn't want to commit to a single session at a single time frame in case I wasn't enjoying it. I would want to leave and go to another."

3. Task 3: You are now registered for the new presentation. Where would you go to see your full agenda for the conference?

All four participants were successful in completing this task. Ellie and Susan voiced ideas around additional features they wanted. Ellie discussed shortcuts with the user profile icon in the top right corner saying:

"I might even assume the little profile thing would show me more information like this on myself."

While Susan expressed the desire for additional reminders via text message, She told us:

"I really like this feature. I'd love to set text message reminders to my phone since I might be more likely to step away from my computer during the conference and forget when things are starting."

4. Task 4: The Opening Up Your Network presentation has now started, how would you join?

All four participants were successful in completing this task. Ellie expressed that she liked the "In Session" banner that was added. Susan discussed her desire for the recommended presentations to show up in multiple locations, saying:

"I think it's weird that the only place where recommended presentations display are on the homepage. I would want to see that information somewhere else too."

5. Task 5: How would you find people you are connected to who are also watching this presentation?

Phil, James, and Susan were successful in completing this task. No additional comments were made. Ellie was partially successful. She navigated to the chat option first, but found the area for connections quickly after. She discussed her expectations, saying:

"Normally when I am in these, on the left is everyone who is in the room with you and the chat is usually lower or you can expand it."

However, when she saw the number of people, she indicated more acceptance

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of the feature and design treatment, saying:

"Oh so this is a much bigger group, so it might be good to keep that separate. Showing them all might be overkill."

6. Task 6: The speaker is dividing you into groups for a breakout session, how would you join your group?

All four participants were successful in completing this task. Susan had a lot of additional questions regarding this feature. She was concerned that she wouldn't be able to switch breakout groups if she wasn't "vibing" with the other members.

7. Post-Scenario Question 1: What did you like about the presentation page?

Phil, James, and Susan all expressed that the presentation page was clearly organized and everything was easy to find. Ellie said that she liked the Resource feature, mentioning:

"I like [the resources]. I don't know what they mean, but I assume that's where you get the slides. They tell you that's where you can get them. They always tell you you get them later, but by the time I get them I don't give a shit."

8. Post-Scenario Question 2: What would you improve about the presentation page?

Phil mentioned that he did not see an option to mute the video chat, and also missed the messaging functionality in the bottom right corner. Susan discussed her desire to improve the home page, specifically wanting to add the agenda to this section. She said:

"Most of [the homepage] just looks like filler information. I could see myself coming back to the agenda multiple times during a conference instead of the homepage."

B. Scenario B: Social Hour

Users were presented with the following scenario: The conference is now over for the day, and you are interested in discussing the conference and networking with other attendees.

1. Task 1: It is the end of the day and you want to go to a post-conference social event. Where would you find that?

All four participants successfully completed this task. Phil and James discussed the importance of this feature. James said:

"Oh this is great! These after conference events are really important for meeting other people. I like this."

Ellie and Susan were more skeptical of this feature. Ellie told us:

"That is a huge part of networking - mixers - or these events. To make it virtual I am immediately polarized because I don't believe I will get the same value out of the social part when it's virtual. It's cocktail hour. You start loosening up a little, you make friends, and it's easier to talk. I don't know how you can put that into a virtual conference."

Ellie also discussed concerns around the number of people in a social hour group, and the potential difficulties around communicating with large groups in a virtual setting. She said:

"We've all learned in this new world that we're in that more than 20 people in a meeting is too much to be social with. So would they somehow cut this off? How do you make it that 100 people are not trying to talk to someone at the same time?"

2. Task 2: You are interested in working for a startup. How would you join a group talking about this topic?

All four participants were successful in completing this task. James and Ellie discussed their hesitations around larger group chats. James expressed a concern that large groups may lead to users who "lurk" but don't contribute to the conversation. Ellie continued to address her points from the previous task, offering solutions around dealing with large groups. She said:

"You can't have more than too many people in a social hour before it gets to be too much. So, maybe there should be buckets. Overfills. And oh well if you don't get to be in the same bucket as your best friend and they get put in another. The whole point is to get to know other people anyway."

3. Task 3: You are in the group video chat, but you are having difficulty joining in the conversation. How would you get involved in the conversation?

All four participants were fully successful in completing this task. Phil, James, and Ellie expressed uncertainty around how the icebreaker feature would work. Phil and James thought it was part of the chat. Ellie discussed it in broader terms, focusing on chat and video, and expressing a desire for both a facilitator and resources to help navigate this experience. She said:

"It would be interesting to see how that works. Would it bring you to the forefront to get people to shut up. Is it like a raise your hand? It seems like someone would have to be facilitating this. You might need to raise your hand option if Tracy Bishop is saying something, but Lee won't shut up. That's why you can't have too many people in this, or it would be obnoxious. It would be interesting to see how it plays out. It would almost be like - here's the rules or how best to attend a social networking happy hour. Like follow these tips and tricks on how to get the most out of this zoom meeting."

Susan noted different methods that she could use (i.e. icebreaker, simply talking using her video, or entering something in the chat), but expressed a desire to

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simply listen to the conversation.

4. Task 4: You heard interesting comments from Benjamin Howe. How would you connect with him?

Phil and James were unsuccessful in this task. Both participants wanted to send a direct message first. Ellie and Susan were partially successful. Ellie clicked on Message first, but then found the Connect option. Ellie also noted that she found the connect and message icons and functionality very similar at first.

Regardless of task success, all four participants made comments on the importance and preference of sending a direct message to another user, rather than just connecting to someone on a superficial level. Susan said:

"I don't want more connections, just to have a lot of connections. I want true conversation and meaningful relationships with people. That's why I would want to send a message first."

5. Post-Scenario Question 1: What did you think of the ice breaker option?

All four participants expressed a positive opinion surrounding the ice breaker option. Phil, Ellie, and James expressed additional concerns around the logistics surrounding use and implementation. Ellie noted the limitations of the prototype, saying:

"Idk. It is not operable, so I would like to see a bit more about how it works. What happens when you click on it. I am hesitant to use it. I wouldn't want to interrupt everyone."

6. Post-Scenario Question 2: What did you think about the label "Social Hour"?

All four participants expressed positive opinions on the Social Hour label. Ellie said:

"I think it's ideal. It's a huge reason why I go in the first place."

7. Post-Scenario Question 3: What did you think about the Social Hour experience?

All four participants expressed positive opinions on the Social Hour experience. James and Susan discussed how it was essential to the overall experience. James said:

"I thought this area was great, and really necessary if you're attempting to encompass the entire conference experience. This would be something that I would look for if I were going to a virtual conference."

Ellie continued to express her concern surrounding the number of participants in a chat. She said:

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“My biggest concern is how do you make it not overwhelming, but still make it fun and interesting.”

8. Post-Scenario Question 4: What would you improve about the Social Hour experience?

Phil and James did not have any additional comments. Ellie continued to discuss her hesitations around group size. Susan reiterated her desire to make meaningful connections, saying:

“As I said before, I go to conferences to make connections, but I don't want to make virtual connections with people just to do so. My hope is that these sessions would be where I would know whether I have a connection with someone.”

C. Post-Test Questions

Users were asked three additional questions about their experience.

1. What is your impression of the virtual conference platform after using it?

All four participants expressed positive opinions on the platform as a whole. Phil and James both made comments on the platform's ease of use. James said:

“I liked the layout of things; everything felt like it was right there and not buried somewhere where I can't find it.”

Ellie continues to discuss concerns around the social aspect of the platform, and the importance of the platform in keeping her engaged in the conference. She said:

“I go to a conference to see people, be seen, and have a good time. How do you make that happen? How do you engage people? Otherwise I am attending this and working at the same time.”

Ellie also discussed the importance of individual networking and scheduling time to meet. She told us:

“I think having the option to track down individuals and set up coffee in a coffee room or something like that. A lot of bankers are like "let's meet in this time frame" so there are people who are going to want to get facetime with you, so the ability to have a one on one meeting.”

2. What feature(s) of the platform would you say you found to be the most useful? Least useful?

All four participants mentioned elements of the prototype that were not interactive and not tested. This included concerns surrounding the functionality and necessity of these features. Phil said:

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"There were a lot of buttons and widgets that I didn't interact with that I'm not sure if they are useful. They may be useful but I can't speak to them. There is a lot of information in the application that we didn't address in the test so it just raises the question, do you need them? Why are they here?"

Ellie also expressed concern around privacy, saying:

"I want the option to not be tracked. I would not really want people to tell me if I am in a certain [event or social hour]."

3. Is there anything else that you observed during the completion of the tasks that you would like to discuss?

None of the participants had any additional comments.

D. System Usability Scale Survey

Participants were asked to fill out the same System Usability Scale survey that was used in the previous round of user tests. All four participants completed this survey. The updated prototype received an average score of 86.87, an improvement of 18.12 points over the first iteration. This was higher than the generally accepted standard at 68. This score also qualifies for a rating of "A" or "Excellent" based on general SUS guidelines.

6.0 Discussion

6.1 Overview

The primary objective of this project was to research, design, and user test a virtual conference platform that supports and enhances engagement, attendee interactions, and networking opportunities within a virtual environment. The design of the platform was guided by four overarching goals that focused on identifying specific challenges in terms of communicating and connecting with others when attending in-person conferences, determining and prioritizing critical platform features that would help facilitate connections and communication, enhancing social interactions, and utilizing game-based elements to increase engagement.

In order to determine some of the barriers and challenges associated with interacting, communicating, and networking during a conference, interviews were conducted with five participants to gather information about their conference experiences. Many of the interview responses were geared towards challenges during in-person conferences. Although understanding these challenges identified gaps in the in-person conference experience, it also provided insight in terms of value and benefits of a virtual conference platform. For example, it was found that a virtual conference platform enhances the ability to connect with a larger audience, reduces logistical costs, and can ease social anxiety. Following the interviews, a survey was distributed in order to gain more information about the insights that emerged during the interviews, as well as begin to understand user needs in terms of critical features that would facilitate and enhance social interactions. Primarily, insights gathered from the survey highlighted barriers and challenges around

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interacting/socializing during conferences and outlined a series of features to include in the virtual conference platform.

The results of both the interviews and surveys were used to guide and influence the creation of three user personas, which helped create a sense of empathy and understanding of user needs. The interview and survey results were also used to create a feature matrix, which served as a prioritized list of “must-have” features that needed to be included in the initial design of the prototype.

The combination of the interview and survey data, as well as the user personas and feature matrix, were then used to design the interface and key interactions for the first iteration prototype. Initial sketches were generated to align on the primary interface screens before we moved into a more concrete design in the form of the mid fidelity prototype. It was also determined that a mid-fidelity prototype would provide more context during user testing, leading to deeper insights and feedback. The user testing focused on scenario-based tasks that included the participants’ ability to find information related to speaker presentations and workshops, networking within the platform, and socializing/interacting with other participants.

Several key insights resulted from the mid-fidelity prototype user test. Major themes that influenced the second iteration included streamlining interactions that occur in the social engagement area, changing the label of the social area from “The Lounge” to “Social Hour” thus making the social area more accessible, and creating transparency around individual conference agenda events and event registration. It was also noted that there was a need to streamline and simplify conference attendee connection recommendations and create an easier path for connecting with other attendees.

One of the biggest takeaways of the mid-fidelity prototype test was the need to simplify the layout, interactions, and elements available to the users in order to reduce cognitive load, and create a more functional process for engaging, connecting, networking, and socializing within the platform.

Following the initial mid-fidelity prototype test, user feedback was applied to a second iteration prototype design. Updates to the prototype included an enhanced homepage that detailed events and a more integrated activity feed, as well as additional visibility around conference schedules. Networking aspects included a more refined approach towards displaying attendee connection/profile elements, and an updated social hour area where attendees can meet and engage with each other. Once the updates to the prototype were completed, a second round of user testing occurred.

The results of the second round of user testing provided additional insights and several themes emerged across both the initial prototype and the second iteration prototype. The homepage and schedule areas continued to be highlighted as areas important to the user. However, it was found that the homepage might not be the actual “jump-off” point into the platform; the schedule/agenda area appeared to stand out as a more functional starting point when using the platform. In addition, although the ability to find and connect with others was simplified, interactions and elements can be refined in order to create a more

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seamless process for connecting with others. Another key takeaway between the first iteration and second iteration focused on communicating with other attendees, specifically using individual messages.

Both prototypes scored well on the SUS questionnaire. However, once feedback and changes were made to the second iteration, the SUS score for the second iteration showed an 18% increase in terms of ease of use and usability.

The overarching goals of the project, as well as the results of the methods applied during the course of designing and testing the platform, influenced the layout, interactions, elements and design decisions during the project. All of the project goals were met during the course of designing the platform, including the ability to understand user perspectives around the addition of game-based elements in the platform. However, it was determined during the participant surveys that the need to include gamification elements in the platform at this stage of the design process was unnecessary.

6.2 Limitations

The interviews, Mid-Fidelity Prototype Test 1, and Mid-Fidelity Prototype Test 2 were limited by the small sample size (n=5, n=4, and n=4, respectively). The gender distribution of survey participants skewed more towards the female demographic (18 females to 11 males), and a younger age range (18 out of 29 participants were under the age of 40). The Mid-Fidelity Prototype Test 1 participants were made up of entirely males, a majority of which worked in finance (three out of four participants). The Mid-Fidelity Prototype Test 2 participants were more diverse in profession and gender, but more similar in age range, including younger/middle aged participants, but lacking older participants (participants were aged 27 to 42).

We were also limited by the fast turnaround time of project activities. Activities were, on average, developed and conducted within one to two weeks. This was especially noteworthy when creating the first iteration of the prototype. The short timeframe limited idea exploration and resulted in minor errors around the functionality of the prototype. These errors did not ruin the tests but did cause minor issues during testing. There were also limitations around properly exploring chat and video conferencing features, which were key to the experience we created, but difficult to test in a static environment.

6.3 Future work

As the prototype continues to evolve based on feedback from the second round of user testing, next steps would cover incorporating the insights gathered from the test, updating the prototype, and testing it again. Major take-aways resulting from the second user test which could influence future iterations centered on social interactions to include messaging and connecting with other attendees, leveraging the individual agenda as the initial jump off point within the platform, fine-tuning user micro-interactions, and reevaluating the function of the homepage. In addition, data and user privacy was also expressed as a user concern throughout the design and testing of the platform. Therefore, several aspects that can be incorporated and tested in future iterations include user privacy controls that allow the user

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to determine what is shared/captured when attending a virtual conference within the platform.

Future studies should include a wider range of demographics in terms of age, gender, and profession, and a more functional prototype that allows us to explore the nature of interactions on a virtual conference platform.

7.0 Conclusion

The primary purpose of this project was to design and test a virtual conference platform that enhances communication, collaboration, and networking capabilities of conference attendees. The project went through several iterative phases. Initial background research included a review of current literature within the virtual collaboration space and social interactions as well as an in-depth competitor analysis. The background research served as an entry point into understanding and identifying gaps within virtual conference platforms that already exist within the space. In addition, the research also helped to justify the need for a virtual conference platform that leverages multiple opportunities for attendees to participate, connect, and network within virtual environments.

Interaction and communication with potential users were a critical part of the process during the ideation and design phases of this project. The project included user interviews, a survey, and two rounds of user tests with prototypes of the virtual conference platform. The results of the interviews and surveys were used to guide and develop user personas and a feature matrix. The personas provided insightful user needs and motivations while the feature matrix streamlined critical features to incorporate into the prototype. Both of these project deliverables helped to guide and refine the ideas for a virtual conference platform.

As the project moved into the design phase, a series of sketches were completed and discussed in order to align on screen layout and interface elements. The sketches added value to the design process by serving as a quick method for getting thoughts and ideas down on paper. Following the series of sketches, a mid-fidelity prototype was developed and user tested. The design of a mid-fidelity prototype provided additional background context during user testing which led to deeper insights and feedback from the participants. However, due to the quick turnaround time, the initial mid-fidelity prototype had a few errors. These errors did not impact the user tests though and the prototype received an average SUS score of 68.75.

After completing the first user test both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. The insights gained from the user tests were applied to the second iteration of the mid-fidelity prototype and included enhanced interface interactions and a streamlined approach to connecting with other attendees and networking. A second user test was conducted using the updated prototype. The feedback gained from the second user test was positive and the SUS score of the second iteration prototype improved significantly. The results and insights from the second user test can be used to continue to refine and enhance the prototype.

The project culminated with a second iteration mid-fidelity prototype that has various opportunities for additional iterations and future work. For example, fine tuning and testing the micro-interactions within the platform and leveraging the agenda feature as the initial entry

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point to the virtual conference platform. In addition, several aspects around user privacy need to be integrated and tested.

Although there are multiple opportunities for future work, all goals outlined at the onset of the project have been met. Our platform aims to provide a centralized, holistic approach to collaborating, engaging, and networking with other attendees that was not seen in either the literature review or the competitor analysis. The features and functionality designed within this platform create a seamless approach for enhancing meaningful social interactions, engagements and networking for all conference attendees. Overall, user feedback indicated that a virtual conference platform used to enhance collaboration, communication, and network connections would be valuable within the virtual conference space.

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9.0 Appendices: Supporting Material

9.1 Competitor Analysis

The review is based on competitors' sites and Trustradius.com (software reviews).

Brands	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Run the World</p> <p>Charges 25% of ticket sales or a fee per person for free events</p>	<p>Browse attendees list and shows where they work and what they do</p> <p>Chat allows members to ask questions & give feedback and event organizers to interview or communicate with attendees</p> <p>Ability to set up 1-hour cocktail party where attendees are matched for several minutes and can chat with each other</p> <p>Helps organizers follow up with attendees after the event</p> <p>Every event attendee has to create a video profile akin to an Instagram story that can help inform other attendees about who they are</p> <p>Pre-baked event templates</p>	<p>Video profiles could attract unwanted attention</p> <p>Does not validate attendees for more security around who attends</p> <p>Chat-only communication with other attendees and between attendees and speakers</p> <p>Lacks functionality for larger conferences and not immersive</p>
<p>Sococo</p> <p>(online workspace)</p>	<p>Let people go into private offices (breakout) and back into the big conference room</p> <p>Creates a virtual office plan that shows where people are and how they are communicating (voice, video, chat, screen share) (faces over a map)</p> <p>Ability to "knock on the door" or "get" someone to a chat or meeting</p> <p>spotlight other people</p> <p>Integrates with Zoom</p>	<p>It's not easy to send colleagues documents, etc</p> <p>Room capacity limitations - The small virtual offices only hold four people, so if somebody needs to have a bigger meeting, they have to 'book' the conference room in advance</p> <p>Only supported by Chrome</p> <p>High ongoing subscription cost is difficult for companies to justify</p>
<p>Adobe Connect</p>	<p>Good for training, webinars, collaborative experiences (workshops)</p>	<p>Layouts look outdated and not immersive for a conference experience</p>

	<p>Speakers can set up customizable layouts with pods that can help them and the attendees have a more immersive experience. (pods can include presentation, chat, useful links during the presentation, etc)</p> <p>Layouts can be saved as templates</p> <p>Collaborate privately with other hosts and presenters during live sessions</p> <p>Measures the engagement of the room and provides analytics</p> <p>Enables custom apps to help improve the event (closed captions for accessibility, ice-breakers, surveys, etc)</p> <p>Add interactivity to your sessions with multiple chat pods, polls, quizzes, simulations, breakout rooms, games, etc</p>	<p>Not possible to monitor chat/pods/etc when screen sharing if you don't have multiple screens</p> <p>No "call me" feature</p> <p>Very expensive</p> <p>Although people can set up polls, they do not have live polls which would allow people to see results in real-time</p>
<p>Crowd Compass (mobile event app)</p>	<p>Lead capture</p> <p>It has a social wall. Connect to social media profiles for activity feed during the event</p> <p>Includes a schedule/agenda, as well as the speaker profiles</p> <p>1:1 messaging</p> <p>Set up appointments with speakers, sponsors, etc</p> <p>Share contact information digitally</p> <p>Shows engagement metrics</p> <p>Live QA, polling, surveys, and note-taking</p> <p>Gamified - complete challenges and earn points</p>	<p>Only shows basic reports on engagement</p> <p>No Instagram integration</p> <p>Chat-only features among attendees</p> <p>Seems better as a companion app for live conferences</p>
<p>Meetyoo</p>	<p>Click through virtual space with a mouse</p>	<p>Only for Windows, tablets, and smartphones</p>

	<p>Attendees are shown as avatars in real-time within the space</p> <p>Space is tailor to every event (entrance hall, lounge, digital auditorium, conference rooms, exhibition stands)</p> <p>There are templates for the event space that are customizable</p> <p>Includes booths of every participating company at the event</p> <p>Online support and information desk at the event</p> <p>Optional anonymity of attendees</p> <p>Interaction with other visitors with groups and individual chats, polls, Q&A, video chats</p> <p>If they miss the live event, they can access recordings at a media library</p> <p>Can be used for hybrid events where remote attendees can follow the live event</p> <p>Lead detection and success measurement</p> <p>Presentations are live videos or previous recordings</p>	<p>Immersive experience but the graphics are odd and outdated</p> <p>When the conference get lots of participants, the webcast becomes unstable and participants may lose video or audio</p> <p>Requires phone number which can feel less secure and private</p>
On24	<p>20+ interactivity tools give you the ability to customize the audience experience</p> <p>Content performance is captured to inform future events</p> <p>Integrates with CRM and MAP systems for lead prioritization and immediate sales follow-up</p> <p>Drag-and-drop functionality</p> <p>Support and chat feature</p> <p>Customizable registrations forms</p>	<p>Difficult to set up</p> <p>Video hosting is not possible</p> <p>Hard to find past events</p> <p>Users would like to have email reminders of when to set presentations for on-demand</p> <p>Can't use webcam and share screen at the same time - Picture on picture would be nice</p> <p>Cannot save events as a template, only clone them which can waste time</p>

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9.2 Interview Protocol

A Virtual Conference Platform that Promotes Meaningful Social Interactions, Engagement, and Networking for Attendees

Primary Research Question:

How can a technology-based solution enhance the virtual conference experience by creating improved opportunities for social interactions, engagement, and networking for conference participants?

Screening Questions (Ask Before Scheduling the Interview):

1. Have you attended an in-person or virtual/online conference within the last two years? If no - exclude
2. Are you 21 years or older? If no - exclude
3. Do you consent to have this conversation audio-recorded? If no - exclude

Introduction

My name is _____. Thank you for volunteering to meet with me today. I'm a graduate student at DePaul University and I'm working on a research project to learn more about how people interact, network, and engage with other conference attendees.

There are no right or wrong answers in this interview. Your actions and responses will be confidential and used only in connection with this class assignment. A pseudonym will be used in place of your real name and all of your personal information will be de-identified.

Today's interview session should take approximately 60 minutes, barring interruptions.

I would like to record audio of today's interview so I don't have to take as many notes. Are you ok with that?

Before we begin, please read and sign this informed consent form.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Warm-up Questions

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- How often do you attend conferences?
- What are your primary reasons for attending a conference?
- Tell me about your favorite conference.
- Have you ever attended the same conference more than once? Why?
- What aspects do you look for in a conference when you are deciding to attend?
- What type of research do you do about a conference before registering?
- Do you normally attend conferences with a group/team or individually? Why?
 - Do you prefer to attend conferences with a group/team or individually? Why?

General Focus Questions

Conference goals

- What types of goals are you typically looking to accomplish when you attend a conference?
- What kinds of challenges have you encountered in relation to achieving these goals?
- Can you tell me about any conference activities you enjoyed?
- Can you tell me about any conference activities you did not enjoy?
- Have you ever encountered any barriers when attending a conference?
 - What were they?

Virtual conferencing questions

- Have you ever attended a virtual event or conference?
 - How many times? Why?
 - Can you tell us about that/your most recent experience?
 - What did you like about your experience(s)?
 - What goals were you trying to accomplish for attending the virtual conference?
 - Can you tell me about any activities (individual or group) you did during the virtual conference?
 - Were you able to interact with others? Attendees, speakers, sponsors?
 - How did you interact with these people (video, chat, or some other way to communicate)?
 - What did you like about interacting with people in those ways?
 - Can you tell me about the tools you used?
 - What platform did you use this tool on (i.e. phone, laptop, tablet)? Why?
 - What features in the tools were most important to you? Why?
 - What did you like about the tool(s)?
 - What would you improve about the tool(s)?

Deep Focus Questions

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Engaging with other conference attendees

- How do you prefer meeting new people? In small group settings or one-on-one (approaching an individual)? Why/Why not?
- During the last conference you attended, how often did you initiate conversations with other attendees you didn't know?
- Can you tell me how you identified who to interact with?
- How do/would you initiate a conversation with another attendee you don't know?
- Can you recall an interaction that you had at that conference that you thought was successful or beneficial to your goal for attending the conference? What made it successful?

Networking

- How important to you is networking at a conference?
- Have you encountered any challenges when networking at conferences or events?
 - If so, what were those challenges?
 - What do you think allowed you to have a seamless experience with no challenges?
- During the last conference you attended, what were some of the important things you wanted to learn about the other attendees when networking?
- How do you prefer to share your contact information with other conference attendees?
- How do you remember/store contact information for connections that you establish/meet at a conference?
 - Have you exchanged any (other) artifacts with attendees?
 - How do you prefer to store those after the conference?
- Based on your experience attending conferences, in what setting would you say a majority of networking opportunities take place?

Engagement and Networking in a Virtual Networking

- How would you feel about directly approaching other conference attendees in a virtual setting?
 - How would that differ from an in-person setting?
 - What would make this process easier for you?
- How would you feel about being approached by other conference attendees in a virtual setting?
- What other concerns would you have surrounding engagement or networking in a virtual environment.

Metrics and Gamification

- What would motivate you to interact/network with other attendees more at conferences?
- How would you feel about receiving incentives for engaging and networking with other

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conference attendees?

- Would you be interested in seeing metrics or stats about your conference attendance? If so, what types?
 - Examples: how many people you interacted with, how many participants were interested in interacting with you, how long you attended sessions, how long you were in breakout rooms
- Would game based elements such as tasks/missions, leaderboards, points, and rewards appeal to you if applied in a conference setting? Why/Why not?

Retrospection Questions

- What are your biggest concerns around attending a virtual conference?
- What devices would you prefer to use to experience this conference? Why?
- What would you like to see in a conference tool to help you accomplish what you want from the conference?
- In a perfect world, if there was a product or features that could improve your social interactions and networking in conferences what would these be?

Demographic Questions

- How old are you?
- What city and state do you live in?
- What is your profession?
- How would you describe your tech savvy-ness?

Closing/Wrap-Up

That wraps up all the questions I have for you. Thank you so much for meeting with me today. Do you have any final thoughts you'd like to share?

Once again, it was really nice speaking with you and hearing your thoughts and perspective on conference participation. If there's anything else you need, please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is [hand participant your email address on a piece of paper or business card] right here.

9.3 Affinity Diagram



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9.4 Interview Codes

Conferences	Virtual Platform Values & Concerns (VPVC)
Conferences: Cost	VPVC: Virtual Tool Benefits
Conferences: Cost: Discounts	VPVC: Tool Benefits: Travel Efficiency
Conferences: Cost: Travel	VPVC: Tool Benefits: Cost Effective
Conferences: Cost: Less Than In Person CONFERENCE	VPVC: Tool Benefits: Larger/Diverse Audience Base
Conferences: Subject Matter	VPVC: Tool Benefits: Less Social Pressure
Conferences: Subject Matter: Speakers	VPVC: Social Concerns
Conferences: Subject Matter: Presentations	VPVC: Social Concerns: Distractions
Conferences: Subject Matter: Group Sessions	VPVC: Social Concerns: Forced to Interact
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling	VPVC: Social Concerns: Being Ignored
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling: Conference Scheduling	VPVC: Social Concerns: Attendee Validation
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling: Day by Day Plan	VPVC: Technical Concerns
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling: Dates	VPVC: Technical Concerns: Device Compatability
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling: Selling Out	VPVC: Technical Concerns: Internet Conection
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling: Travel Time	
Conferences: Planning and Scheduling: Academic Prep	
Conference: Experience	Virtual Platform Features
Conference: Attentiveness: Paying Attention	Virtual Platform Features: Profile
Conference: Attentiveness: Participation	Virtual Platform Features: Profile: Photos/Bios
Conference: Attentiveness: Sitting	Virtual Platform Features: Profile: Organizing contacts
Conference: Attentiveness: Groups & Crowds	Virtual Platform Features: Activity Feed (Social Stuff)
	Virtual Platform Features: Activity Feed (Social Stuff): Tracking interactions
	Virtual Platform Features: Activity Feed (Social Stuff): Sharing
Networking	Virtual Platform Features: Privacy Settings
Networking: Importance	Virtual Platform Features: Privacy Settings: Agreeing to share information
Networking: Importance: Yes	Virtual Platform Features: Privacy Settings: Agreeing to be messaged
Networking: Importance: No	Virtual Platform Features: Presentation & Notes
Networking: Reasons/expectations	Virtual Platform Features: Presentation & Notes: Lecture/presentation notes
Networking: Reasons/expectations: Learning	Virtual Platform Features: Presentation & Notes: Presentation/resources library
Networking: Reasons/expectations: Other Perspectives	Virtual Platform Features: Messaging
Networking: Reasons/expectations: Work Requirements	Virtual Platform Features: Group Discussions
Networking: Reasons/expectations: Recruitment	Virtual Platform Features: Group Discussions: Generic Settings
Networking: Locations	Virtual Platform Features: Group Discussions: Breakout Sessions
Networking: Locations: During the conference	Virtual Platform Features: Metrics & Stats
Networking: Locations: After the conference	Virtual Platform Features: Gamification
Networking: Challenges around networking	Virtual Platform Features: Immersion
Networking: Challenges around networking: Finding others	Virtual Platform Features: Immersion: Mimics Real World
Networking: Challenges around networking: Initiating Conversation	Virtual Platform Features: Immersion: Does Not Mimic Real World
Networking: Challenges around networking: Meaningful Interactions	
Networking: Challenges around networking: Gauging Response	

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9.5 Survey Questions

A Virtual Conference Platform that Promotes Meaningful Social Interactions, Engagement, and Networking for Attendees

Primary Research Question:

How can a technology-based solution enhance the virtual conference experience by creating improved opportunities for social interactions, engagement, and networking for conference participants?

Introduction:

We are asking you to participate in this survey because we would like to learn and understand how a technology-based solution can enhance the virtual conference environment by increasing opportunities for social interaction, engagement, and networking for conference attendees. This study is being conducted by Gabriela Wyffels, Katie Anderson, Diana Speicher, and Chris Poynton, graduate students at DePaul University. Hank Streeter is the faculty advisor and he will be supervising the research.

To participate in this survey, you must meet the following requirements:

1. Must be 21 years old.
2. Must have attended an in-person or virtual/online conference within the past two year.

The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential with no personal identifiable information recorded. Your participation is voluntary. You may discontinue the survey at any time by closing the browser window.

If you have any further questions, please contact:

Gabriela Wyffels - gabrielawyffels@gmail.com

Katie Anderson - kanderson632@gmail.com

Diana Speicher - dspeicher27@gmail.com

Chris Poynton - iamchrispoynton@gmail.com

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By clicking next, you are agreeing to the requirements of this survey.

Survey questions:

Warm-Up

Question	Instructions	Answer options	Reason
How often do you attend conferences?	Choose one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have only attended a conference once • Every 5+ years • Every 2-5 years • Every 1-2 years • Multiple times a year 	To determine how familiar participants are with conferences.
Have you attended a virtual conference before?	Choose one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No 	

Conferences

Question	Instructions	Answer options	Reason
What reasons have you had for attending a conference?	Select all that apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak/Present • Exhibit • Meet experts • Network • Job hunt • Find new vendors and suppliers • Find new clients • Sell products/services • Continuing education credits • Learn something new/gain new perspective • Meet people from my community • Have fun • Worked/Volunteered 	To determine the key reasons why people attend conferences and weigh how important networking is and what types of interactions to support.
What challenges did you consider when thinking about attending a conference?	Select all that apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost • Subject matter • Attendance logistics (i.e. travel and scheduling) 	To determine which challenges are considered by participants. (Note: we can add

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-conference experience • Other (open text field) 	survey logic here that will only show that options that they chose for the next question)
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Networking

Question	Instructions	Answer options	Reason
How important is networking in conferences to you?	Choose one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all important • • • • Extremely important 	To determine the importance of networking among different user groups.
How important are the following aspects for you when networking at conferences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about people • Learning about the industry • Gaining new perspectives • Work requirements • Recruitment 	Matrix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all important • • • • Extremely important • n/a 	To determine the reasons for networking among the different user groups.
How frequently have you encountered the following challenges when networking in conferences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating conversations • Having meaningful interactions • Meeting the right people • Finding clients/colleagues • Learning how to network effectively • Lack of opportunity and/or structure • Fear • Other (please specify) 	Matrix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all often • • • • Extremely often • n/a 	To determine the challenges that participants encounter when networking at conferences.

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<p>How do you like to meet new people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions by friends or clients • During activities • Simply approaching others • Other (please specify) 	Matrix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly dislike • • • Strongly like • No opinion 	To determine ways to help attendees meet each other
--	--------	---	---

VPVC

Question	Instructions	Answer options	Reason
In an online environment, how would you rate your comfort level when reaching out to someone you don't know?	Choose One	1 -Very Uncomfortable 2 3 4 5 - Very Comfortable	To determine if people are more/less comfortable interacting in an online environment
In an online environment, how would you rate your comfort level of having someone you don't know contact you?	Choose One	1 - Very Uncomfortable 2 3 4 5 - Very Comfortable	To determine if people are more/less comfortable interacting in an online environment

Virtual Platform Features

Question	Instructions	Answer options	Reason
<p>How would you rate the importance of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Feed • In-Platform Note Taking • Individual/Group Messaging • Metrics and Stats on Conference 	Pick One	1 Low Importance 2 3 4 5 High Importance No Opinion	To identify the importance of specific features.

<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gamification / Rewards / Badges for Conference Contributions • Your connections with other attendees • Attendee Endorsements • Having the option to show/hide your Attendee Profile • Having the option to turn on/off messaging functionality. 			
<p>Are there any features surrounding a virtual conference platform that were not mentioned that you feel would be important?</p>	Open ended	Open ended	To identify any additional features we may not have accounted for from our interviews.
<p>What can we do to help you connect with others during/after the conference?</p>	Select all that apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide assistance to maintain contact • provide a list of your contacts • send you reminders to get in touch • bring people together that know each other in smaller events or social hour • provide matching services to increase your list of contacts 	To identify preferences around specific types of engagement.
<p>In a virtual environment, how important is it for you to see a layout of the conference space?</p>	Pick one.	<p>1 Low Importance 2 3 4 5 High Importance No Opinion</p>	To identify preferences surrounding the digitalization of a physical environment.

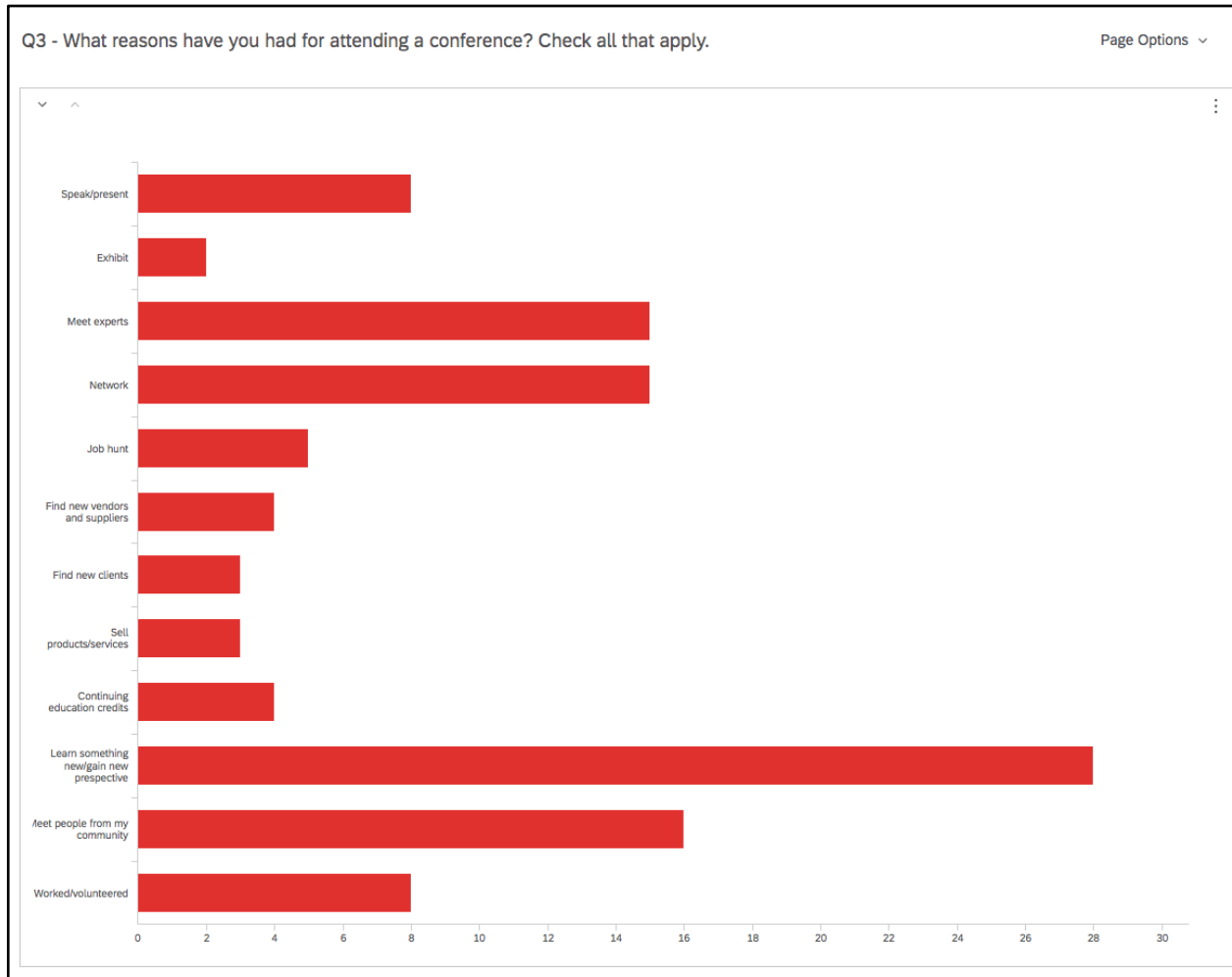
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Wrap up

Question	Instructions	Answer options	Reason
What category below includes your age?	Choose one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21-29 • 30-39 • 40-49 • 50-59 • 60 or older 	To measure if age has an effect on virtual conferencing preferences.
What gender do you identify as?	Choose one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female • Other (text entry) • Prefer not to specify 	To determine if there are differences between genders in regards to virtual conferencing preferences.
Which industry do you work in?	Choose one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Entertainment • Architecture and Engineering • Automotive • Business • Community and Social Service • Computer Science • Education • Food • Healthcare • Installation, Maintenance, Repair • Legal • Life, Physical, Social Sciences • Management • Personal Care • Police, Fire, Military • Production • Real Estate • Student • Do Not Work • Other: 	To determine if there are differences among industries in regards to virtual conferencing needs

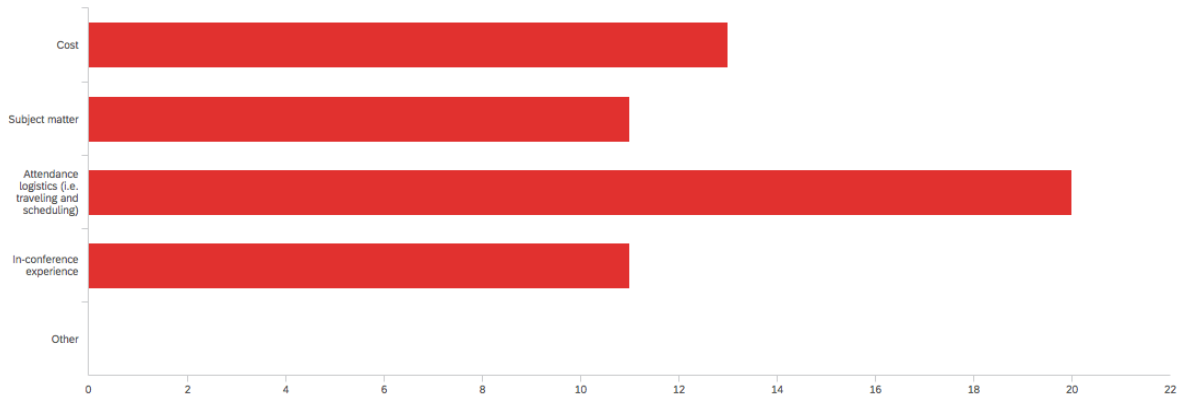
9.6 Survey Results

Note - question numbers below do not accurately reflect order of the final survey. The survey questions were numbered according to how they are presented below.



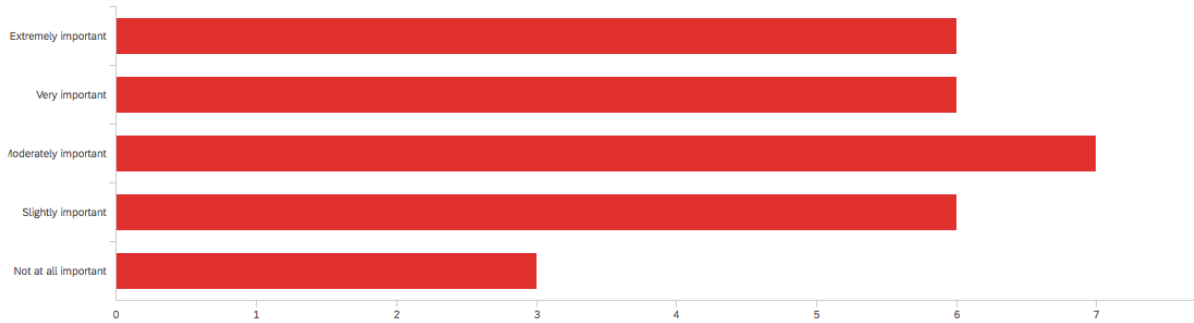
Q26 - What challenges have you encountered when considering attending a conference? Check all that apply.

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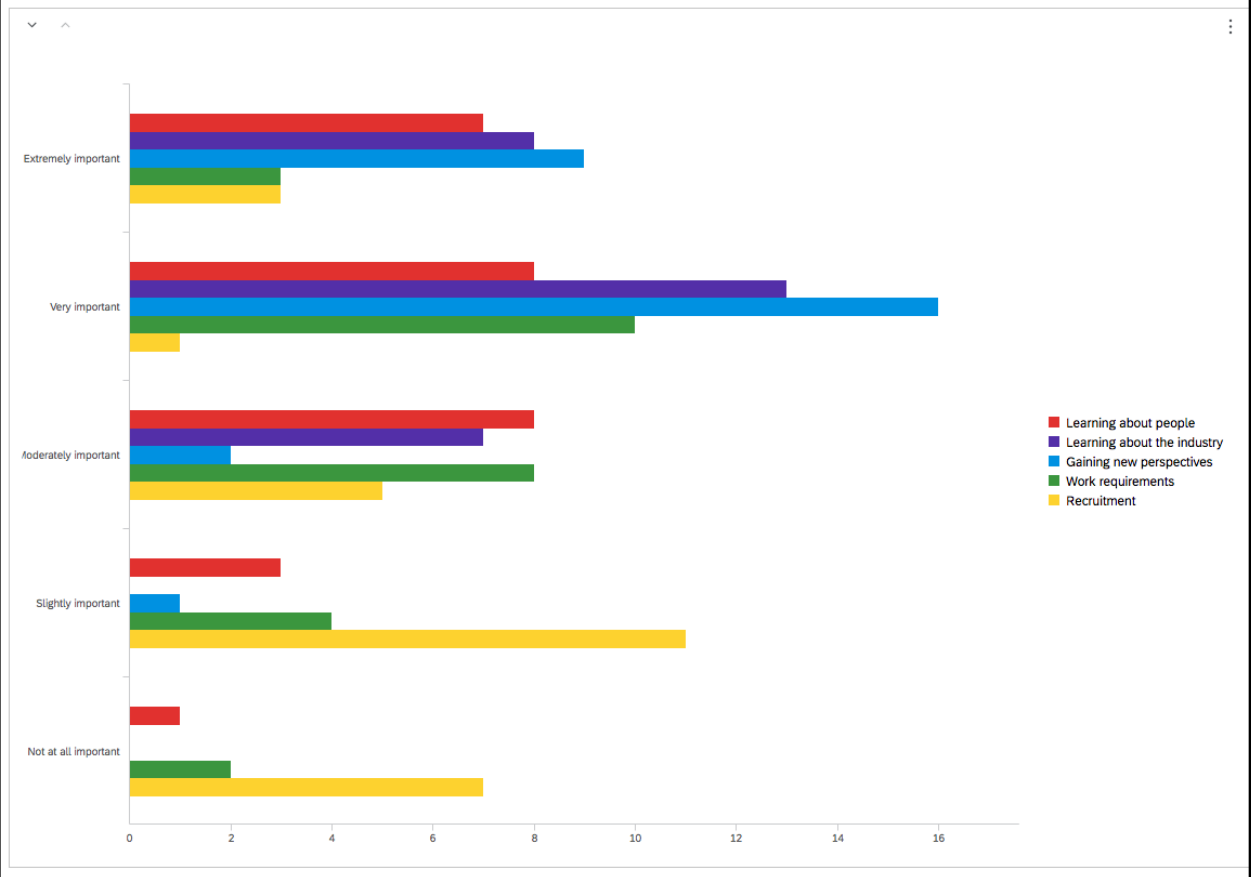
Q5 - How important is networking in conferences to you?

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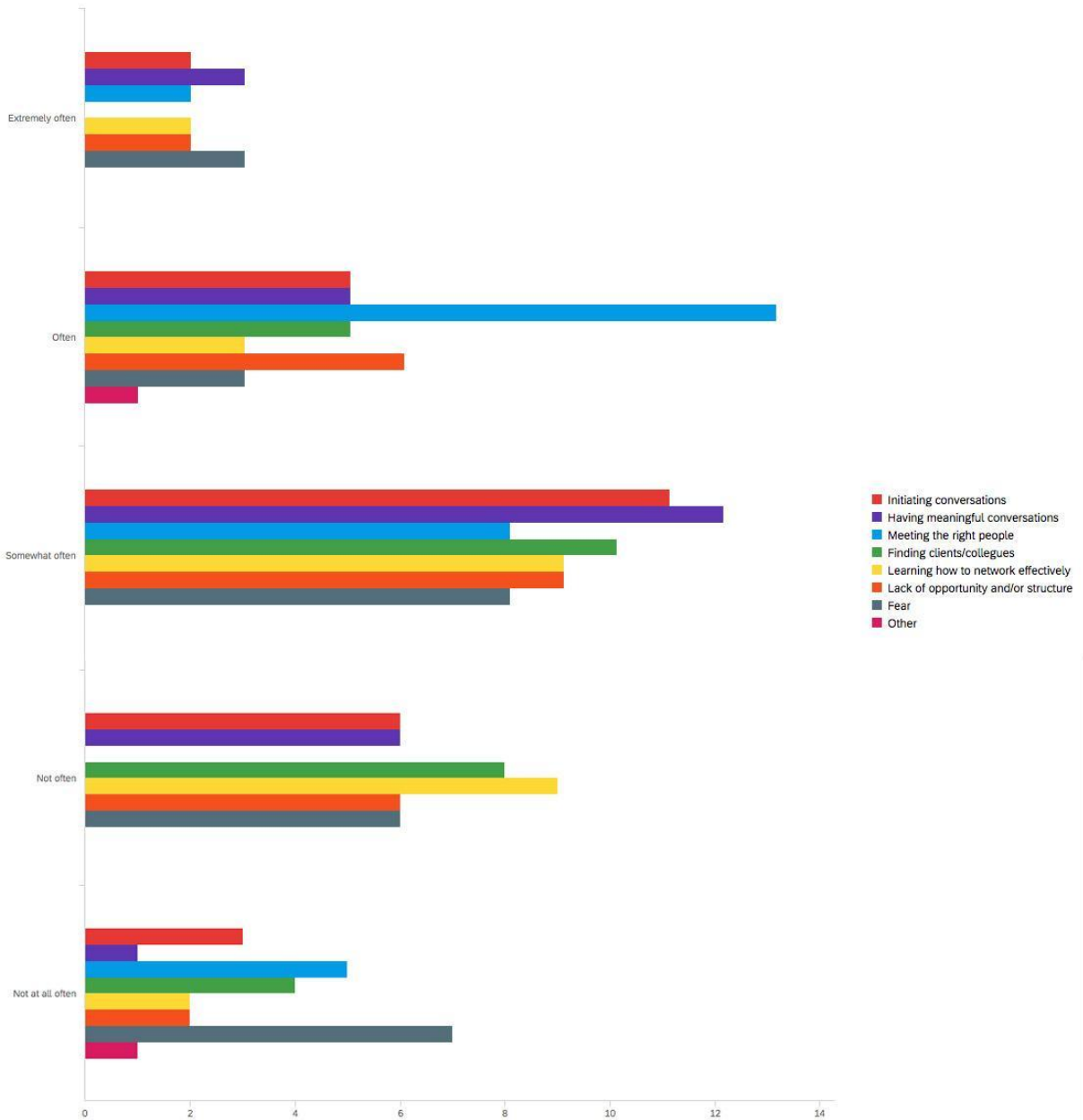
Q6 - How important are the following aspects for you when networking at conferences?

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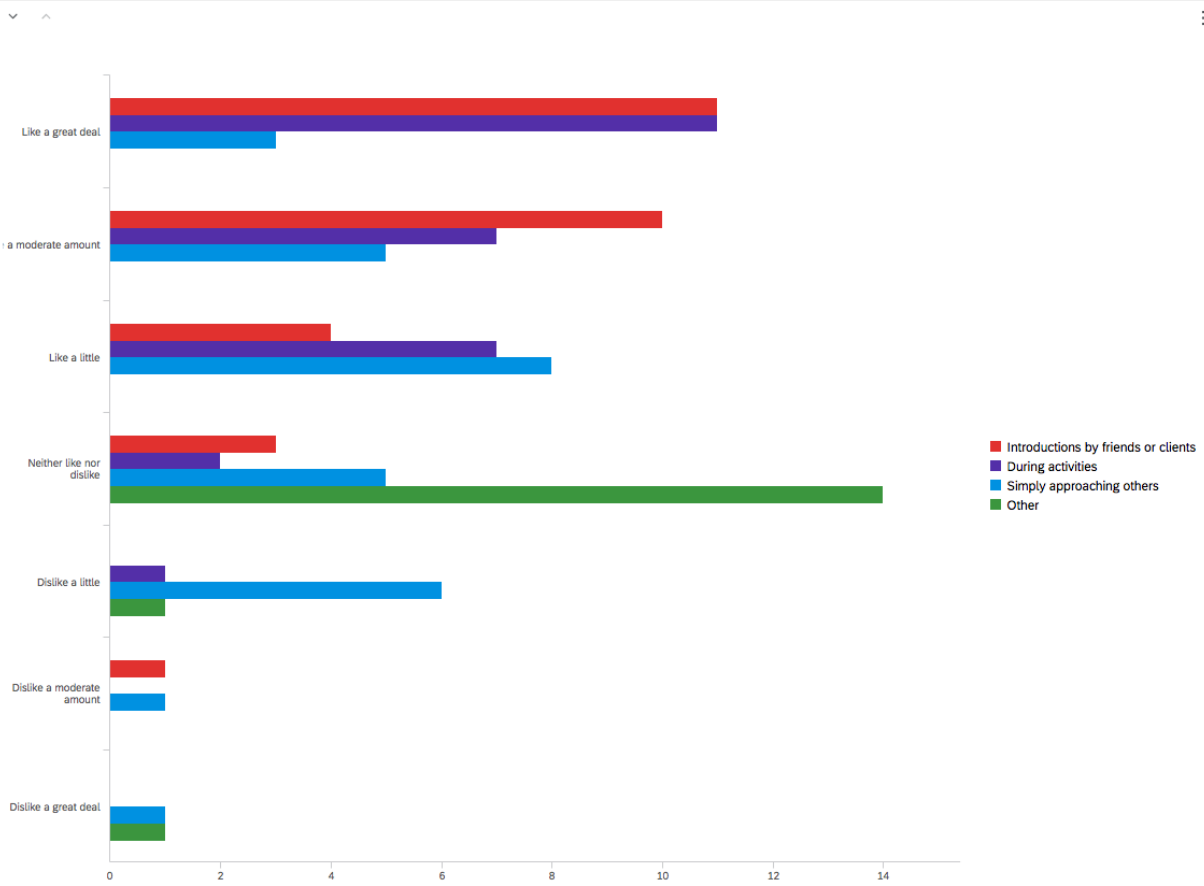
Q8 - How frequently have you encountered the following challenges when networking in conferences?

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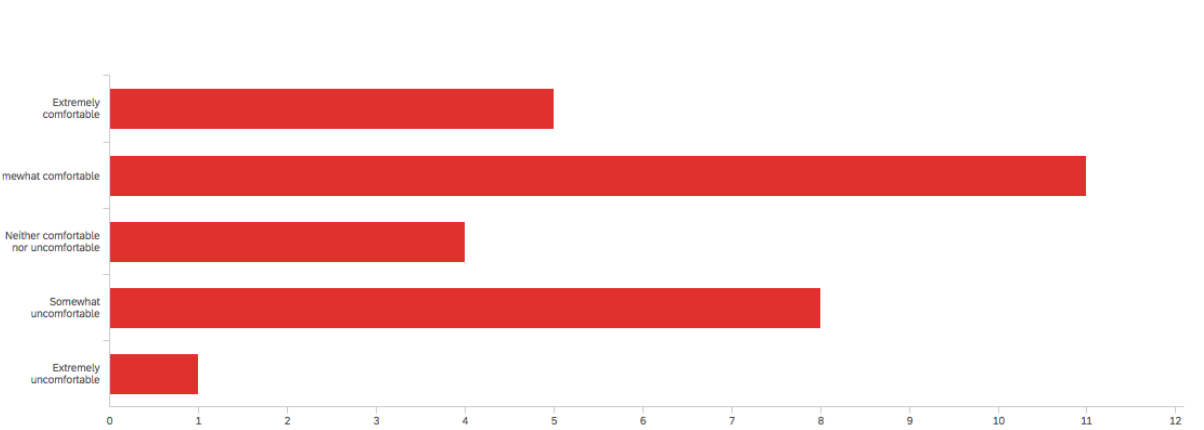
Q9 - How do you like to meet new people?

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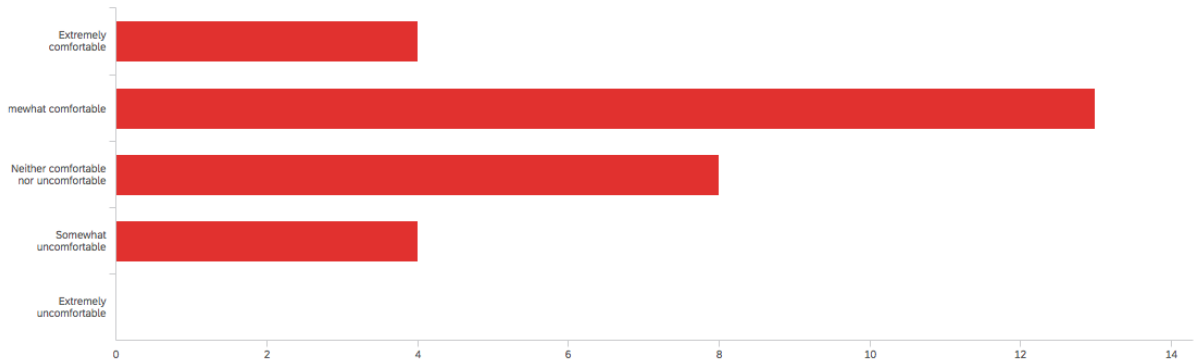
Q11 - In an online environment, how would you rate your comfort level when reaching out to someone you don't know?

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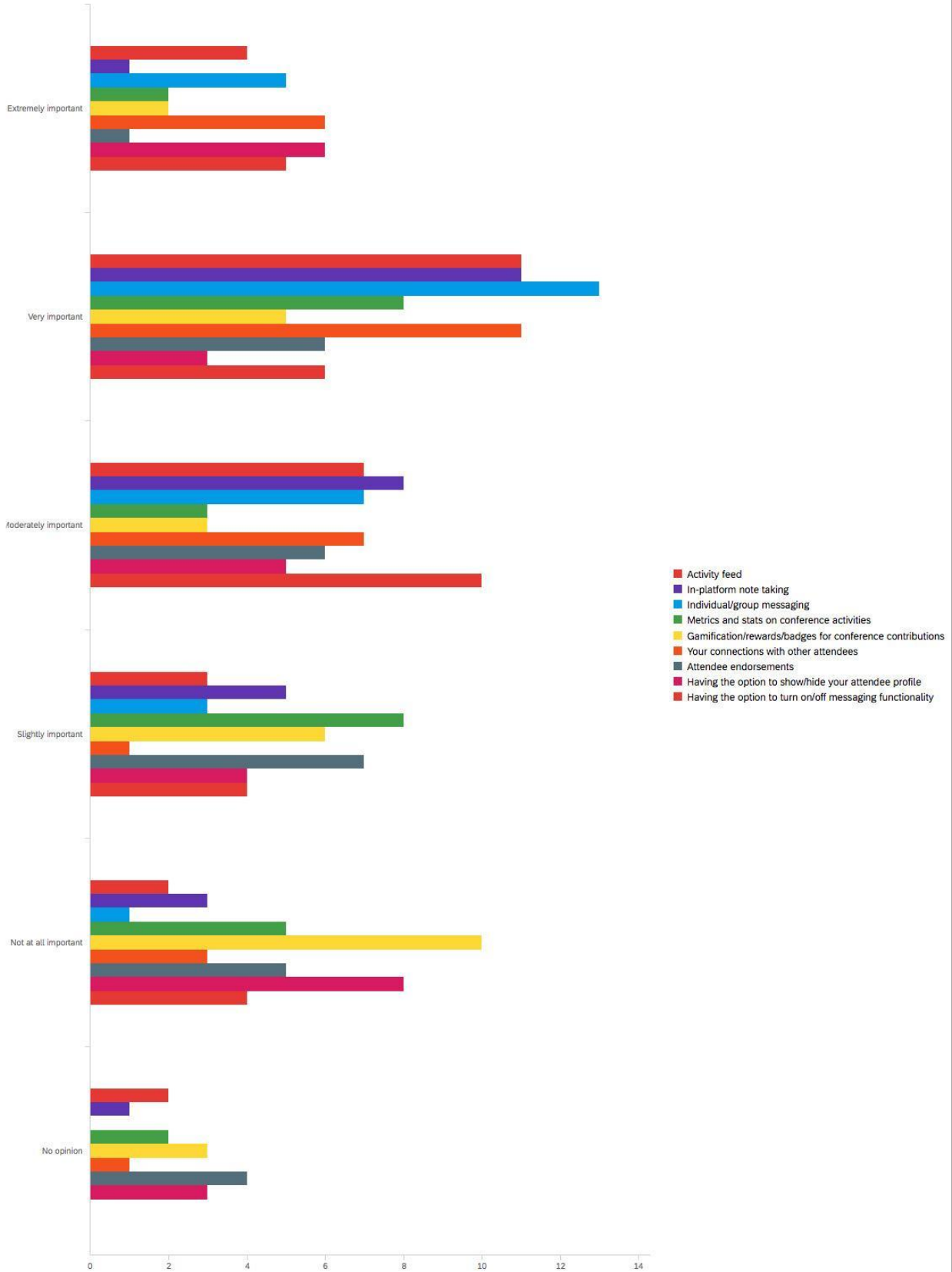
Q12 - In an online environment, how would you rate your comfort level of having someone you don't know contact you?

Page Options ▾



Q14 - How would you rate the importance of the following features in a virtual conferencing platform?

Page Options



Q15 - Are there any features surrounding a virtual conference platform that were not mentioned that you feel would be i...

Page Options

Are there any features surrounding a virtual conference platform that were...

i think you've got the most of them



Thinking of safety and privacy, especially as it relates to unwanted advances, an unfortunately frequent conference occurrence.



Presentation deck download, Presenter bios, ability to react (e.g., like, love, ask a question - for Q&A time), IT troubleshooting

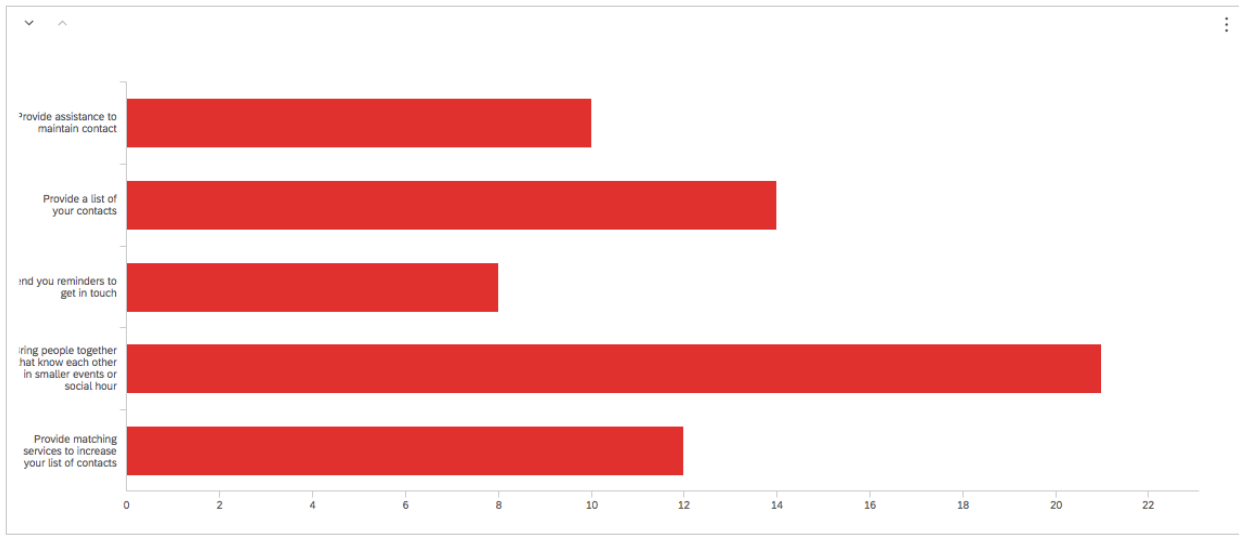


A strong privacy policy rivaling the GDPR law in terms of comprehensiveness, with maximum privacy settings on by default. Just as important is all analytics must be opt-out by default.



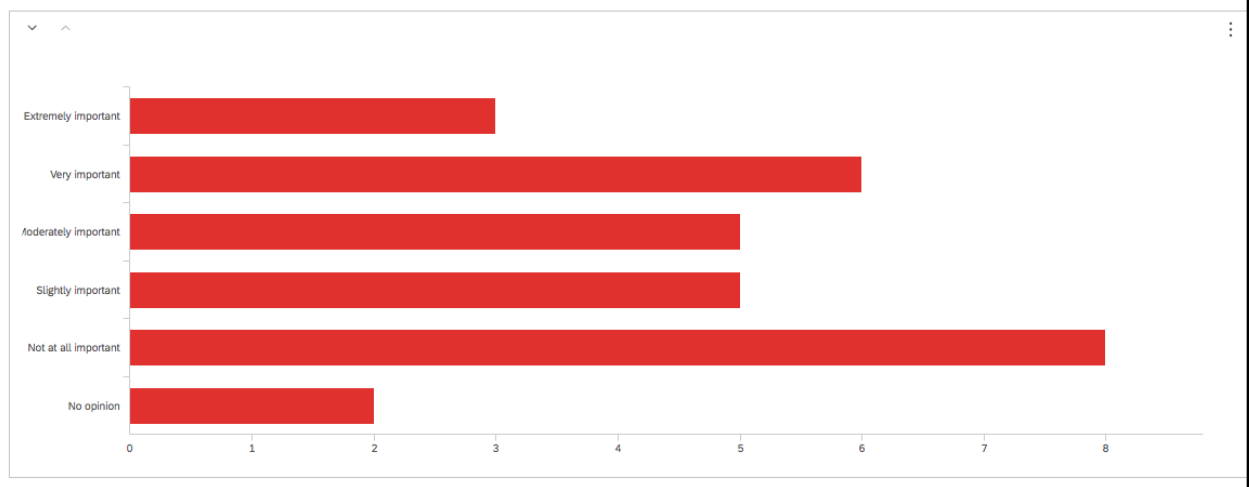
Q28 - What can we do to help you connect with others during/after the conference? Check all that apply.

Page Options



Q16 - In a virtual environment, how important is it for you to see a layout of the conference space?

Page Options ▾



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9.7 Personas

The personas were created with this [Figma UI Kit](#).



“ Conferences are a great way for me to catch up with my peers in a low-key setting. I love hearing about what everyone has been up to and what they are working on. The ability to gain new perspectives on industry trends that I can take back to my company is very important to me. ”

Bio

Nicky is a 39-year-old marketing director at a mid-sized corporation in Chicago, IL. Her company sends her to conferences every year so that she can stay up to date on industry trends and recruit new hires for her company. This year, due to planning and scheduling logistics, Nicky will need to attend her primary conference virtually. Nicky needs a solution that allows her to continue to grow and cultivate her network, expand her knowledge of industry trends, collaborate with team members, and potentially recruit new hires.

Motivations

- Wants to meet and engage with her target audience
- Wants to stand out as an active member in her industry community
- Wants to utilize conference social events to develop relationships with her team and peers

Barriers & Pain Points

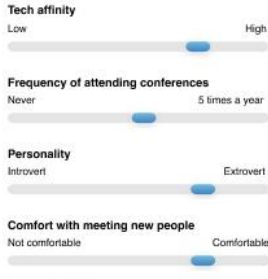
- Scheduling and logistical issues prevent her from attending key conferences and events where her target audience are primary attendees
- Is frustrated when time is spent engaging with attendees outside of her target audience
- Wants an efficient way to find and meet new people/clients that are aligned with her industry/market

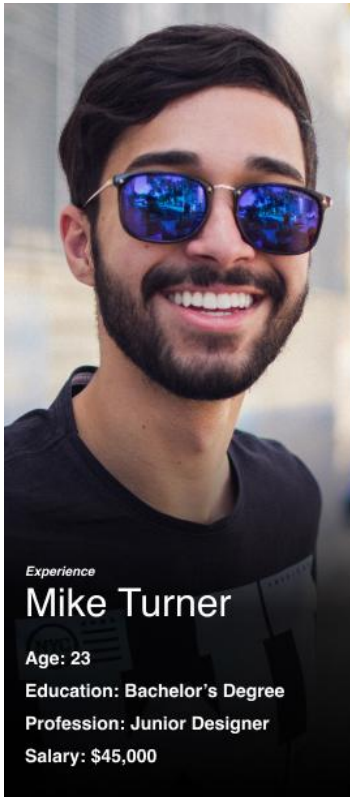
Preferred Devices

Apple Watch • iPhone • ThinkBook laptop

Independent • Go-Getter • Motivated

Specs





“ I am really excited to learn about new trends in my industry and meet some of my peers, but I am not really sure how to network. I want to develop my skills and connections, but I don't want to get in anyone else's way. ”

Bio

Mark is one year into his first job out of college as a Junior Designer at a mid-sized design agency. He does not feel like he is a part of the design community. He wants to meet people to share perspectives and ideas that he can incorporate into his professional life. He knows that an upcoming conference would be a great place to both learn new things and meet new people, but he is unsure if he can attend due to travel and cost restraints. He is also unsure how to network past the point of handing someone a business card. Mark needs a solution that can help him achieve his goals of attending a conference and position him for success.

Motivations

- Wants to learn more about the design industry
- Looking to gain new perspectives from the speakers and other attendees
- Learn from experts and get to know people in the industry
- Become part of the community

Barriers & Pain Points

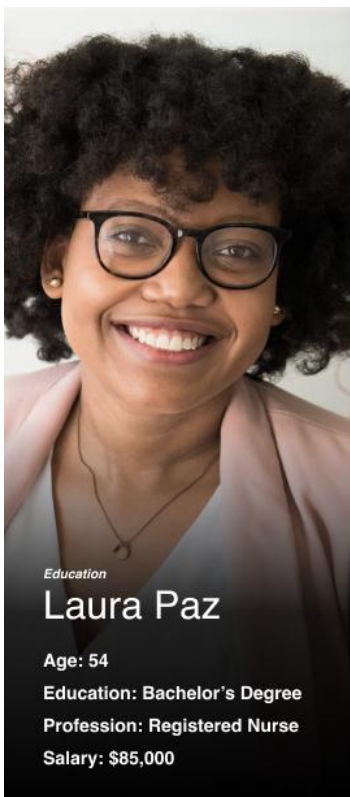
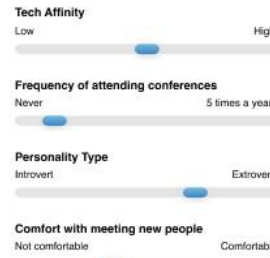
- Doesn't have a lot of experience networking and is somewhat intimidated by the idea
- Not knowing how to start conversations, and sustain them into meaningful interactions
- Irritating people that don't have time to talk to him
- Lack of understanding surrounding some of the more deep-level subject matter
- Not finding the right people to talk to

Preferred Devices

MacPro · iPhone

Passionate · Self-Aware · Adventurous

Specs



“ I am mostly here because I need continuing education (CE) credits for my job. Finding out new ideas and perspectives is nice, but it isn't really my role to bring that to my job. I'd rather just get in and get out. ”

Bio

Laura has been working as a nurse at the same hospital for 25 years. She needs to earn a set number of credits each year that she can apply to her continuing education requirements. One of the easier ways to do this is to attend conferences. However, Laura is not planning on leaving her job before she retires, nor does she have a large professional network to engage with. She would rather focus on earning CE credits but is also open to smaller, structured engagements that allow her to get some insight and perspective from other nurses. She needs a solution that facilitates learning while eliminating unwanted distractions and leaving her to experience the conference in her own way.

Motivations

- Earn continuing education credits
- Learn something unique that is relevant to the profession
- Use low-key activities to gain perspectives of other conference-goers
- Experience the conference with minimal interruption

Barriers & Pain Points

- Being overwhelmed by large crowds
- Lack of structure for interacting with other people in conferences
- Making forced small talk outside of sessions
- High cost of conferences
- Having to travel for conferences

Preferred Devices

MacPro · iPhone

Caring · Appreciative · Open to ideas

Specs



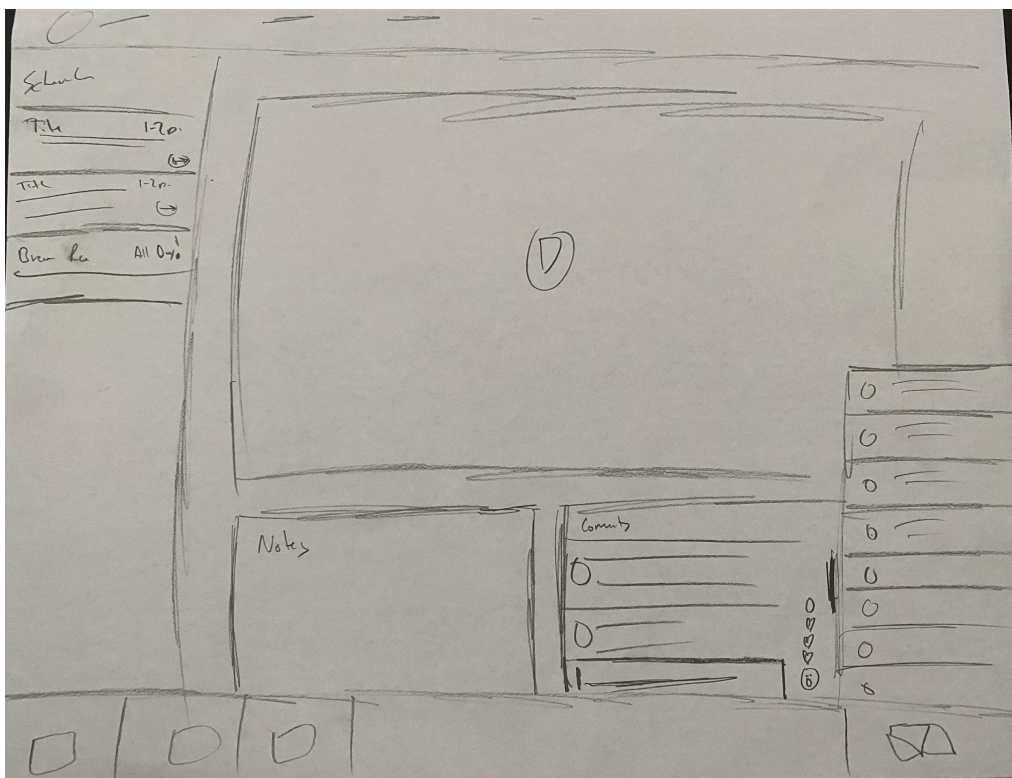
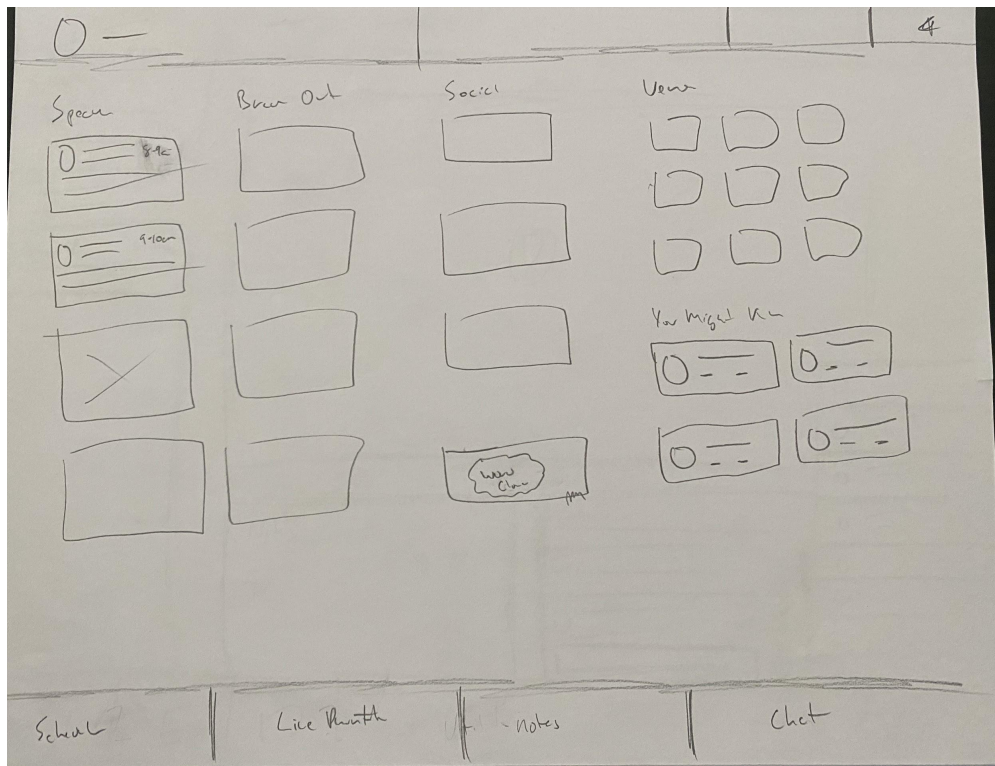
9.8 Features Matrix

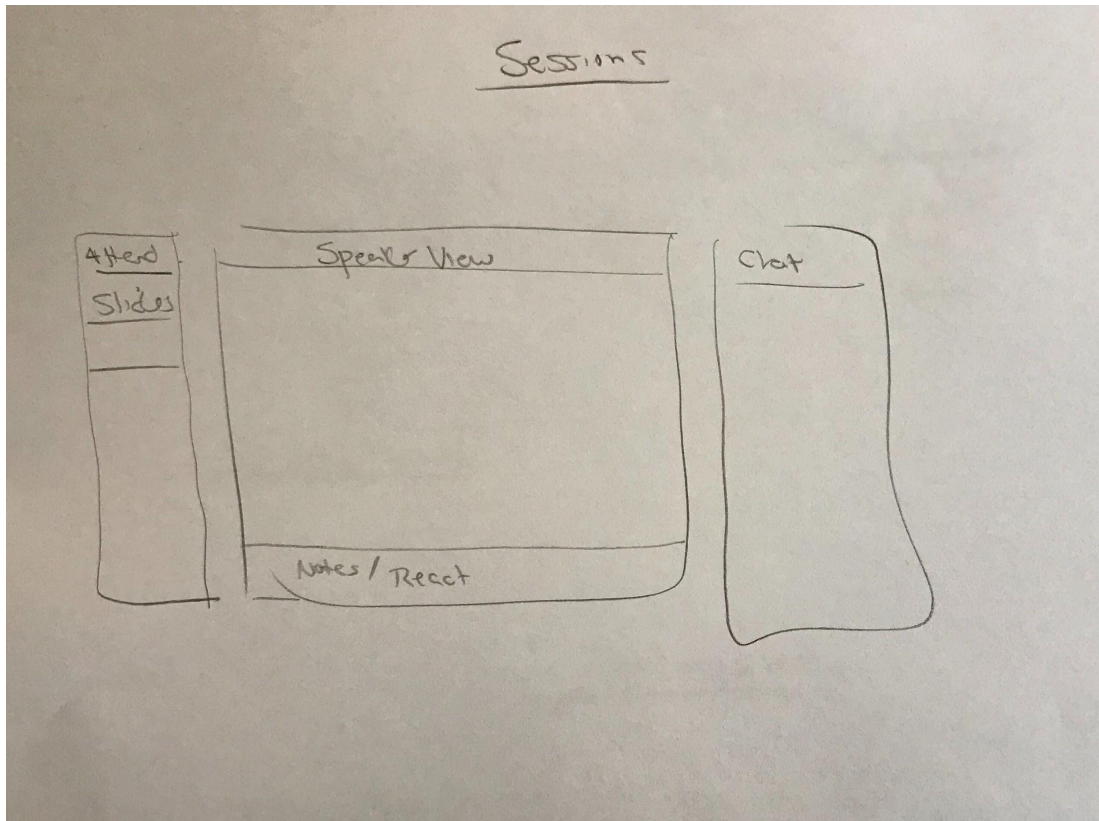
Feature Name	Feature Description	Priority	Effort	Value to User
Profile (general)	An attendee's profile as a whole	High	Low	High
Profile picture	Photo in attendee profile	High	Low	High
Profile bio	Written bio in attendee profile added through WYSIWYG	High	Low	High
Social media links	Links to an attendee's LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram	High	Low	High
Having the option to show/hide your attendee profile	Allow prohibition of profile visibility	High	Low	Medium
Video presentations	Live streams of a speaker presentation	High	Low	High
Breakout rooms - Zoom API	Integration with Zoom can allow easier implementation of breakout rooms	High	Low	High
Individual & group messaging - Slack API	Integration with Slack can allow conference attendees to stay engaged after conference and can maybe enable a lower effort messaging system	High	Low	High
Having the option to turn on/off messaging functionality	Enable/disable receiving messages	High	Low	Medium
Closed captioning	Allow for the presentation/video conversations to be accessible to the hearing impaired	High	Low	High
Connecting with other attendees	Provides option to make connections, and insights into network and relation to other attendees	High	Low	High
In-platform note taking (real-time)	Take notes in a variety of ways (i.e. text, audio, picture, video, etc)	High	Low	High
LinkedIn Integration	Integration to the LinkedIn API that would help reduce the development effort of adding custom features (Ex -Matching Attendees)	High	Medium	High
Matching attendees	Match attendees based on their profiles, goals, and needs from the conference	High	Medium	Medium

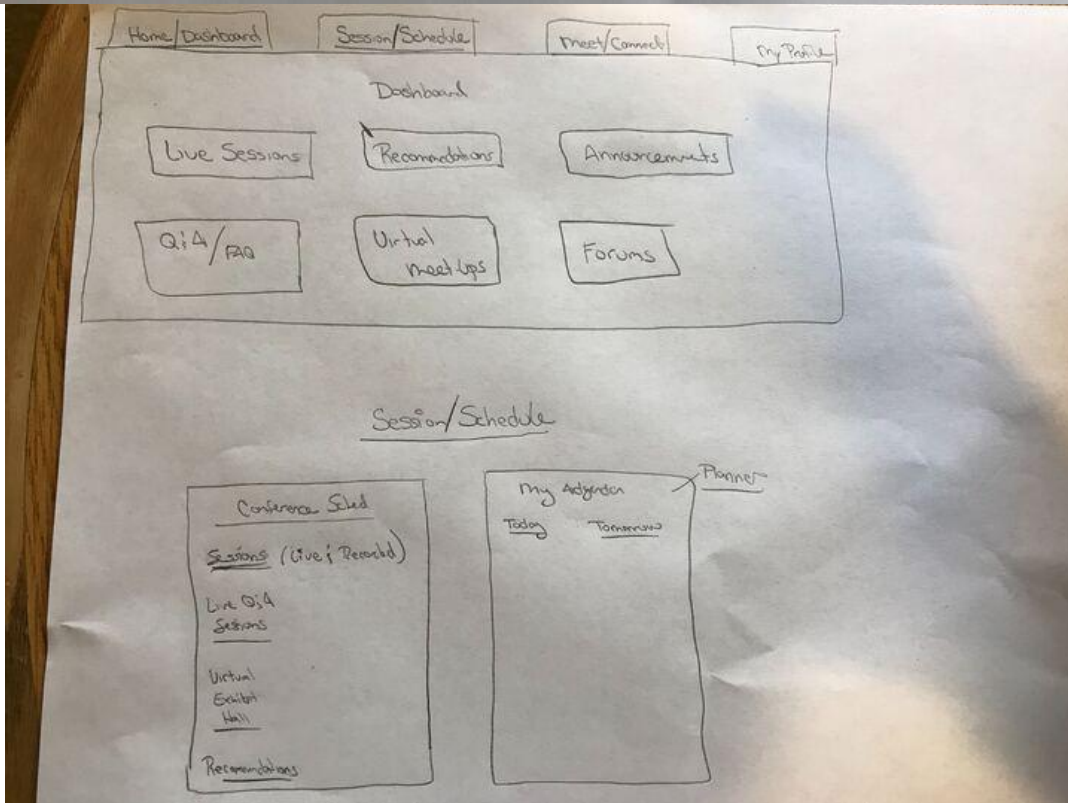
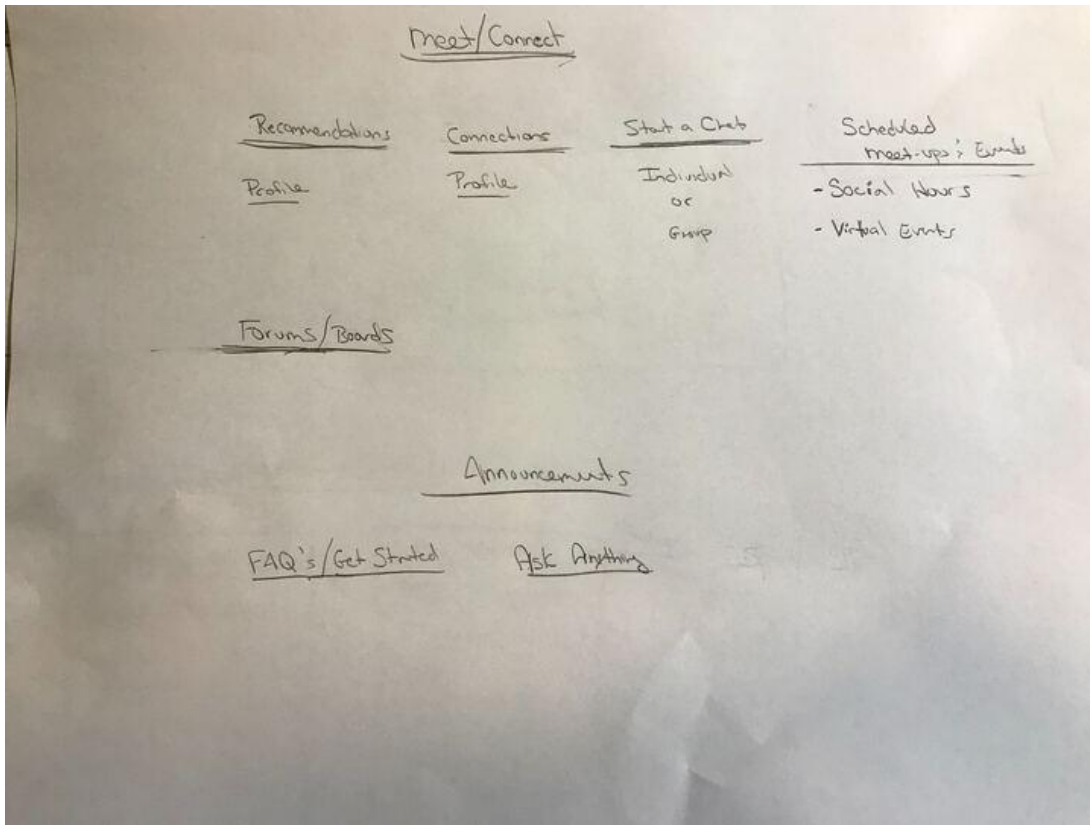
Social hour / smaller events / groups	Distinct social opportunities during the conference. Video focused.	High	Medium	High
Audience presentation engagement	A live feed, similar to the live chat feature, that focuses on real-time questions, polling, and surveys	High	Medium	High
Layout of virtual conference + attendees	Display a map of conference spaces and the attendees within the space	High	Medium	Medium
Word cloud for group interactions	Distinguish what is being talked about in groups with key words	Medium	Low	Medium
People's reactions to presentations	Attendees real-time reactions (likes, love, etc)	Medium	High	Medium
Activity feed	Stream of recent activities performed by individuals at a conference	Medium	High	High
Reminders to get in touch	Enable reminders for attendees to stay in contact after the conference	Medium	Low	Medium
Attendee endorsements	Add/receive public-facing notes regarding professional and conference performance	Medium	High	Medium
Advanced note taking (linked to presentation time stamps and artifacts)	Note taking feature that is tied to timestamps in video presentations and speaker artifacts for additional context	Medium	High	High
Conference artifacts (presentations, videos)	A repository of conference resources including articles, presentation videos, presentation slide decks, and other resources for conference attendees to access any time before, during, or after the conference	Medium	Low	High
Metrics & stats on conference activities	Display calculations of conference activities on an individual level	Low	Med	Low
Having the option to turn on/off analytics sharing	Default mode is enabled sharing. Ability to enable/disable	Low	Low	Low
Gamification / rewards / badges for conference contributions	Elements of game playing to encourage engagement	Low	High	Low
Video Bios/Q&A	Video bio uploaded by the user as a form of introduction	Low	Low	Low

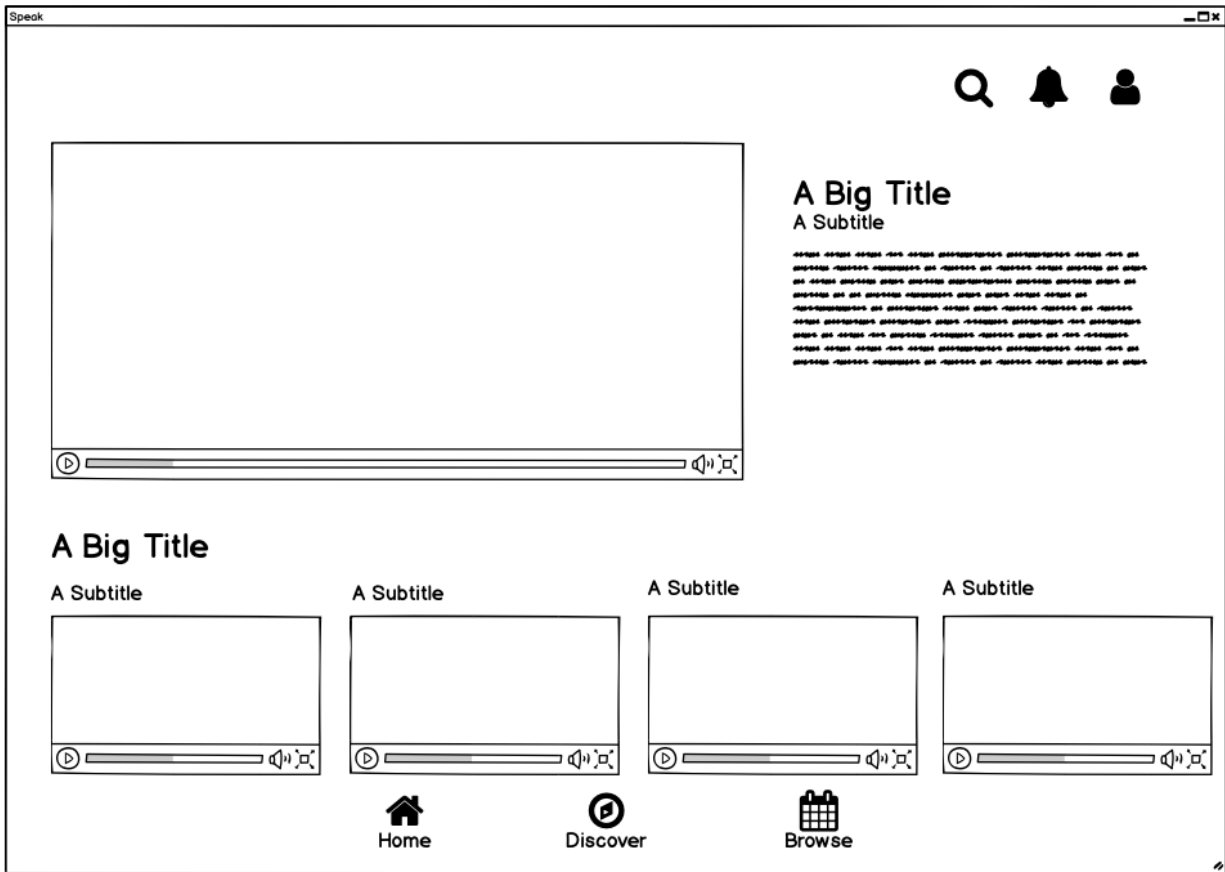
Layout of virtual conference	Display a map of conference spaces	Low	Low	Medium
Individual Messaging	Users can message other users directly, and privately	Low	High	High
Group messaging	Users can message groups of 3+ users in a private group chat	Low	High	High
Live chat	A live, public stream of discussion-based chat. To be used in different social situations during the conference	Low	High	High
Breakout rooms	Separate rooms for discussions/activities during a presentation	Low	High	High

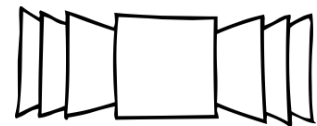
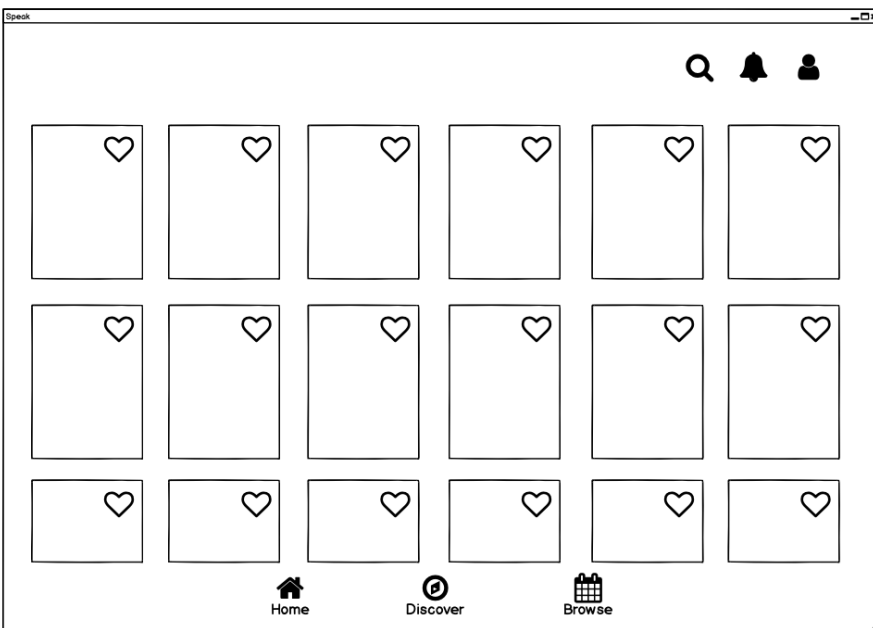
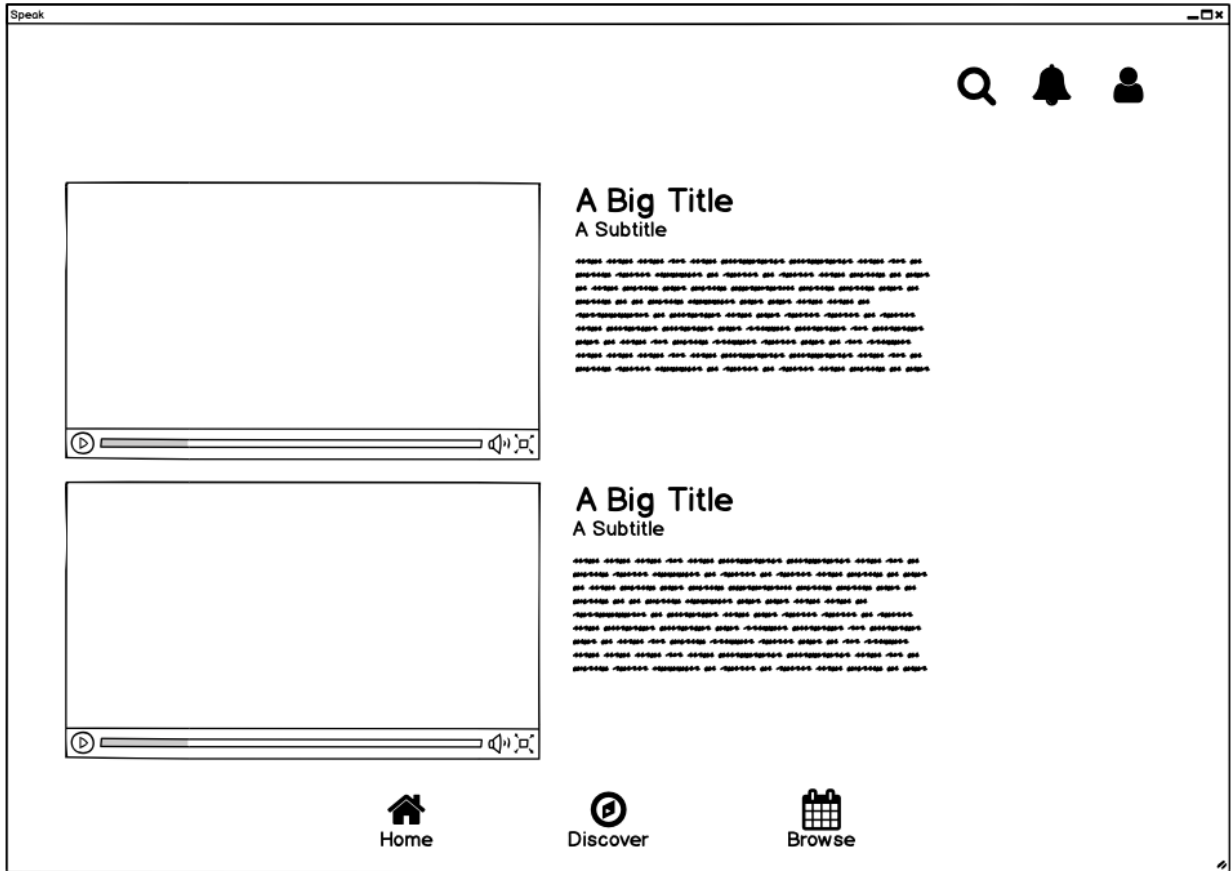
9.9 Prototype Ideation Sketches

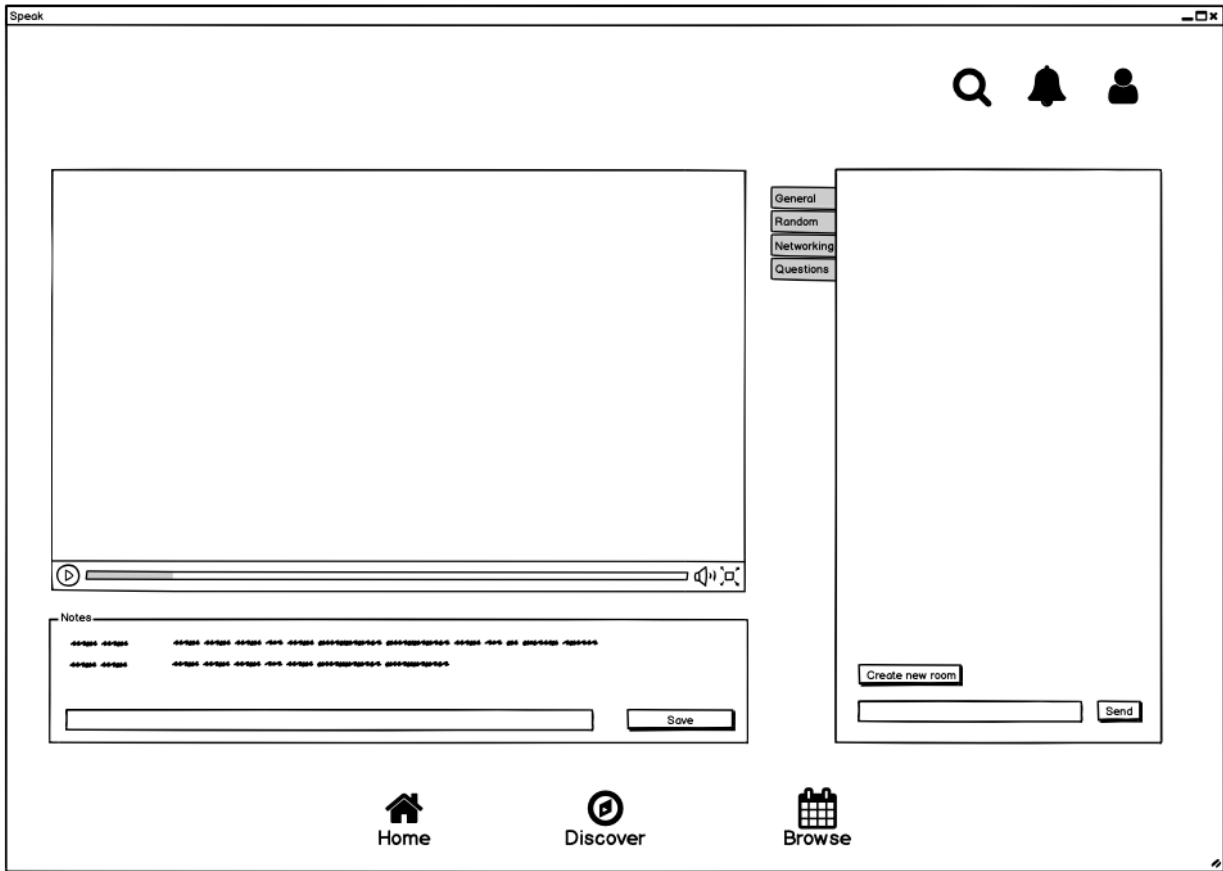


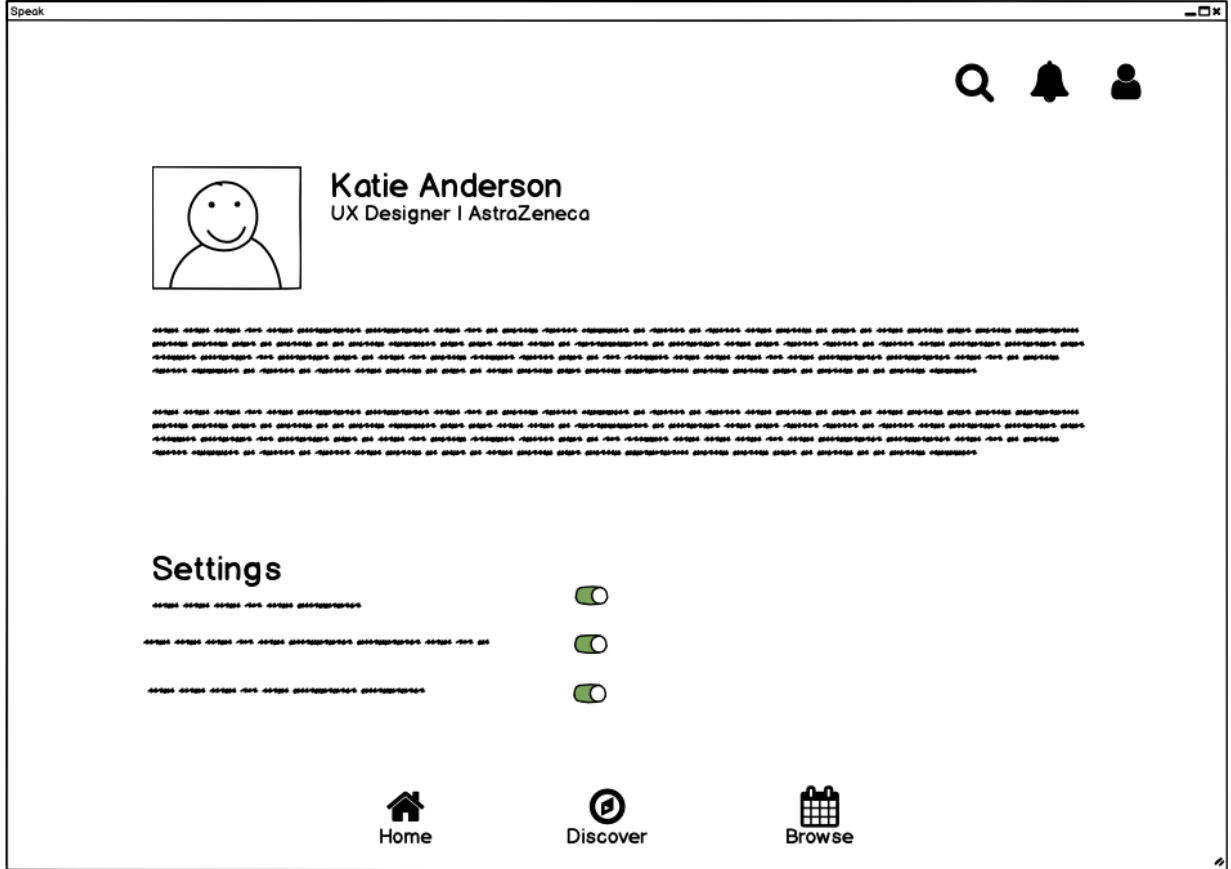




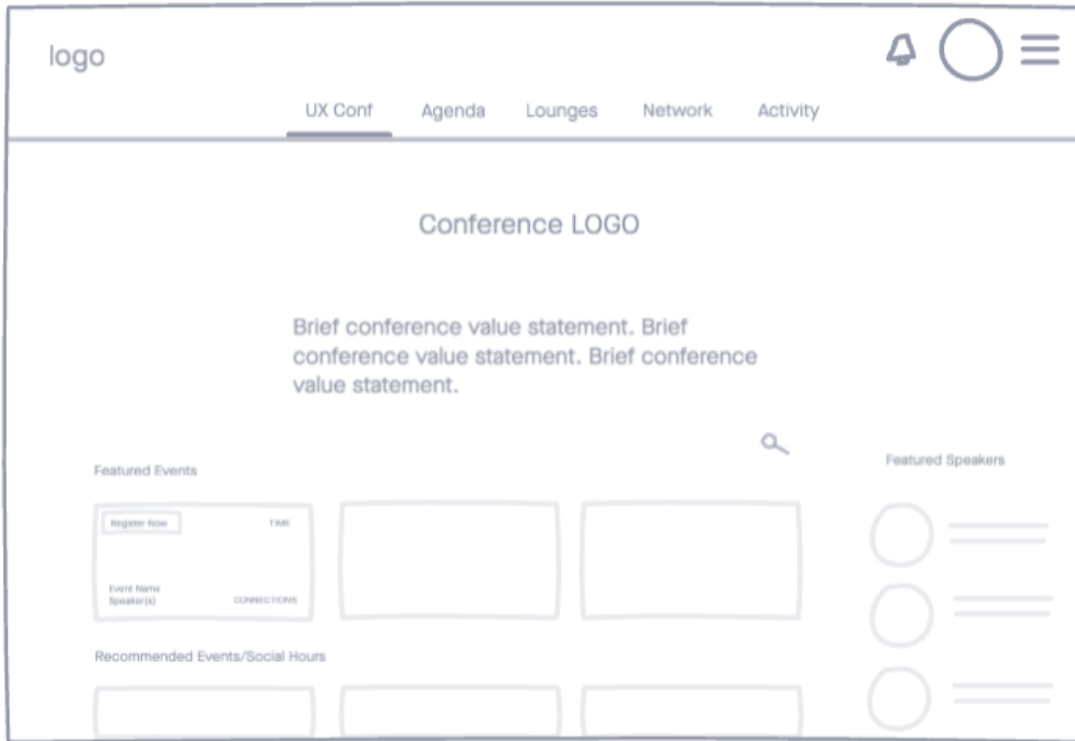








Conference Page



Agenda Page

logo

UX Conf Agenda Lounges Network Activity

Conference LOGO

My Scheduled Events Today

TIME	Event Name Speaker(s)	CONNECTIONS GOING	
TIME	Event Name Speaker(s)	CONNECTIONS GOING	
TIME	Coffee with Joe Korr 30 min		
TIME	Private Event Name	CONNECTIONS GOING	

Conference Schedule

Events happening NOW

TIME

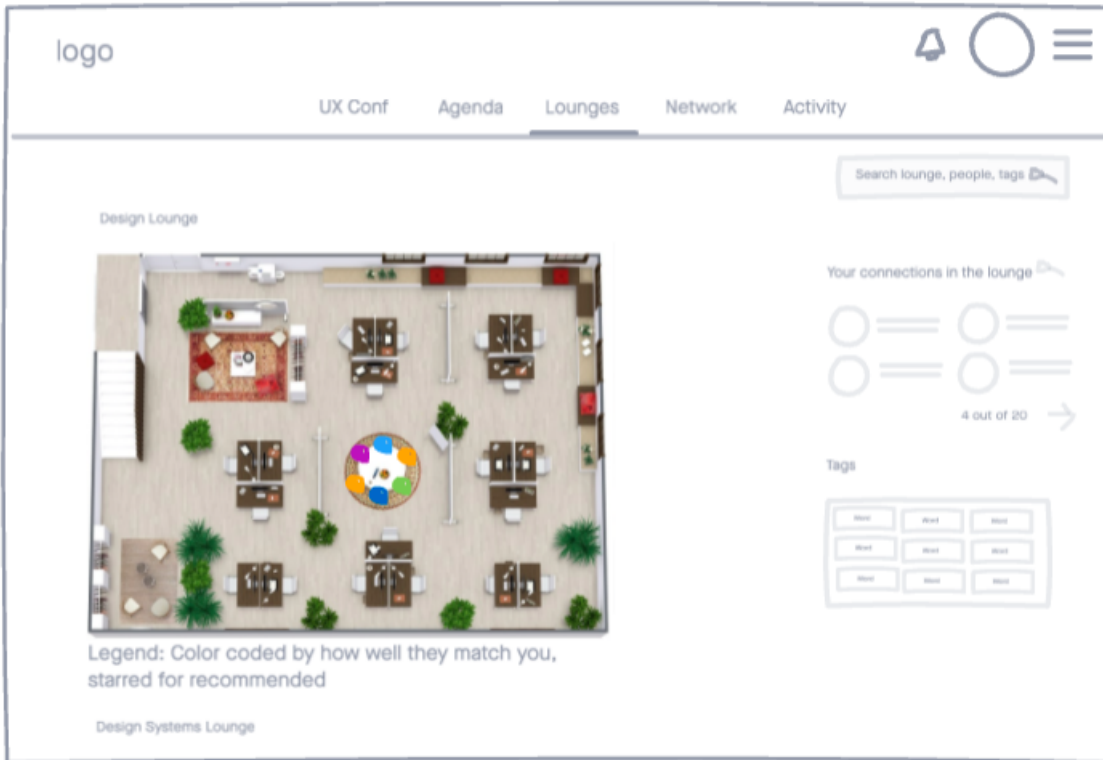
Event Name
Speaker(s) CONNECTIONS

Social Hours happening NOW

TIME

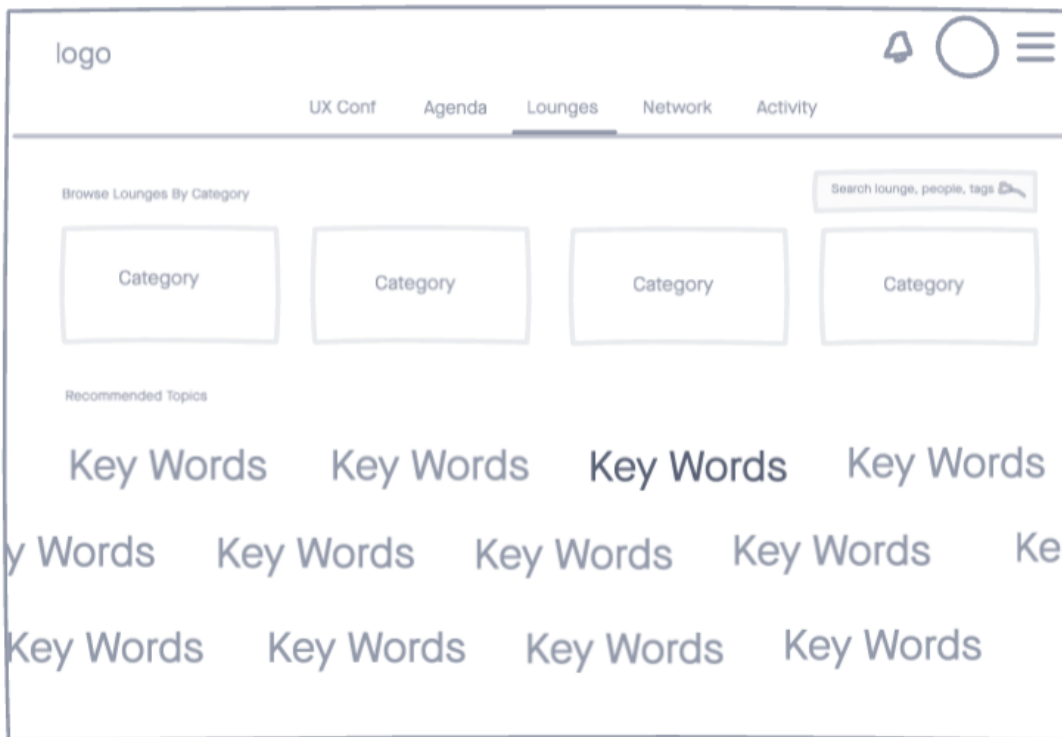
Event Name
Speaker(s) CONNECTIONS

Virtual Lounge Page

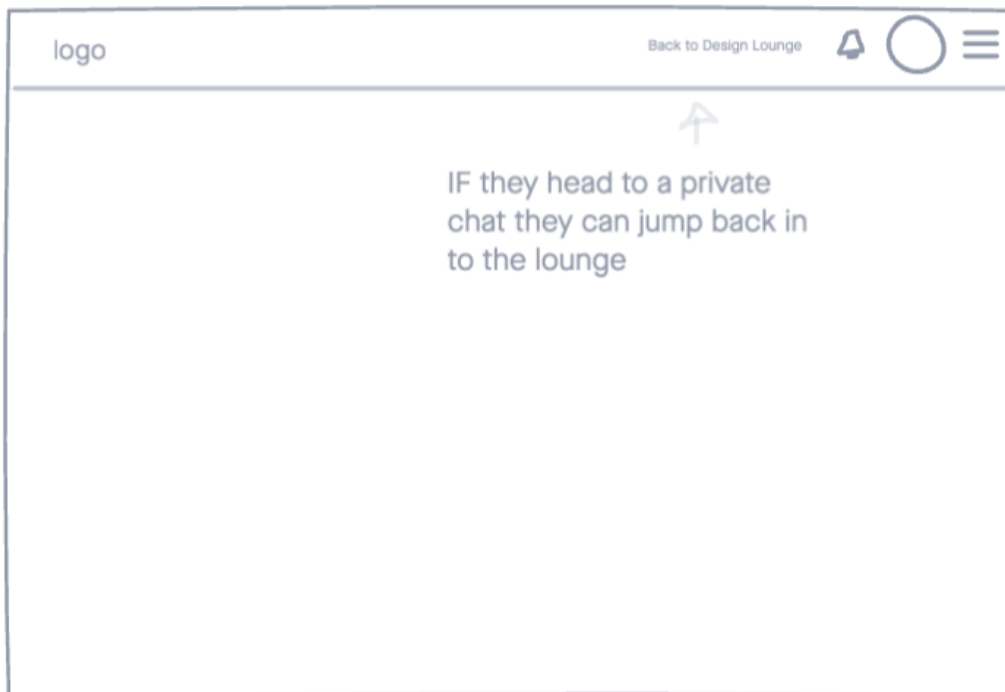
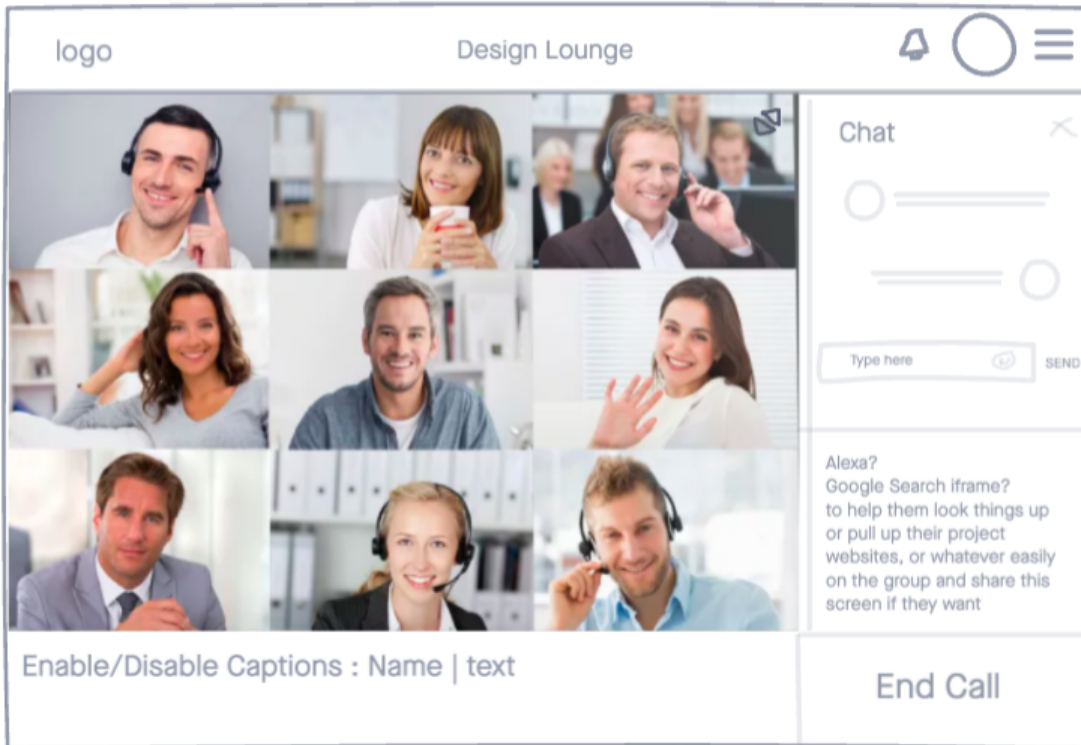




Virtual Lounge Page



Virtual Lounge Call



Network Page



My Connections:
filter by (slack groups, channels, spotlight, rating)

→ invite people to slack groups

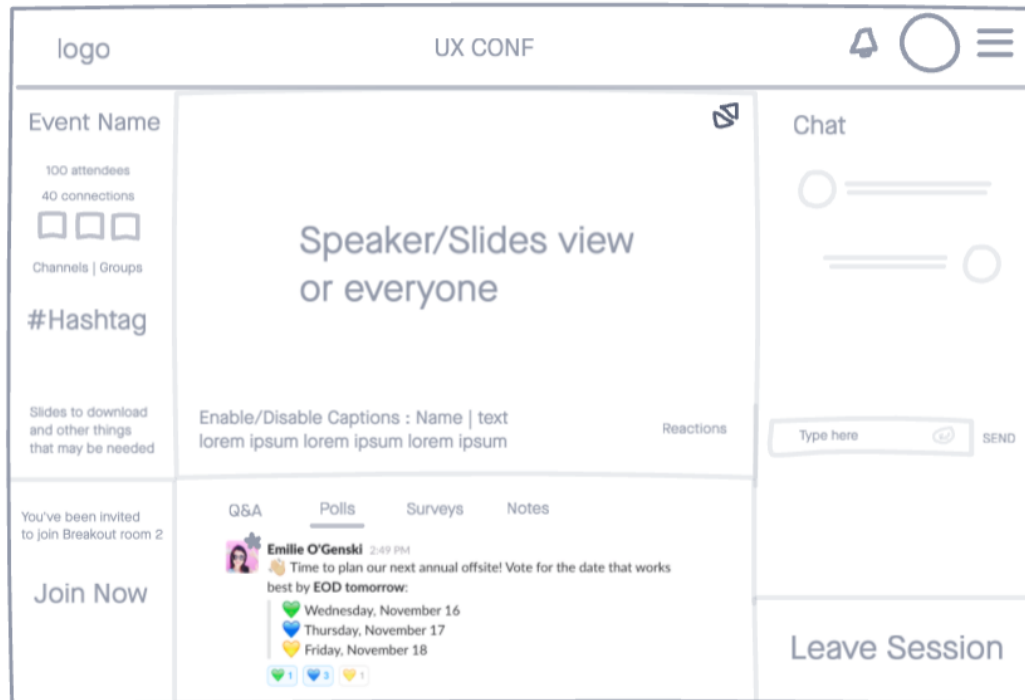
→ invite people to event/socials

→ invite people to calls/view calendar to schedule

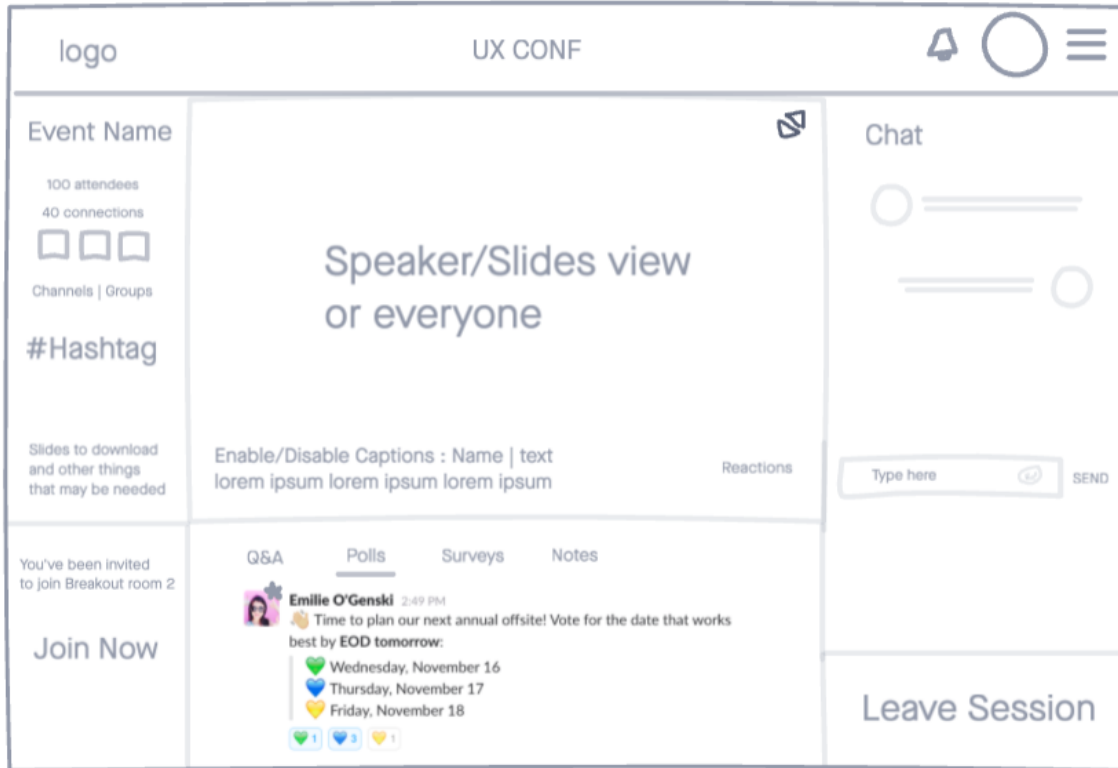
→ follow / send request to connect

→ Give complement/endorsement/wave

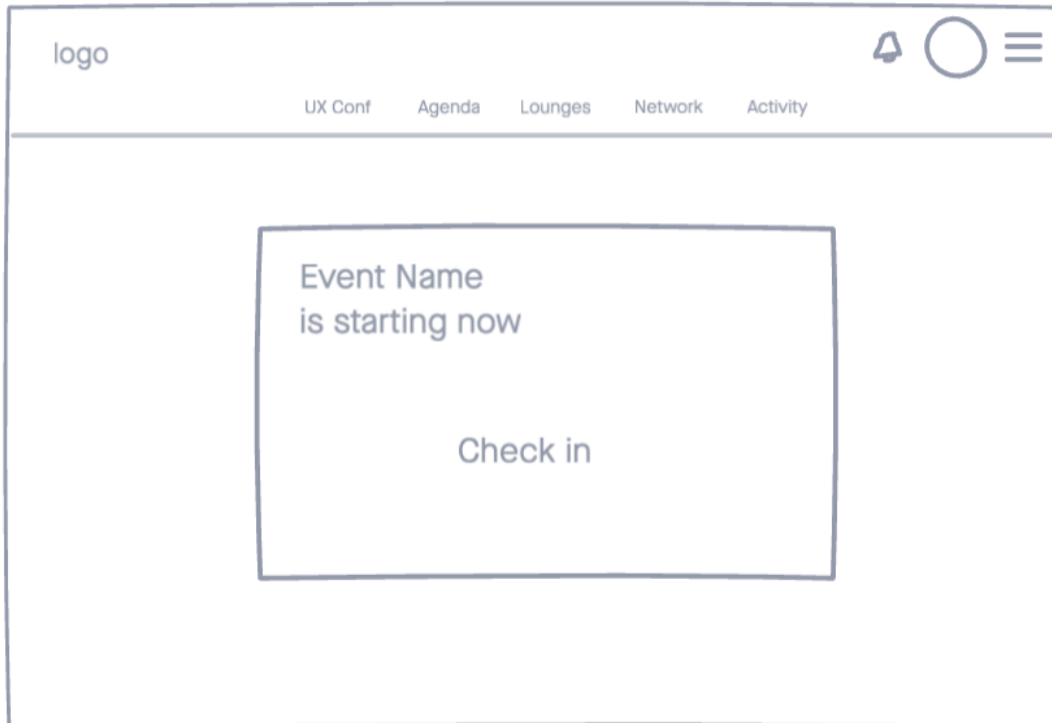
Event session page



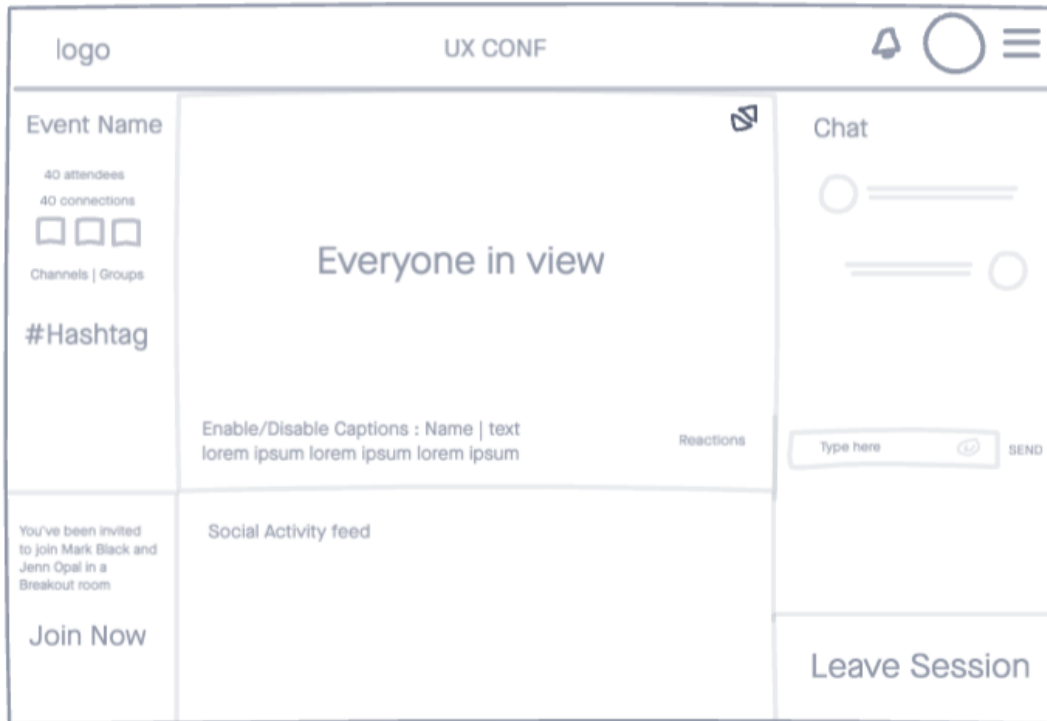
Event session page



Event session stating pop-up



Private Event/Social HH session page

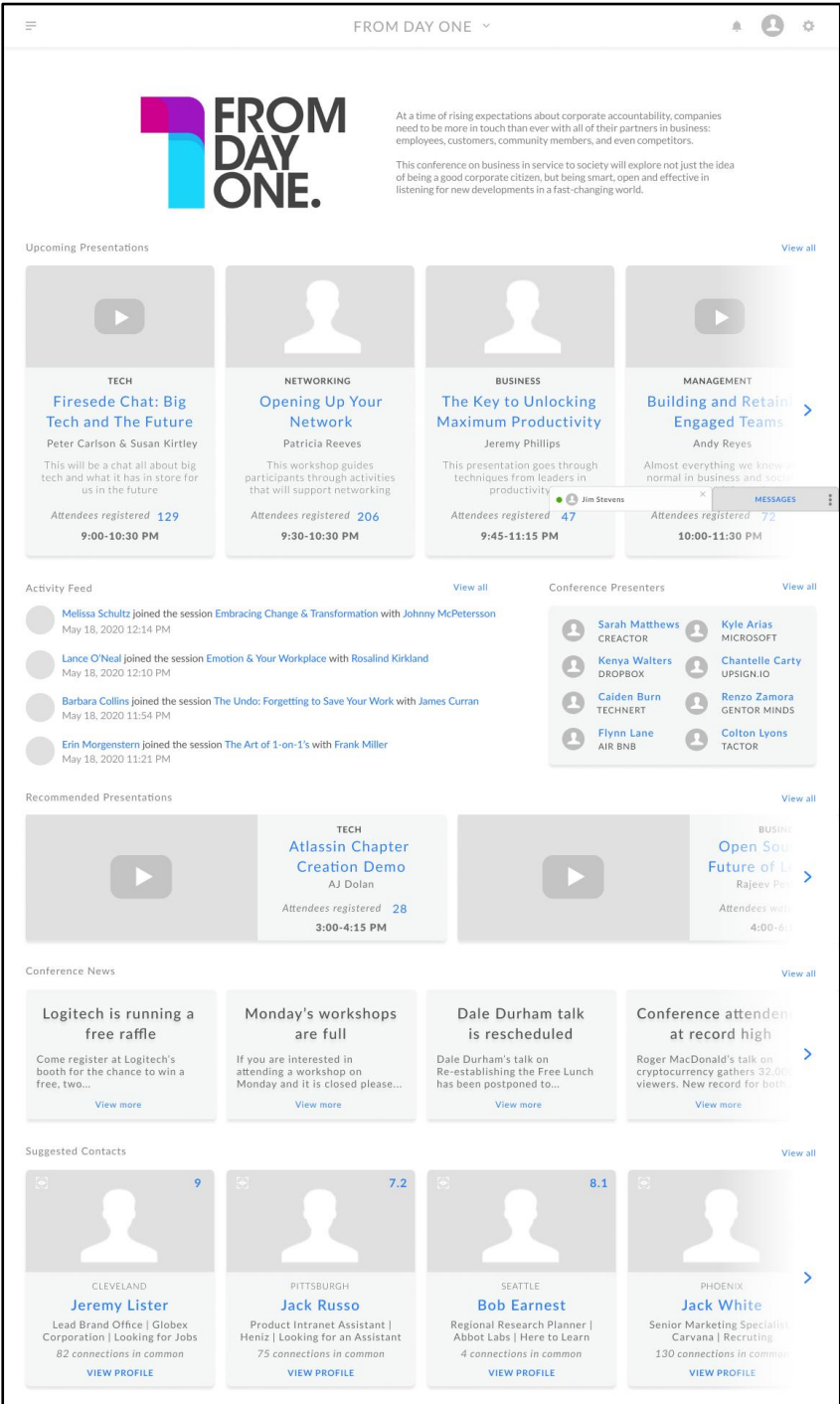


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9.10 Mid-Fi Prototype 1

Link: [Mid-Fi Prototype 1](#)

Link to Figma Wireframe Kits: [Wireframe Component Library v1.0](#), [Wireframy v2.4](#)



Conference Home Page

The screenshot displays a conference schedule application interface. At the top, it says "FROM DAY ONE" with a dropdown arrow. Below this are tabs for "ALL EVENTS" and "MY AGENDA". A search bar is present with the placeholder text "Search event name, speaker, or category". The schedule is organized by day: "Day 1 - Monday May 18", "Day 2 - Tuesday May 19", and "Day 3 - Wednesday May 20".

The "MORNING" section for Day 1 includes the following events:

- 9:00 - 10:30 AM** (Fireside Chat): **TECH** category, "Fireside Chat: Big Tech and The Future" by Peter Carlson & Susan Kirtley. 129 attendees registered.
- 9:30 - 10:30 AM** (Workshop): **NETWORKING** category, "Opening Up Your Network" by Patricia Reeves. Includes a "MESSAGES" button for Jim Stevens.
- 9:45 - 11:15 AM** (Keynote Presentation): **BUSINESS** category, "The Key to Unlocking Maximum Productivity" by Jeremy Philipps. 98 attendees registered.

A "COFFEE BREAK" section follows with the text "Feeling social? Find others to network with at the lounge." and a "GO TO LOUNGE" button.

The "AFTERNOON" section includes:

- 10:00 - 11:30 AM** (Keynote presentation): **MANAGEMENT** category, "Building and Retaining Engaged Teams" by Andy Reyes. 276 attendees registered.
- 11:00 - 12:00 PM** (Social event): **SOCIAL** category, "Social Happy Hour Event" by Kairon Rose & Patrick Underwood. 30 attendees registered.
- 1:15 - 2:45 PM** (Workshop): **MANAGEMENT** category, "Achieving a Transformative Hiring Strategy" by Alisha Hoffman. 309 attendees registered.
- 1:30 - 2:30 PM** (Social event): **BRAND** category.

Conference Schedule

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☰
FROM DAY ONE ▾
🔔 👤 ⚙️

NETWORKING

Opening Up Your Network

Monday May 18 | 9:30 - 10:30 AM

Join Patricia Reeves, Internal Group Administrator at Johnson & Johnson, in discovering the magic behind networking with others. Patricia has lead workshops globally for over 32,000 people. She will be on the upcoming CNN documentary series, "Woman Opening Up the World," speaking about the empowerment with women. She has appeared on the History Channel and Biography Channel, as well as the PBS Newshour, CBS and FOX.

Networking is a challenge that all people face at one point or another - whether they know that they are partaking in it or not. Explore the facets on conversation with Patricia as she walks up through how to make the process more enjoyable and natural.

12 Spots left!

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Attendees Registered **206**

Patricia Reeves
INTERNAL GROUP ADMINISTRATOR | JOHNSON & JOHNSON

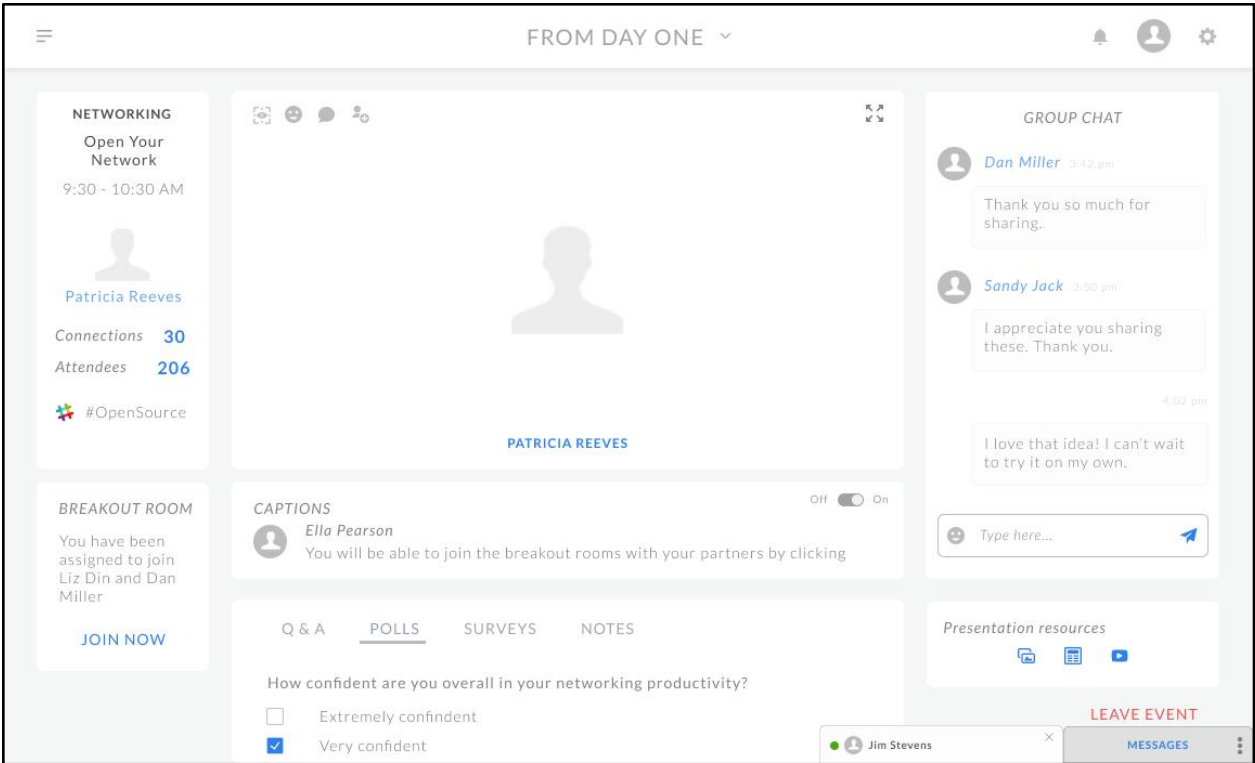
[View Profile](#)
[Connect](#)

Patricia Reeves is a powerful speaker, best-selling author and historian. Her articles have appeared in USA Today, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer and numerous other newspapers and magazines.

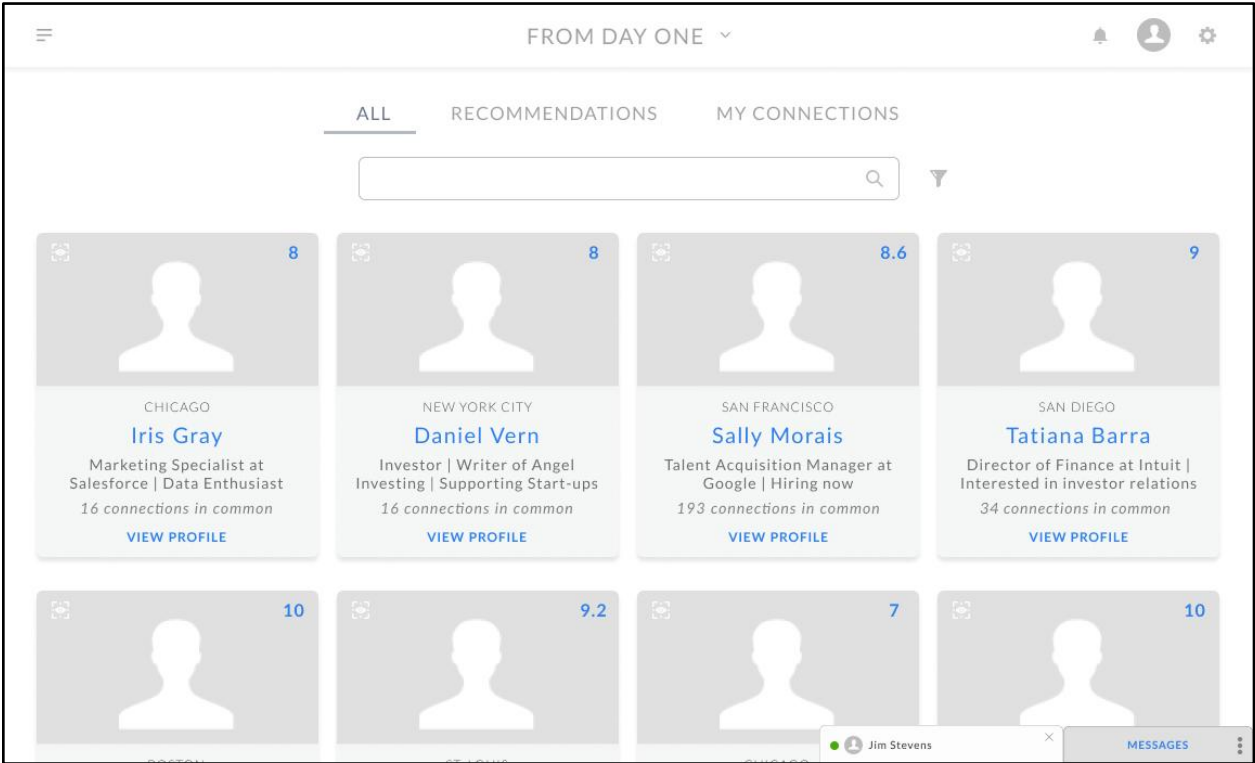
●
Jim Stevens
✕

MESSAGES
⋮

Conference Event - Register



Conference Event - Live View



Connections (Networking)

Sally Morais
MANAGER | GOOGLE

190 connections in common **9.5**

Activity Feed

- Sally Morais joined the session **Embracing Change & Transformation with Johnny McPetersson** May 12, 2020 12:14 PM
- Sally Morais is now friends with **Johnny McPetersson** May 12, 2020 11:25 AM
- Sally Morais posted **Fighting the Good Fight Event** has been totally transformative. Great session and awesome presentation. May 12, 2020 10:15 AM

You might also know

CHICAGO Jack Russo National Tactics Architect at	NEW YORK CITY Fransis Brook Implementation Analyst at	SAN FRANCISCO John Mull Product Manager at	PHILADELPHIA Diana McDonald
--	---	--	--

User Profile

LOUNGE

Search topic, people, category, or keywords

Browse by category

- BRAND
- OFFICE LIFE
- FREELANCING

Feeling random? Join any group by chance below.

By category

JOIN

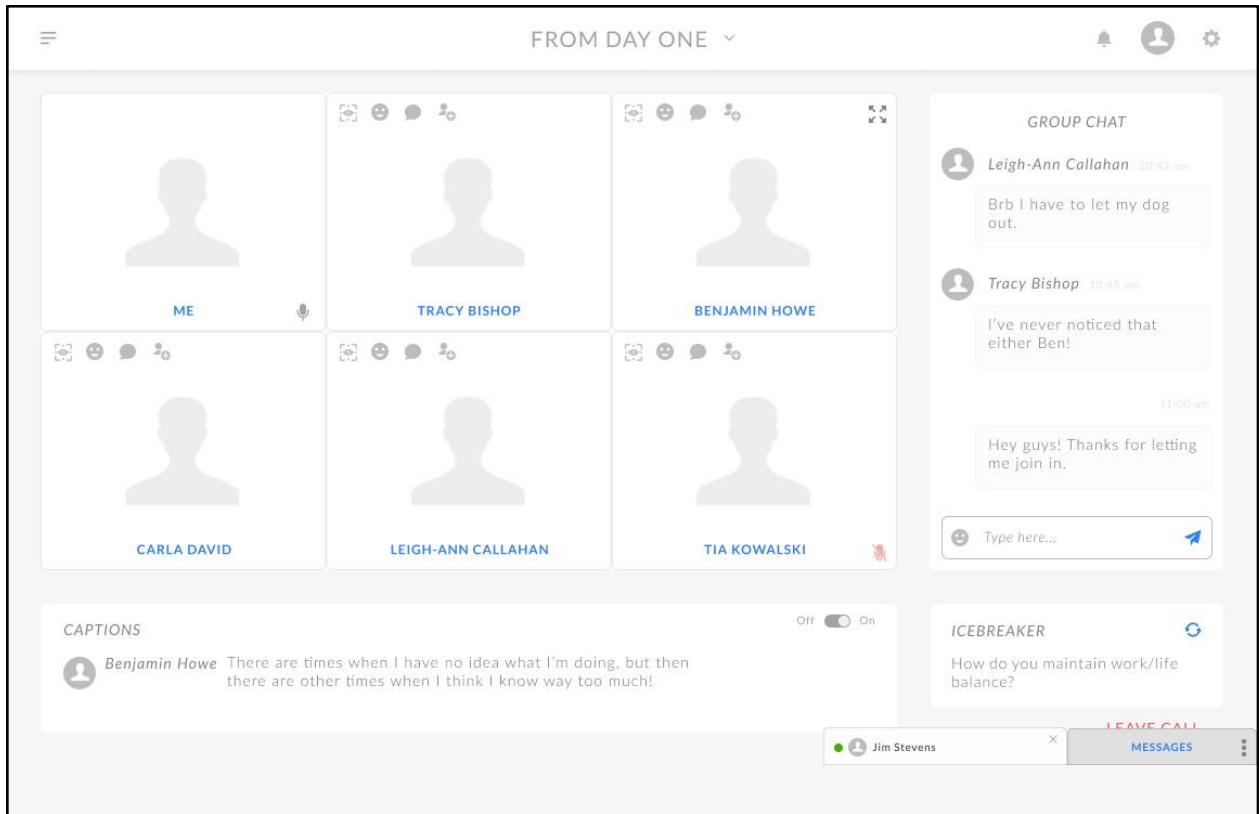
Recommended for you

MENTAL HEALTH Dealing With Stress #Yoga #Meditation #Beathing #Therapy 5 Connections JOIN	WORK LIFE BALANCE Share Your Pet Pics #Dogs #Cats #Outdoor 4 Connections JOIN
SOCIAL MEDIA #NoScreenTime #Netflix #Irony	MANAGING OTHERS Conflict Management #Peers #Email #Slack

Browse by spotlighted attendees

Alisha Brook RESPONSE COORDINATOR	6
Brianna Abbott GROUP ADMINISTRATOR	8.3
Karla David RESEARCH ENGINEER	7.1
Ben Slacker PROGRAM ASSOCIATE	9.3

Virtual Lounge Landing



Virtual Lounge - Event

9.11 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 Test Plan

Usability Test Plan: Moderator's Guide

A. Participant Screener

A total of 4 participants will be recruited for testing the virtual conference platform. The following screening questions will be used to identify participants that fit the test criteria:

1. Are you over the age of 21?
 - a. Yes (continue)
 - b. No (**terminate**)
2. Have you attended a conference (virtual or in-person) in the past 2 years?
 - a. Yes (continue)
 - b. No (**terminate**)

B. Introduction and Participant Consent

Introduction: Hi, my name is _____. Thank you for taking the time to participate in our study. My team and I are researching how individuals interact, network, and engage with other conference attendees for our graduate program capstone. We have created a prototype for a virtual conference platform based on our research, and we are now working to understand the usability of this prototype.

Purpose: The data collected today will only be used for this class assignment; only our research team will know your identity. This observation today will help us understand how people use our prototype as we work to improve it through additional stages of design.

Procedure: There are no right or wrong answers or behaviours. I simply wish to watch what you do and listen to what you say. I will take notes, record the session, and possibly record video and audio of your screen. I may ask questions before, during, and after the observation period. I want to also ask that you think aloud as you complete the tasks, and please feel free to express your opinions – both positive and negative. This will be a 30-minute, one-on-one session.

Informed Consent : This activity is voluntary. You have the right to not demonstrate any activity or answer any question, and to stop the inquiry at any time or for any reason. Your actions and responses will be confidential and used only in connection with this class assignment. Only your first name will be used to identify you. If you wish, you can use a pseudonym rather than your real name.

[Give the participant the informed consent form]: Please read over this informed consent form.

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Please feel free to ask me questions about this form and sign it if you consent to take part in this research.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

C. Warm Up Questions

I'm going to ask you a few questions before we proceed to the task portion of our session.

1. How often do you attend conferences?
2. What are your primary reasons for attending a conference?
3. Have you ever attended a virtual conference?
 - a. If yes, can you tell me more about that experience?
 - i. What were your primary goals for attending?
 - ii. What activities/events did you find engaging and beneficial to your goals?
 - iii. Can you tell me how you would improve the experience you had at your most recent conference?
 - b. If no, can you tell me about your most recent experience attending a conference?
 - i. What were your primary goals for attending?
 - ii. What activities/events did you find engaging and beneficial to your goals?
 - iii. Can you tell me how you would improve the experience you had at your most recent conference?

D. Tasks

Thank you for answering my questions. Now what is in front of you is a prototype of a virtual conference platform - I'm going to ask you to complete a few tasks that relate to navigating through and using the platform. I will read you the questions, and then ask you to show me how you would perform the task. As you conduct each task, I will ask you to describe what you see and do aloud. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. If you need help along the way, please let me know and I will be happy to assist.

Scenario A: Presentation Selection

It is just before 9:00 am on the first day of the From Day One conference, and you just logged into the virtual conference platform on your computer.

	Task	Screen	Objective	Success	Notes
1	On the homepage, you want to find an event that starts at 9:30am and view it. How	Home Event Detail	To understand how a user would browse to find a presentation. To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific presentation/session.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	

	would you find out more about the event?				
2	You're interested in attending this workshop session that has a set capacity. How would you register for this workshop?	Event Detail	To understand if users understand the concept of registering for an event, and if they are able to successfully register.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
3	You want to see the entire conference schedule so you can plan your day around the events you might be interested in attending. Where would you find the full schedule?	Schedule	To determine if the user is able to locate the Schedule page, and which route they would take to find this page. We are specifically interested in seeing how users interact with the side navigation menu.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
4	You're excited to attend the event you just registered for. It's now 9:30am. How would you view that event?	Schedule Event Detail	To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific presentation/session.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	

Post-Task Questions

- How would you rate the ease-of-use of this platform to locate a current presentation?
- How did you feel about the level of detail surrounding a specific event?

Scenario B: Networking

You've just finished registering for an upcoming workshop, and you'd like to connect with and

meet the other conference attendees.

	Task	Screen	Objective	S / F	Notes
1	You want to see who is attending the conference to make new connections. How would you find other conference-goers to network with?	Home Connections	To determine if the user is able to locate the Attendees page, and which route they would take to find this page. We are specifically interested in seeing how users interact with the side navigation menu.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
2	You've found an attendee that you'd potentially like to connect with named Sally Morais. How would you learn more about them?	Home Connections Attendee Profile	To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific attendee, and what level of detail they are looking for when making connections.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
3	You have seen some of the attendees and made a few connections. How would you find someone that is recommended for you to meet at this conference?	Home Connections Attendee Profile	To determine if users understand how to find recommended connections. To determine if users are able to understand the concept surrounding the recommendation scale.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
4	You noticed Jack Russo's information and would like to potentially find and speak to him during the conference. How would you spotlight this person to find them later on?	Home Connections Attendee Profile	To determine if users understand the concept of spotlighting, and if users can easily identify and use this feature.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	

Post-Task Questions

- What information did you find useful when selecting someone to network with?
- What were your thoughts on the idea and execution of spotlight functionality?

Scenario C: Virtual Lounge

You have a 20 minute break between presentation sessions, and you're interested in engaging in group conversations with other attendees.

	Task	Screen	Objective	S / F	Notes
1	You want to find a group to join. How would you find and join a group conversation talking about meditation?	Home Lounge Lounge Group	To determine if the user is able to locate the lounge. To determine if users understand the concept of the lounge. We are specifically interested in seeing how users interact with the side navigation menu.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
2	You are in a group conversation, and you are interested in networking with Benjamin Howe in the group. How would you add this person to your network?	Lounge Lounge Group User Profile	To determine how users use the lounge to connect with other conference attendees. To determine the level of detail users are looking for to connect with people.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
3	You want to randomly join a group based on recommendations around your profile. How would you join a group using random matching?	Lounge Lounge Group	To determine if users understand the Random Placement feature, and if they successfully utilize the drop down to randomly join a group by recommendation.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	

Post-Task Questions

- What did you think about the concept and execution surrounding the Lounge?
- What did you think about the level of detail surrounding specific groups in the Lounge?

E. Wrap-Up Activity

Thank you for taking part in our research. I just want to ask you a few questions about the platform you just used before we end this session.

- What is your impression of the virtual conference platform after using it?
- What feature(s) of the platform would you say you found to be the most useful? Least useful?
- Is there anything else that you observed during the completion of the tasks that you would like to discuss?

System Usability Scale

I will now ask you a few questions, for you to rate from “Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree”

Questions (5 positive, 5 negative)	Scores				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt confident navigating through the virtual conference platform.	1	2	3	4	5
I felt like I needed to learn a lot before I could start using the platform.	1	2	3	4	5
I think most people would learn to use the platform quickly.	1	2	3	4	5

The platform was cumbersome to use.	1	2	3	4	5
The various features of the platform were integrated and consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
The platform features were inconsistent.	1	2	3	4	5
I think that the platform was easy to use.	1	2	3	4	5
I would need help from a more knowledgeable person to use the platform	1	2	3	4	5
I think that I would like to use the platform to attend virtual conferences more frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
The platform was unnecessarily complex.	1	2	3	4	5

9.12 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 Test Results

Scenario A: Presentation Selection

It is just before 9:00 am on the first day of the From Day One conference, and you just logged into the virtual conference platform on your computer.

	Task	Objective	Success	Notes
1	On the homepage, you want to find an event that starts at 9:30am and view it. How would you find out more about the event?	<p>To understand how a user would browse to find a presentation.</p> <p>To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific presentation/session.</p>	<p>Fully Successful - 3</p> <p>Partially Successful - 1</p>	<p>Tim: Noticed the 'Join Now' and 'Leave Event' button, but thought that the 'Join Now' was for the presentation - not a breakout room.</p> <p>Rich: Clicked "View All" on the home page to navigate to the schedule, but this was not linked. Then went right to the hamburger menu navigation.</p>
2	You're interested in attending this workshop session that has a set capacity. How would you register for this workshop?	To understand if users understand the concept of registering for an event, and if they are able to successfully register.	Fully Successful - 4	Tim: "I would have clicked the icon at the top to go home."
3	You want to see the entire conference schedule so you can plan your day around the events you might be interested in attending. Where would you find the full schedule?	<p>To determine if the user is able to locate the Schedule page, and which route they would take to find this page.</p> <p>We are specifically interested in seeing how users interact with the side navigation menu.</p>	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Three participants mentioned the possibility of overlapping presentation times.</p> <p>Michael: Asked about what the screen would look like if there were multiple overlapping events such as when there's a very large conference, and three different keynote speakers are presenting at the same time.</p> <p>Rich: "Here's where it is, but it doesn't show me all three days together, but it doesn't show overlapping times"</p> <p>Tim: Like ability to search for specific events and seeing which presentations/workshops he registered for. Wanted to know if the platform would provide feedback if he</p>

				registered for two events with overlapping times.
4	You're excited to attend the event you just registered for. It's now 9:30am. How would you view that event?	To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific presentation/session.	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Michael and Rich mentioned confirmation for registration.</p> <p>Michael: "It would be nice if there was a little notification icon here that could show me what events/talks I was already registered for so I don't have to remember the name of the event"</p> <p>Rich: "It doesn't say I am registered on this page. When I click though. It also doesn't say I am registered. So if this was not my first choice and a bunch of things were full, I might not know"</p> <p>One participant mentioned the need for including the time zone.</p> <p>Tim: Mentioned needing time zones on events. Or UTC if international.</p>

Post-Task Questions

- How would you rate the ease-of-use of this platform to locate a current presentation?
 - **Michael:** "I felt this was pretty straight forward, and an easy thing to do."
 - **Rich:** "Locating the schedule was not hard."
 - **John:** "'I think that maybe to plan the whole day, you have to scroll and maybe I'd add at a table for the day for what the activities are to avoid so much scrolling".
 - **Tim:** "Easy so far." Time also noted some contrast issues with the prototype.
- How did you feel about the level of detail surrounding a specific event?
 - **Michael:** "It would be nice to see what workshops I've registered for or what events I've registered for. I like being able to see a full schedule and then decide what I want to do. This is also helpful if there's an event that I can't register for; it's sold out. So seeing what I'm already attending and at what time and what else is offered allows me to maximize my time."

- **Rich:** ""The one way through the schedule has no way to reserve and no information on it, so that's problematic. However the one on the home page does have a short bio and discusses what the presentation is about."
- **John:** ""This is a little weird. I don't want to know who joined the session". In terms of details around events the participant was satisfied with that. He said "There is a lot here. I'm happy with it".
- **Tim:** "Good. No comments."

Scenario B: Networking

You've just finished registering for an upcoming workshop, and you'd like to connect with and meet the other conference attendees.

	Task	Objective	S / F	Notes
1	You want to see who is attending the conference to make new connections. How would you find other conference-goers to network with?	To determine if the user is able to locate the Attendees page, and which route they would take to find this page. We are specifically interested in seeing how users interact with the side navigation menu.	Fully Successful - 2 Partially Successful - 1 Unsuccessful - 1	Two Participants (Michael and Rich) expressed concerns about the matching capabilities. Rich: ""I know that it's offering me recommendations, but I have no experience why I would trust the AI's recommendations. I am better off filtering by myself." Michael and John did not understand why he would want to see all attendees when there may be hundreds of people there. Rich expressed the opposite, waiting to see everyone and for an easy way to export the data for his own networking use. John: "If there are 206 attendees, I'm not sure if I'd like to go through that". Tim was unsuccessful in this task.
2	You've found an attendee that you'd potentially like to connect with named Sally Morais.	To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific attendee, and what level of detail they are looking for when	Fully Successful - 4	Tim wasn't sure if there was a difference between clicking on the participant's name vs clicking "View Profile". He also wasn't sure what "193 connections in common" meant - thought it meant "has more common interests, not common

	How would you learn more about them?	making connections.		network.”
3	You have seen some of the attendees and made a few connections. How would you find someone that is recommended for you to meet at this conference?	To determine if users understand how to find recommended connections. To determine if users are able to understand the concept surrounding the recommendation scale.	Fully Successful - 4	Michael noted that he would go to the Attendees page to check, but also knew this information was available on the home page. Rich: "The menu feels like an extra click. Every time I want to change something I have to click the menu rather than it being fully available." John mentioned that there are people inside the presentation that might be good for him to connect with. Tim did not know what the number on the attendee card was.
4	You noticed Jack Russo’s information and would like to potentially find and speak to him during the conference. How would you spotlight this person to find them later on?	To determine if users understand the concept of spotlighting, and if users can easily identify and use this feature.	Fully Successful - 4	All four participants were successful in completing this task, but were unsure what the spotlight feature was. Michael: “Spotlight Term was a bit confusing, the tool tip helped though” Rich: ““I don't know what spotlight means" - when asked if they knew what that meant without the tool tip. John: "I don't know what spotlight means". Tim saw the spotlight icon on other pages, but didn't know what it meant until he got to the profile page. Wasn't sure he would know what it did if I hadn't explained it.

Post-Task Questions

- What information did you find useful when selecting someone to network with?
 - **Michael:** “Job Title/Role/Position is important for me. Also location is super

important. If I'm networking I'm interested in building connections around the area where I'm currently living. I'd rather connect with people who are close to me rather than on the other side of the country. The activity feed was nice to see too, but I'm not sure if it's something that I would largely use if I'm trying to find people to network with."

- **Rich:** "Position, where they work. The blurb is helpful. I am not sure if it's going to be long enough, depending what they need."
- **Rich:** "I like the activity feed. if you want to run into someone, you can see what they registered for. Would be nice to see everything and have it highlight anything we both signed up for like seminars or break out rooms."
- **Rich:** "Having a calendar that is the things that I registered for so I can see my personal schedule."
- **John** said he felt the information was enough given the amount of time it takes to go through a lot of profiles, saying "that's good because you don't have time to look at too many details".
- **Tim** said company and position is what matters to him.
- What were your thoughts on the idea and execution of spotlight functionality?
 - **Michael:** "I wasn't familiar with that term so it was a little new to me. I think the idea makes sense to indicate people that I'd like to follow/reach out to."
 - **John:** "The term 'bookmark' comes to mind... but I would adjust quickly to 'spotlight'".
 - **Tim** said that the spotlight feature was an "interesting idea."

Scenario C: Virtual Lounge

You have a 20 minute break between presentation sessions, and you're interested in engaging in group conversations with other attendees.

	Task	Objective	S / F	Notes
1	You want to find a group to join. How would you find and join a group conversation talking about meditation?	<p>To determine if the user is able to locate the lounge.</p> <p>To determine if users understand the concept of the lounge.</p> <p>We are specifically interested in seeing</p>	<p>Fully Successful - 1</p> <p>Partially Successful - 2</p> <p>Needed Help - 1</p>	<p>Michael and Rich expressed uncertainty towards the label "Lounge."</p> <p>Michael: "I'm not real sure where or what to click on here"</p> <p>Rich: "Honestly I am just guessing at this point. Nothing really popped up. I guess it's Lounge. I'm only clicking because it's</p>

		<p>how users interact with the side navigation menu.</p>		<p>one of the only things available. I wouldn't know what that is"</p> <p>Michael and Rich also expressed concern about selecting a group, both noting they wanted additional context.</p> <p>Michael: "I wouldn't base my choice of a group off a hashtag though, I'd want to learn more about the group before I decide to join"</p> <p>Rich: "I cant click into any of these. I want to see what the group is before I join one. Dealing with hashtags don't tell me much. I want to see what that is."</p> <p>Rich also expressed not caring about the subject matter, and caring more about the opportunity to meet people., saying "If it's just to meet with people, I don't care what the group session is anyway so I can chat with people I want to network with"</p> <p>John noticed the 'Go to lounge' but it wasn't clickable. He said "I imagine that lounge is where people gather between events". He was successful in finding where to go from the home page, but needed guidance to the menu. This was a fault of the prototype.</p>
2	<p>You are in a group conversation, and you are interested in networking with Benjamin Howe in the group. How would you add this person to your network?</p>	<p>To determine how users use the lounge to connect with other conference attendees.</p> <p>To determine the level of detail users are looking for to connect with people.</p>	<p>Partially Successful - 3 Unsuccessful -1</p>	<p>Michael and Rich both expressed confusion around the icons over the video screen.</p> <p>Michael found some of the icons at the top to be distracting which impacted his ability to determine the "right" icon to click to get connected to someone. It took some time to add the connection.</p> <p>Rich: "I don't see how connecting and spotlight are two different things. I think they are slightly different things in the way I would use them. If I am looking to meet Tracy Bishop, I would click this add connection. So maybe there's a way to type a message when I add a connection. If I add her without her any message why</p>

				<p>not just do that?"</p> <p>Rich: "I also don't know what the smiley face is for. Emoji? Why wouldn't that be in the chat?"</p> <p>Both Michael and Rich expressed a desire for individual networking, and a more formal, direct connection.</p> <p>Michael: "Part of me just wanted to send this person a direct message to connect, rather than just an 'informal' add connection"</p> <p>Rich: "I understand the segmentation, but part of me asks why? Why wouldn't you just connect with them."</p> <p>John said "what is that?" pointing to the 'connect' icon. The participant said they cannot see what it is and that in general the contrast is very low.</p>
3	You want to randomly join a group based on recommendations around your profile. How would you join a group using random matching?	To determine if users understand the Random Placement feature, and if they successfully utilize the drop down to randomly join a group by recommendation.	Fully Successful -1 Partially Successful - 3	<p>Michael noticed the "Join" button from the Lounge screen, but didn't quite catch the drop down to select "recommendations."</p> <p>Rich noted a contrast issue, saying "I don't know I would have seen this to be honest. I do not think I would have paid attention to this with the light gray color."</p> <p>John was unsuccessful in this task.</p>

Post-Task Questions

- What did you think about the concept and execution surrounding the Lounge?
 - **Michael:** "I thought it was ok. Personally, when I network I do it in more of a one-on-one situation. So direct messages are good."
 - **Rich:** "Personally, I think a lot of networking is more one on one and smaller groups than this. At some point, if i want to get to know someone, it needs to be a separate conversation outside this group."
 - **John:** "I think I need to use it to really understand how it works. I see that you

guys have added a bunch of dimensions to a conference tool and that is really interesting".

- **Tim** said he likes the level of detail on the lounge page, and felt it gave him enough information to know what he's potentially joining.
 - What did you think about the level of detail surrounding specific groups in the Lounge?
 - **Michael**: "I'm still kind of thinking about how the whole group thing works. Can anyone create groups? What happens if there's a bunch of empty groups? I wasn't big on the hashtags either, I want to actually go into the group and see what it's about before fully joining, and the hashtags aren't really helpful for me."
 - **Rich**: "When I see these hashtags, I wonder if we are going to do those or if this is a discussion about best practices for stress management."
 - **Rich**: "Also do not know if this is moderation or a free for all. It sounds like these are unmoderated conversations, so are these blank rooms or do people start their own rooms."
 - **Rich**: "Last point, if there is nobody in any of these rooms, it's hard to get critical mass. The first click can be tough and if there is only one person, it's hard to get the second person. IT probably gets easier to get people to join, but it's hard to get people to join an empty room. If I am in an empty room for 10 mins and nobody joins, I'm going to leave. so that enhances the problem."
 - **John**: "I need to have an idea of what people are going to talk about. If I don't find anything then maybe I'd use that feature".
-

E. Wrap-Up Activity

Thank you for taking part in our research. I just want to ask you a few questions about the platform you just used before we end this session.

- What is your impression of the virtual conference platform after using it?
 - **Michael**: "I really like this idea and I can see this being used to host virtual conferences."
 - **Rich**: "I think this will be reasonable for satisfying for the speakers. I think it's important to see how you open up Q and A. Sometimes it's not just understanding, it's seeing who asked the question. If I'm going to network with some people, I think that is going to be the one struggle in how you provide a platform that is essentially one on one interactions."
 - **Rich**: "I think the lounge idea addresses more the happy hour type thing. But I think there's a lot that happens outside of that. I am not a great conference

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- attendee, but I spent most of my time outside the lecture. My drive is meeting specific people.”
- **John:** "It is intriguing. I never used a layer like that to navigate the different resources in a conference. I think it is cool. I would like to explore more."
 - **Tim:** "Overall, I really liked the product. Could see this being used for all types of conferences."
 - What feature(s) of the platform would you say you found to be the most useful? Least useful?
 - **Michael:** "Being able to see a list of conference attendees, and seeing who is at the conference. I like the idea of recommended connections, but I'm not sure about where the data is coming from and how accurate the recommendations are. Also had questions about the difference between spotlight and connect."
 - **Rich:** "Most - Attendees are the most useful. Hands down. That's what I value. Do you want to make this exportable to CSV? Also what column you show in your export. Least - The Home page. Just really busy. The stuff there is useful and my default is to use the menu. There is just a shit ton of information all at once. I am kind of surprised that news is at the bottom."
 - John did not find the activity feed useful in terms of who has joined what room, saying "I wouldn't like to see that".
 - **Tim:** "Most: schedule, least: spotlight."
 - Is there anything else that you observed during the completion of the tasks that you would like to discuss?
 - **Rich:** "The only other thing is my question is it says FROM DAY ONE. I am not sure if this was meant to be a return to home button. Every time I had to go to the menu and that was a bit much."

9.13 Mid-Fi Prototype 1 SUS Results

System usability scale					
Q #	Participant # SUS Question	P1	P2	P3	P4
1	I felt confident navigating through the virtual conference platform	0	3	3	4
2	I felt like I needed to learn a lot before I could start using the platform	4	2	2	1
3	I think most people would learn to use the platform quickly.	2	2	3	4
4	The platform was cumbersome to use	4	3	3	2
5	The various features of the platform were integrated and consistent	3	2	3	3
6	The platform features were inconsistent	4	3	2	1
7	I think the platform was easy to use	2	3	3	4
8	I would need help from a more knowledgeable person to use the platform	3	3	3	2
9	I think that I would like to use the platform to attend virtual conferences more frequently	3	3	3	4
10	The platform was unnecessarily complex	4	3	2	2

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	Individual SUS	72.5	67.5	67.5	67.5
	Total (Average) SUS	68.75			

9.14 Mid-Fi Prototype 2

Link: [Mid-Fi Prototype 2](#)

Link to Figma Wireframe Kits: [Wireframe Component Library v1.0](#), [Wireframy v2.4](#)

FROM DAY ONE

At a time of rising expectations about corporate accountability, companies need to be more in touch than ever with all of their partners in business: employees, customers, community members, and even competitors.

This conference on business in service to society will explore not just the idea of being a good corporate citizen, but being smart, open and effective in listening for new developments in a fast-changing world.

Upcoming Presentations

- TECH**
Firesede Chat: Big Tech and The Future
Peter Carlson & Susan Kirtley
This will be a chat all about big tech and what it has in store for us in the future
129 attendees registered
9:00-10:30 PM CST
- NETWORKING**
Opening Up Your Network
Patricia Reeves
This workshop guides participants through activities that will support networking
206 attendees registered
9:30-10:30 PM CST
- BUSINESS**
The Key to Unlocking Maximum Productivity
Jeremy Phillips
This presentation goes through techniques from leaders in productivity
You and 74 attendees are registered
9:45-11:15 PM CST
- MANAGEMENT**
Building and Retaining Engaged Teams
Andy Reyes
Almost everything we know is normal in business and society
72 attendees registered
10:00-11:30 PM CST

Activity Feed

- Melissa Schultz joined the session Embracing Change & Transformation with Johnny McPeterson
11 hours ago
45 Likes • 8 Comments
- Lance O'Neal commented on Wesley Williams' attendance at Google Seattle Happy Hour
11 hours ago
Happy to see so many people here at this happy hour together. Proud to be in the Google team.
45 Likes • 8 Comments
- Barbara Collins liked James Curran's activity on James Curran Undo: Forgetting to Save Your Work
11 hours ago
45 Likes • 8 Comments

Conference Presenters

- Sarah Matthews (CREACTOR)
- Kyle Arias (MICROSOFT)
- Kenya Walters (DROPOX)
- Chantelle Carty (UPSIGN.IO)
- Caiden Burn (TECHNERT)
- Renzo Zamora (GENTOR MINDS)
- Jason Morrel (INTUIT)
- Greg Smith (PAYPAL)
- Flynn Lane (AIR BNB)
- Colton Lyons (TACTOR)

Recommended Presentations

- TECH**
Atlassian Chapter Creation Demo
AJ Dolan
28 attendees registered
3:00-4:15 PM CST
- BUSINESS**
Open Source Future of Work
Rajeev P...
34 attendees registered
4:00-6:00 PM CST

Conference News

- Logitech is running a free raffle**
Come register at Logitech's booth for the chance to win a free, two...
View more
- Monday's workshops are full**
If you are interested in attending a workshop on Monday and it is closed please...
View more
- Dale Durham talk is rescheduled**
Dale Durham's talk on Re-establishing the Free Lunch has been postponed to...
View more
- Conference attendees at record high**
Roger MacDonald's talk on cryptocurrency gathers 32,000 viewers. New record for both...
View more

Suggested Contacts

- CLEVELAND**
Jeremy Lister
Lead Brand Officer
Globex Corporation
82 connections in common
VIEW PROFILE
- PITTSBURGH**
Jack Russo
Product Intranet Assistant
Heniz
74 connections in common
VIEW PROFILE
- SEATTLE**
Bob Earnest
Regional Research Planner
Abbot Labs
14 connections in common
VIEW PROFILE
- PHOENIX**
Jack White
Senior Marketing Specialist
Carvana
130 connections in common
VIEW PROFILE

Home - V2

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☰
FROM DAY ONE
🔔 👤 ⚙️

NETWORKING

Opening Up Your Network

Monday May 18 | 9:30 - 10:30 AM CST

[Share Event](#)

Join Patricia Reeves, Internal Group Administrator at Johnson & Johnson, in discovering the magic behind networking with others. Patricia has lead workshops globally for over 32,000 people. She will be on the upcoming CNN documentary series, "Woman Opening Up the World," speaking about the empowerment with women. She has appeared on the History Channel and Biography Channel, as well as the PBS Newshour, CBS and FOX.

Networking is a challenge that all people face at one point or another - whether they know that they are partaking in it or not. Explore the facets on conversation with Patricia as she walks up through how to make the process more enjoyable and natural.

14 Spots left!

[REGISTER NOW](#)

206 attendees registered

You are already registered to an event at this time: **Building and Retaining Engaged Teams** from 10:00 - 11:30 AM CST

Patricia Reeves
INTERNAL GROUP ADMINISTRATOR | JOHNSON & JOHNSON

[View Profile](#) [Connect](#)

[f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [@](#)

Patricia Reeves is a powerful speaker, best-selling author and historian. Her articles have appeared in USAToday, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer and numerous other newspapers and magazines.

COncference Event Detail - V2

☰
FROM DAY ONE
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NETWORKING

Opening Up Your Network

Monday May 18 | 9:30 - 10:30 AM CST

[Share Event](#)

Join Patricia Reeves, Internal Group Administrator at Johnson & Johnson, in discovering the magic behind networking with others. Patricia has lead workshops globally for over 32,000 people. She will be on the upcoming CNN documentary series, "Woman Opening Up the World," speaking about the empowerment with women. She has appeared on the History Channel and Biography Channel, as well as the PBS Newshour, CBS and FOX.

Networking is a challenge that all people face at one point or another - whether they know that they are partaking in it or not. Explore the facets on conversation with Patricia as she walks up through how to make the process more enjoyable and natural.

Thanks for registering!

REGISTERED!

207 attendees registered

Patricia Reeves
INTERNAL GROUP ADMINISTRATOR | JOHNSON & JOHNSON

[View Profile](#) [Connect](#)

[f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [@](#)

Patricia Reeves is a powerful speaker, best-selling author and historian. Her articles have appeared in USAToday, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer and numerous other newspapers and magazines.

● 👤 Jim Stevens
✕

MESSAGES

⋮

Conference Event Detail Registered - V2

FROM DAY ONE

ALL EVENTS MY AGENDA INVITES

Search event name, speaker, or category

Day 1 - Monday May 18 Day 2 - Tuesday May 19 Day 3 - Wednesday May 20

MORNING

9:00 - 10:30 AM CST
Fireside Chat
TECH
Fireside Chat: Big Tech and The Future
Peter Carlson & Susan Kirtley
129 attendees registered

9:30 - 10:30 AM CST
Workshop
NETWORKING
Opening Up Your Network
Patricia Reeves

9:45 - 11:15 AM CST
Keynote Presentation
BUSINESS
The Key to Unlocking Maximum Productivity
Jeremy Philipps
You and 100 attendees are registered

COFFEE BREAK
Feeling social? Find others to network with in the social hour events.
[VIEW SOCIAL EVENTS](#)

10:00 - 11:30 AM CST
Keynote presentation
MANAGEMENT
Building and Retaining Engaged Teams
Andy Reyes

11:00 - 12:00 PM CST
Social event
MARKETING SOCIAL
Marketing Social Hour
Kairon Rose & Patrick Underwood
30 attendees registered

AFTERNOON

1:15 - 2:45 PM CST
Workshop
MANAGEMENT
Achieving a Transformative Hiring Strategy
Alisha Hoffman
You and 14 attendees are registered

1:30 - 2:30 PM CST
Social event
BRAND

Conference Schedule - V2

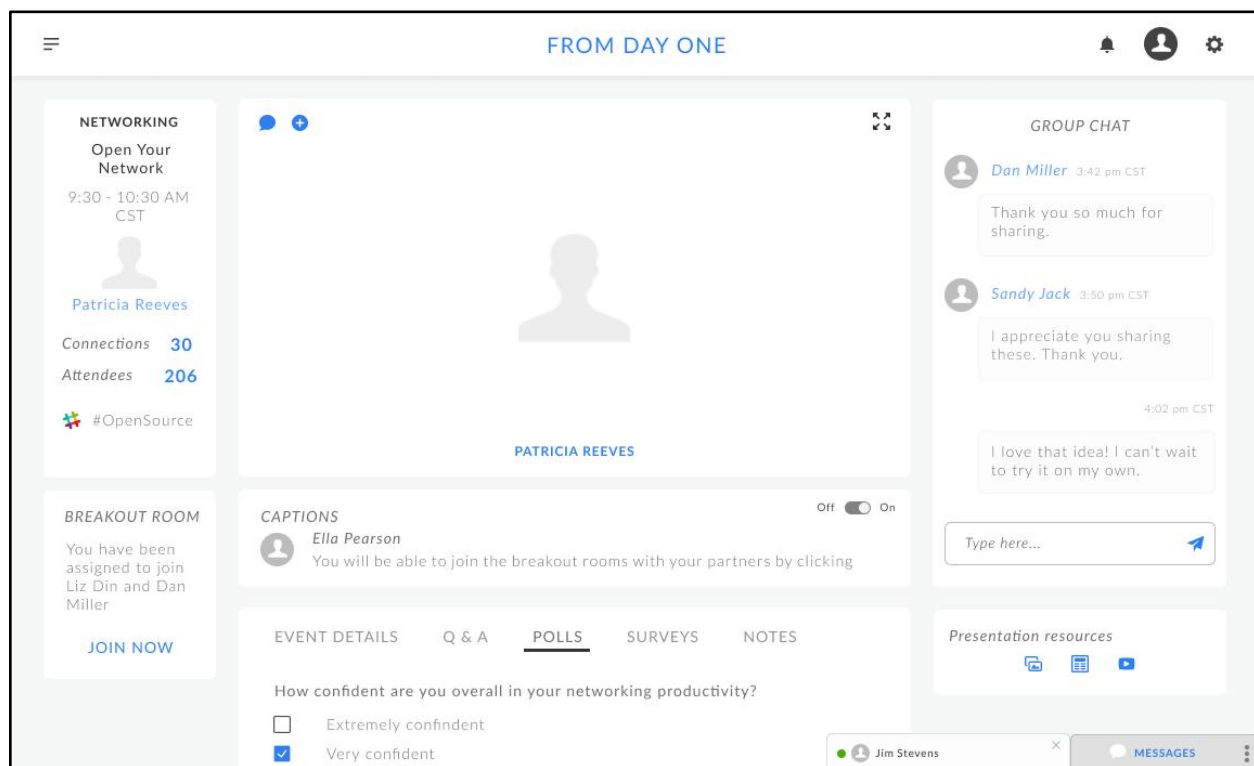
The screenshot displays a mobile application interface for an event agenda. At the top, it says "FROM DAY ONE" with navigation icons for a menu, notifications, profile, and settings. Below this are tabs for "ALL EVENTS", "MY AGENDA" (which is selected), and "INVITES". A search bar is present with the placeholder text "Search event name, speaker, or category". The agenda is organized by day: "Day 1 - Monday May 18", "Day 2 - Tuesday May 19", and "Day 3 - Wednesday May 20".

Under the "MORNING" section for Day 1, there are six event cards:

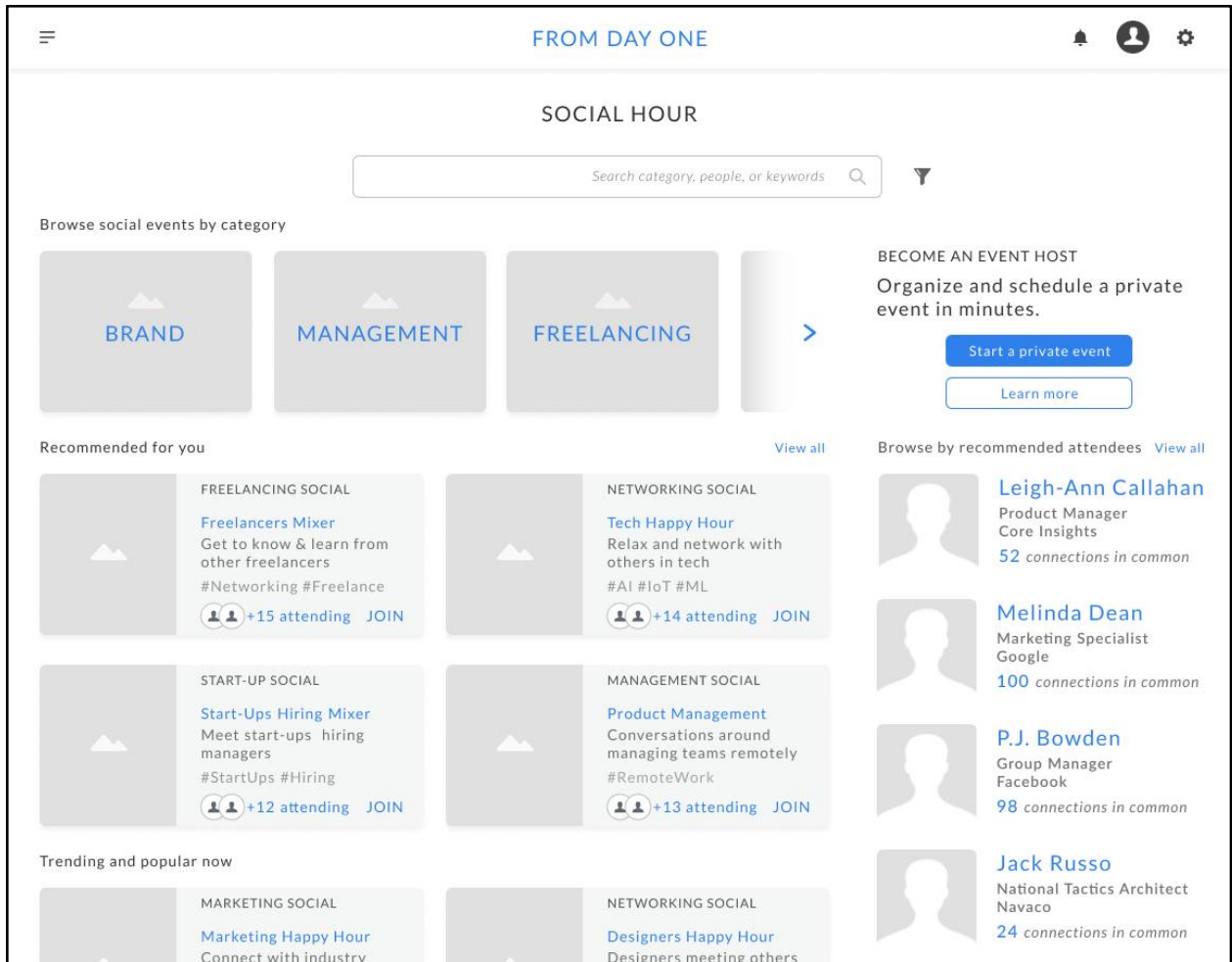
- 9:30 - 10:30 AM CST**
Keynote Presentation
Networking: Opening Up Your Network
Speaker: Patricia Reeves
Action: Check in now
- 11:30 - 12:30 AM CST**
Workshop
Management: Maximizing Productivity in Your Team
Speaker: Andy Smith
Action: You and 74 attendees are registered
- 1:30 - 2:20 PM CST**
Private Social
Private Social: Googler's Social Hour
Hosted by Google
Action: You and 74 attendees are registered
- 3:00 - 4:00 PM CST**
Keynote Presentation
Design: Approaching Users for Constructive Feedback on Your Products
Speaker: Sara Davis
Action: You and 70 attendees are registered
- 4:30 - 5:45 PM CST**
Panel Discussion
Sales: Net Promoter Scores (NPS): Are You a Believer Yet?
Speaker: Samuel Eslick
Action: You and 80 attendees are registered
- 6:00 - 7:00 PM CST**
Private Happy Hour
Private Social: Google Cloud Happy Hour
Hosted by Google
Action: You and 20 attendees are registered

A chat window for "Jim Stevens" is partially visible over the second event card, with a "MESSAGES" button and a close icon.

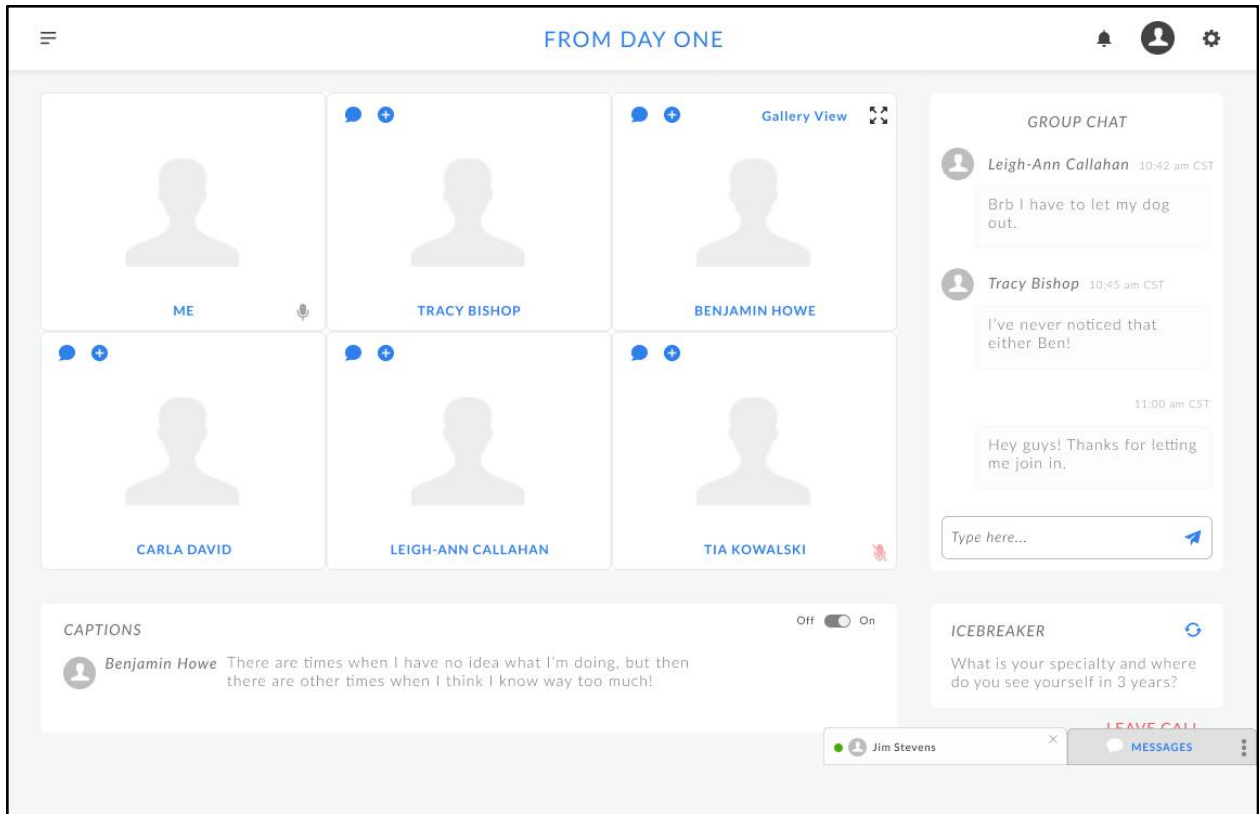
Agenda - V2



Conference Presentation - V2



Social Hour Landing - V2 (Originally Virtual Lounge Landing)



Social Hour Event - V2 (Originally Virtual Lounge Event)

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9.15 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 Test Plan

Usability Test Plan: Moderator's Guide

A. Participant Screener

A total of 4 participants will be recruited for testing the virtual conference platform. The following screening questions will be used to identify participants that fit the test criteria:

1. Are you over the age of 21?
 - a. Yes (continue)
 - b. No (**terminate**)
2. Have you attended a conference (virtual or in-person) in the past 2 years?
 - a. Yes (continue)
 - b. No (**terminate**)

B. Introduction and Participant Consent

Introduction: Hi, my name is _____. Thank you for taking the time to participate in our study. My team and I are researching how individuals interact, network, and engage with other conference attendees for our graduate program capstone. We have created a prototype for a virtual conference platform based on our research, and we are now working to understand the usability of this prototype.

Purpose : The data collected today will only be used for this class assignment; only our research team will know your identity. This observation today will help us understand how people use our prototype as we work to improve it through additional stages of design.

Procedure: There are no right or wrong answers or behaviours. I simply wish to watch what you do and listen to what you say. I will take notes, record the session, and possibly record video and audio of your screen. I may ask questions before, during, and after the observation period. I want to also ask that you think aloud as you complete the tasks, and please feel free to express your opinions – both positive and negative. This will be a 30-minute, one-on-one session.

Informed Consent : This activity is voluntary. You have the right to not demonstrate any activity or answer any question, and to stop the inquiry at any time or for any reason. Your actions and responses will be confidential and used only in connection with this class assignment. Only your first name will be used to identify you. If you wish, you can use a pseudonym rather than your real name.

At this point, I will ask for your consent. Please answer yes if you verbally consent to this test.

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Do you consent to taking part in this study?

Do you have any questions before we get started?

C. Warm Up Questions

I'm going to ask you a few questions before we proceed to the task portion of our session.

1. How often do you attend conferences?
2. What are your primary reasons for attending a conference?
3. Have you ever attended a virtual conference?
 - a. If yes, can you tell me more about that experience?
 - i. What were your primary goals for attending?
 - ii. What activities/events did you find engaging and beneficial to your goals?
 - iii. Can you tell me how you would improve the experience you had at your most recent conference?
 - b. If no, can you tell me about your most recent experience attending a conference?
 - i. What were your primary goals for attending?
 - ii. What activities/events did you find engaging and beneficial to your goals?
 - iii. Can you tell me how you would improve the experience you had at your most recent conference?

D. Tasks

Thank you for answering my questions. Now what is in front of you is a prototype of a virtual conference platform - I'm going to ask you to complete a few tasks that relate to navigating through and using the platform. I will read you the questions, and then ask you to show me how you would perform the task. As you conduct each task, I will ask you to describe what you see and do aloud. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. If you need help along the way, please let me know and I will be happy to assist.

Scenario A: Scheduling, Presentations, and Networking

It is just before 9:00 am on the first day of the From Day One conference, and you just logged into the virtual conference platform on your computer.

	Task	Screen	Objective	Success	Notes
1	Your college told you the Opening Up Your Network presentation sounded interesting. How	Home Schedule Opening Your Network	To understand how a user would browse to find a presentation. To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific presentation.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	

	would you find that?	Event			
2	Even though you are registered for an event at the same time as this event, you think this event is interesting. How would you register for Opening Up Your Network?	Home Schedule Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users know how to register for an event at the same time as one they are already registered for. To identify any obstacles around potentially switching registered events.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
3	You are now registered for the new presentation. Where would you go to see your full agenda for the conference?	Agenda	To understand how a user would browse to find their agenda of all the sessions they have registered for. To determine if users understand the concept of an agenda.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
4	The Opening Up Your Network has now started, how would you join?	Agenda Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users are able to join a session that is in-progress.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
5	How would you find people you are connected to who are also watching this presentation?	Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users can identify where to find existing connections during a presentation.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	

6	The speaker is dividing you into groups for a breakout session, how would you join your group?	Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users can identify where to join a breakout session within the presentation screen.	Fully Successful Partially Successful Needed Help Unsuccessful	
---	--	----------------------------	--	---	--

Post-Scenario Questions

- What did you like about the presentation page?
 - What would you improve about the presentation page?
-

Scenario B: Social Hour

The conference is now over for the day, and you are interested in discussing the conference and networking with other attendees.

	Task	Screen	Objective	S / F	Notes
1	It is the end of the day and you want to go to a post-conference social event. Where would you find that?	Home Social Hour	To determine if the user is able to locate the Social Hour section. To determine if users understand the concept of the Social Hour.		
2	You are interested in working for a startup. How would you join a group talking about this topic?	Home Social Hour Startups	To determine if the user can identify a group in the social area based off of their needs. To determine which details users are looking for when making the decision to join a group.		

3	You are in the gr	Startups	To determine which option users would take to involve themselves in a conversation (video chat, written chat, ice breaker button).		
4	You heard interesting comments from Benjamin Howe. How would you connect with him?	Startups	To determine how users use a Social Hour event to connect with other conference attendees.		

Post-Scenario Questions

- What did you think of the ice breaker option?
- What did you think about the label “Social Hour”?
- What did you like about the Social Hour experience?
- What would you improve about the Social Hour experience?

E. Wrap-Up Activity

Thank you for taking part in our research. I just want to ask you a few questions about the platform you just used before we end this session.

- What is your impression of the virtual conference platform after using it?
- What feature(s) of the platform would you say you found to be the most useful? Least useful?
- Is there anything else that you observed during the completion of the tasks that you would like to discuss?

System Usability Scale

I will now ask you a few questions, for you to rate from “Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree”

Questions (5 positive, 5 negative)	Scores				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt confident navigating through the virtual conference platform.	1	2	3	4	5
I felt like I needed to learn a lot before I could start using the platform.	1	2	3	4	5
I think most people would learn to use the platform quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
The platform was cumbersome to use.	1	2	3	4	5
The various features of the platform were integrated and consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
The platform features were inconsistent.	1	2	3	4	5
I think that the platform was easy to use.	1	2	3	4	5
I would need help from a more knowledgeable person to use the platform	1	2	3	4	5
I think that I would like to use the platform to attend virtual conferences more frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
The platform was unnecessarily complex.	1	2	3	4	5

9.16 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 Test Results

Scenario A: Scheduling, Presentations, and Networking

It is just before 9:00 am on the first day of the From Day One conference, and you just logged into the virtual conference platform on your computer.

	Task	Screen	Objective	Success	Notes
1	Your college told you the Opening Up Your Network presentation sounded interesting. How would you find that?	Home Schedule Opening Your Network Event	To understand how a user would browse to find a presentation. To determine if users understand how to find more information on a specific presentation.	Fully Successful - 4	All four participants took the expected path. There were no additional comments.
2	Even though you are registered for an event at the same time as this event, you think this event is interesting. How would you register for Opening Up Your Network?	Home Schedule Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users know how to register for an event at the same time as one they are already registered for. To identify any obstacles around potentially switching registered events.	Fully Successful - 4	Phil, James, and Ellie commented on the usefulness of this feature. Phil: "Awesome! That was easy and had a great user experience." James: "I like that there's a notification about registering for multiple events. That's really helpful!" Ellie: "I think it's kind of nice. It's hard to remember my schedule. Every time I attend a conference, it's...the whole day is full and they don't give you a lot of time between events to choose your next location. When I first attended, when I never did it before, I always had to figure out where to go next and I would frantically be finding what to choose and be late. Now the day before, I plan my whole day out." Ellie: "Would be nice to see my backlog." Susan (re: conflicting times): "Would this happen with all events? Even ones that don't have a max capacity? ...Yeah, I wouldn't want to

					commit to a single session at a single time frame in case I wasn't enjoying it. I would want to leave and go to another."
3	You are now registered for the new presentation. Where would you go to see your full agenda for the conference?	Agenda	<p>To understand how a user would browse to find their agenda of all the sessions they have registered for.</p> <p>To determine if users understand the concept of an agenda.</p>	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Phil: "All events is probably all events in the conference and my agenda would be the events that I'm registered to."</p> <p>Ellie: "This is all events, so I am going to click on my agenda. It shows me what I would register for, which is what I would expect. This is good!"</p> <p>Ellie: "I might even assume the little profile thing would show me more information like this on myself."</p> <p>Susan: "I really like this feature. I'd love to set text message reminders to my phone since I might be more likely to step away from my computer during the conference and forget when things are starting."</p>
4	The Opening Up Your Network has now started, how would you join?	Agenda Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users are able to join a session that is in-progress.	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Phil: "Oh I was actually on my agenda so I should be able to check-in now."</p> <p>Ellie: "Check in now. I like that it has a little ribbon that says "in session". That's cool."</p> <p>Susan: "I think it's weird that the only place where recommended presentations display are on the homepage. I would want to see that information somewhere else too."</p>

5	How would you find people you are connected to who are also watching this presentation?	Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users can identify where to find existing connections during a presentation.	Fully Successful -3 Partially Successful -1	<p>Phil, James, and Susan were successful with this task.</p> <p>Phil: "That was easy, these are my connections. Looks very clear to me."</p> <p>Ellie was partially successful. She went to the chat first, but found the connections quickly after.</p> <p>Ellie: "Normally when I am in these, on the left is everyone who is in the room with you and the chat is usually lower or you can expand it."</p> <p>Ellie: "So this is the people I am connected to neat. All is everyone. Recommendations is people they think I should meet. That's neat."</p> <p>Ellie: "Oh so this is a much bigger group, so it might be good to keep that separate. Showing them all might be overkill"</p>
6	The speaker is dividing you into groups for a breakout session, how would you join your group?	Opening Your Network Event	To understand if users can identify where to join a breakout session within the presentation screen.	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Ellie: "This is neat. I would click join now"</p> <p>Susan had a lot of questions regarding this feature. She was concerned that she wouldn't be able to switch breakout groups if she wasn't "vibing" with the other members.</p>

Post-Scenario Questions

- What did you like about the presentation page?
 - **Phil:** "It seems clearly organized. For the tasks that you wanted me to do things are easily laid out and easy to find."
 - **James:** Everything was really easy to find. I didn't feel like I had to search hard for anything or to figure out how to do something. The layout looked nice too; I liked that.
 - **Ellie:** I like [the resources]. I don't know what they mean, but I assume that's where you get the slides. They tell you that's where you can get them. They always tell you you get them later, but by the time I get them I don't give a shit."

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- **Ellie:** "I would think if you made these operable, if I hover over them it would tell me what it is."
- **Susan:** "The process of getting there was very easy."
- What would you improve about the presentation page?
 - **Phil:** "I can't think of anything that I'd change. But where are my audio connections, like microphones or speakers to adjust the volume or mute myself?"
The participant did not see the messaging on the bottom and said "Can I send a message to anyone in the group? In addition to the group chat, maybe you want to message someone directly."
 - **James:** "I think this is really good as it is and I can't think of anything that would improve it."
 - **Ellie:** "I think it's nice. The fact that I can expand things and just watch it is neat."
 - **Susan:** "I feel like the agenda should be on the homepage. Most of (the homepage) just looks like filler information. I could see myself coming back to the agenda multiple times during a conference instead of the homepage."

Scenario B: Social Hour

The conference is now over for the day, and you are interested in discussing the conference and networking with other attendees.

	Task	Screen	Objective	S / F	Notes
1	It is the end of the day and you want to go to a post-conference social event. Where would you find that?	Home Social Hour	To determine if the user is able to locate the Social Hour section. To determine if users understand the concept of the Social Hour.	Fully Successful - 4	Phil did not have any issues with this task. "I would go to Social Hour and look for a recommended event to go to." James: "Oh this is great! These after conference events are really important for meeting other people. I like this" Ellie: "That is a huge part of networking - mixers - or these events. To make it virtual I am immediately polarized." Ellie: "We've all learned in this new world that we're in that more than 20 people in a

					<p>meeting is too much to be social with. So would they somehow cut this off? How do you make it that 100 people are not trying to talk to someone at the same time?"</p> <p>Susan: "Personally, I don't think I would want to attend a virtual happy hour."</p>
2	You are interested in working for a startup. How would you join a group talking about this topic?	<p>Home</p> <p>Social Hour</p> <p>Startups</p>	<p>To determine if the user can identify a group in the social area based off of their needs.</p> <p>To determine which details users are looking for when making the decision to join a group.</p>	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Phil: " I guess I could find that in the social hour but it doesn't have to be, it could be maybe under groups... But I could browse by something that looks [like a] startup in the categories, or I could go to this start-up mixer. Otherwise I would search for a start-up event."</p> <p>James expressed slight reservations around the sizing of the chat group, saying that sometimes when the group gets too big you just end up with people who kind of "lurk" but don't contribute to the conversation.</p> <p>James: "It's easier for me to talk to people in smaller groups at in-person conferences. I don't get too overwhelmed that way"</p> <p>Ellie: "Maybe you should put a max. Only so many people are allowed to attend social meetings at a time. Let's say if too many people are interested in Freelance Social, create another one until that then fills up."</p> <p>Ellie: "You can't have more than too many people in social hour before it gets to be too much. So, maybe there</p>

					should be buckets. Overfills. And oh well if you don't get to be in the same bucket as your best friend and they get put in another. The whole point is to get to know other people anyway."
3	You are in the group video chat, but you are having difficulty joining in the conversation. How would you get involved in the conversation?	Startups	To determine which option users would take to involve themselves in a conversation (video chat, written chat, ice breaker button).	Fully Successful - 4	<p>Phil, James, and Ellie expressed uncertainty around how the icebreaker feature would work. Phil and James thought it was part of the chat. Ellie and Susan discussed it in broader terms, focusing on chat and video.</p> <p>Phil thought it was part of the chat: "I could fill out the icebreaker that just sort of announces my presence and if that doesn't work I could type a message."</p> <p>James: "I'm used to just sending a message in the chat window, but if the chat is real clogged up sometimes it's hard to get noticed so you just have to jump right into the conversation"</p> <p>Ellie discussed it in terms of chat or video: "It would be interesting to see how that works. Would it bring you to the forefront to get people to shut up. Is it like a raise your hand? It seems like someone would have to be facilitating this. You might need to raise your hand option if Tracy Bishop is saying something, but Lee wont shut up. That's why you can't have too many people in this, or it would be obnoxious. It would be interested to see how it plays</p>

					<p>out. It would almost be like - here;'s the rules or how best to attend a social networking happy hour. Like follow these tips and tricks on how to get the most out of this zoom meeting."</p> <p>Susan noted different features that she could use (i.e. icebreaker, simply talking using her video, or entering something in the chat), but she said she could see herself simply listening to the conversation.</p>
4	You heard interesting comments from Benjamin Howe. How would you connect with him?	Startups	To determine how users use a Social Hour event to connect with other conference attendees.	<p>Partially Successful - 2</p> <p>Unsuccessful - 2</p>	<p>All four participants made comments on the importance and preference of sending a direct message, rather than just connecting to someone on a superficial level.</p> <p>Phil and James were unsuccessful in this task. Both participants wanted to send a direct message first.</p> <p>Ellie and Susan were partially successful. Ellie clicked on Message first, but then found the Connect option. However, she also expressed hesitation around connecting without any context, preferring to send a message first. Susan echoed a similar sentiment, preferring to focus on sending a direct message.</p> <p>Ellie: "These almost seemed synonyms. The add button makes sense in hindsight. I didn't know I had the capabilities, but that makes sense now. Maybe the little chat box - you don't want to connect but want to ask a</p>

question or say hi. You might want an intro before you connect, or maybe you don't want to connect."

Ellie: "I don't want to accept 50 sales people connecting to me." - so our prototype just says you're not connected without sending a request.

Susan: "I don't want more connections, just to have a lot of connections. I want true conversation and meaningful relationships with people. That's why I would want to send a message first."

Post-Scenario Questions

- What did you think of the ice breaker option?
 - **Phil:** "I think that's good, but where can I see everybody else's icebreaker stuff? Would this be in the messages? I guess I don't know where this goes. I don't know how the ice breaker works...I need to see everyone's icebreaker answers. I guess it would pop up here [in the chat] so people could respond to it."
 - **James:** "I think it's ok. I don't think it's something that I would use though. I'm assuming that using the ice breaker to jump into the flow of a conversation might actually interrupt it and I wouldn't want to do that. I think it's an interesting idea though."
 - **Ellie:** "Idk. It is not operable, so I would like to see a bit more about how it works. What happens when you click on it. I am hesitant to use it. I wouldn't want to interrupt everyone."
 - **Susan:** "I think it's a good option for some people to have. Other people hate ice breakers though."
- What did you think about the label "Social Hour"?
 - **Phil:** Thought it worked well.
 - **James:** "I think this worked well. It was clear and, for me, easy to understand."
 - **Ellie:** "I think it's ideal. It's a huge reason why I go in the first place."
 - **Susan:** "I liked it. Pretty clear to me what's going on there."
- What did you like about the Social Hour experience?
 - **Phil:** "It was easy to find and I think this is really useful."

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- **James:** "I thought this area was great, and really necessary if you're attempting to encompass the entire conference experience. This would be something that I would look for if I were going to a virtual conference."
 - **Ellie:** "Good. I just am really wondering how it would work and how do you keep it at small groups. Or how do you leave? Can I go to another table? Can I hang out at this table for 5 minutes, then join this other group over here. My biggest concern is how do you make it overwhelming, but still make it fun and interesting. I do feel you need to cap it. That might be polarizing though, if someone can't get in. Who is running this would have to think though that part."
 - **Susan:** "The concept is good. Without it, this could all feel like watching a bunch of hour long videos with no one to talk to them about."
 - What would you improve about the Social Hour experience?
 - **Phil:** N/A
 - **James:** "I like this, and I can't really come up with anything that might improve it."
 - **Ellie:** "Everything I said. How do you make it so I can pop in and pop out. I don't want to talk to these people. Maybe I don't want to talk to Tracy, or I don't like Carla and I don't want to be there. There are people that I know that I don't want to go to their table."
 - **Susan:** "As I said before, I go to conferences to make connections, but I don't want to make virtual connections with people just to do so. My hope is that these sessions would be where I would know whether I have a connection with someone."
-

E. Wrap-Up Activity

Thank you for taking part in our research. I just want to ask you a few questions about the platform you just used before we end this session.

- What is your impression of the virtual conference platform after using it?
 - **Phil:** "I thought the tasks were easy and the design made sense."
 - **James:** "This is a really cool idea. I liked the layout of things; everything felt like it was right there and not buried somewhere where I can't find it."
 - **Ellie:** "I think it's a really interesting idea and concept. I think as long as you can overcome the social aspect and really...you really got to nail that. I go to a conference to see people, be seen, and have a good time. How do you make that happen? How do you engage people? Otherwise I am attending this and working at the same time."

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- **Ellie:** "I think having the option to track down individuals and set up coffee in a coffee room or something like that. A lot of bankers are like "let's meet in this time frame" so there are people who are going to want to get facetime with you, so the ability to have a one on one meeting."
- **Susan:** "I liked it. I think there's a lot of good things here!"
- What feature(s) of the platform would you say you found to be the most useful? Least useful?
 - **Phil:** "There were a lot of buttons and widgets that I didn't interact with that I'm not sure if they are useful. They may be useful but I can't speak to them. There is a lot of information in the application that we didn't address in the test so it just raises the question, do you need them? Why are they here?"
 - **James:** "Well I like the social hour area; that's something important for me. And there were some things that caught my attention, but I wasn't asked about it or it didn't come up as I was completing a task. I don't know if it was just extraneous stuff because I didn't use it or if there was a purpose for it and it just didn't get tested."
 - **Ellie:**
 - "Most - Schedule and being able to see my agenda. The agenda is key to making it easy to navigate a conference."
 - "Least - I don't think I know what activity or forum means. [after explaining the forum] - you definitely need something like that, that's helpful. Activity is different, but it makes sense you would want something like that in a virtual conference to see what people are up to, but I want the option to not be tracked. I would not really want people to tell me if I am in a certain thing."
 - **Susan:** "I liked the agenda. That's where I would go multiple times throughout the conference. Least useful might be this chat thing at the bottom of the page. I'm not sure I need any more distractions than I already have -- especially at something virtual."
- Is there anything else that you observed during the completion of the tasks that you would like to discuss?
 - **Phil:** N/A
 - **James:** "Not really. Overall I feel that this is really neat and a good idea."
 - **Ellie:** "I have said my concerns on the social thing, otherwise I think it's pretty neat."
 - **Susan:** N/A

9.17 Mid-Fi Prototype 2 SUS Results

System usability scale					
Q #	Participant # SUS Question	P1	P2	P3	P4
1	I felt confident navigating through the virtual conference platform	3	3	4	4
2	I felt like I needed to learn a lot before I could start using the platform	4	4	3	3
3	I think most people would learn to use the platform quickly.	3	4	4	4
4	The platform was cumbersome to use	4	4	4	3
5	The various features of the platform were integrated and consistent	2	3	4	4
6	The platform features were inconsistent	4	4	4	3
7	I think the platform was easy to use	3	4	4	4
8	I would need help from a more knowledgeable person to use the platform	4	4	4	3
9	I think that I would like to use the platform to attend virtual conferences more frequently	2	2	3	4
10	The platform was unnecessarily complex	4	4	3	1

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	Individual SUS	82.5	90	92.5	82.5
	Total (Average) SUS	86.87			