getOUT
doSOMETHING

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CSE 440 | Interactive Prototype Report

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CurrentQtr/projects/getout/getOUT_Interactive_Prototype.pdf

Problem and Solution Overview

Finding something to do on the spur of the moment can currently be a frustrating process. When an individual is not already aware of what event options are available in the near future it can be difficult to discover a nearby event that is relevant to the individual's interests. Furthermore, if the individual wishes to coordinate with friends to plan something to do, discovering the current availability and plans of multiple friends usually involves contacting friends one by one and can be slow and cumbersome. getOUT is a mobile smart phone application that seeks to address these problems by providing on-demand relevant event suggestions as well as an easy way to check the availability and plans of friends. Using getOUT, and individual should be able to quickly and easily access the information needed to get out and do something.

Tasks

To represent the common uses of getOUT, three representative tasks were created, with hypothetical contexts of use. They are listed below in order of relative difficulty.

Easy Task: Find an event. You are with a group of friends, and you're trying to find something to do. Find a free event, and save it so you can refer to it later if desired.

Medium Task: Publish an event. You are at the HUB setting up for a showing of Se7en tonight from 8:30 to 11:30. You want to publish this event to getOUT so users of this application will be aware of it.

Hard Task: Coordinate with friends. You just got up Saturday morning, and your day is free. You want to set your status on getOUT to indicate that you are looking for something to do. You then want to see what your friends are up to. If none of your friends are currently planning on doing anything, find an event going on today, and share that event by setting it as your status and posting it on your Facebook wall.

Interface Revision Sketches

Based on feedback from our low fidelity prototype, some changes were made to the interface flow. Previously, our home page was designed to show at a glance the top results from various aspects of the application with links to the find events page, the friends page, and a pull-up menu at the bottom, as shown at right.
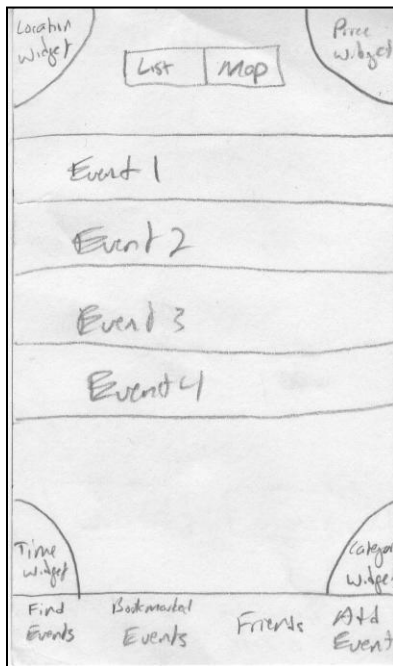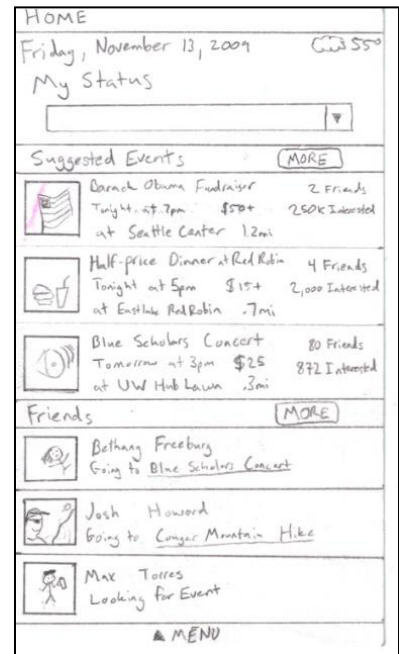
Some users found this screen too crowded, with too much information displayed. In addition, the navigation options were not immediately obvious to some users. To simplify the design and create a more consistent flow between aspects of the application, the home page was discarded, the find events became the new default page, and the pop-up menu was replaced with a persistent tabular menu as found in most iPhone applications. This modified design is shown at left.

The "My Status" field, originally located on the homepage, was moved to the Friends page (see Figure 5). This seemed a logical location, as the only reason to set your status is so your friends can see it. In addition, the function of the "Add to My Events" feature as well as its relationship to the "Share" feature available on the event details page was unclear to some users. To alleviate this, the wording was changed to "Bookmark", a familiar concept to most users, and the layout was modified slightly. The old event details page layout is shown below at left, with the new event details layout shown at right.
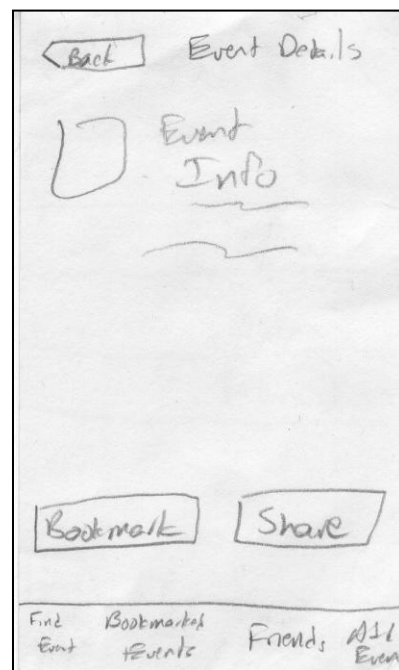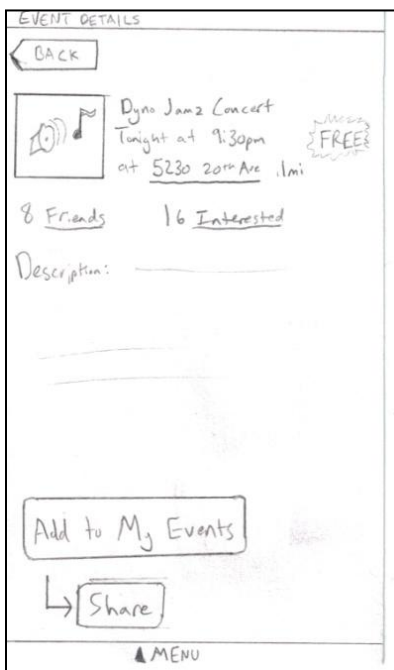
Prototype Overview

Overview of Implementation:

Our interactive prototype is available online from the getOUT webpage. It is built using Flash, and provides for interaction along the fixed paths required to complete the three primary task scenarios. Straying from the paths is possible for exploring the interface screens, but only the fixed paths have been tested and are guaranteed to flow correctly.

Scenario Storyboards:

Easy task: Upon opening the getOUT application, the Find Events screen is displayed. Currently, all the suggested events for this user cost some money, and the user is looking for a free event.
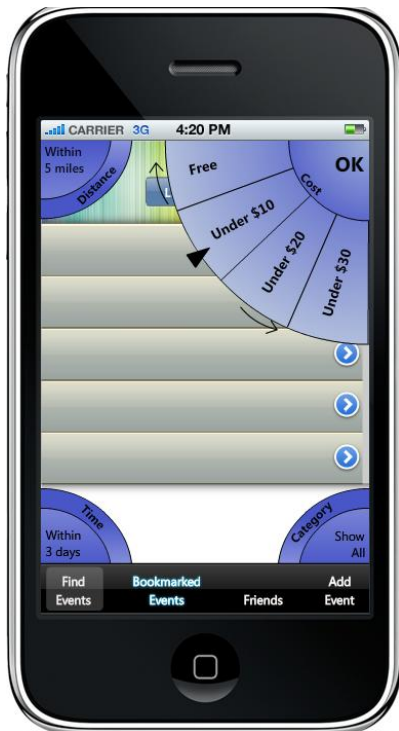
To impose this restriction, the user clicks on the price filter located in the top right corner. By spinning the wheel, the user can set a new maximum price of "Free."

When the user exits the filter by pressing OK, the filter is immediately applied and a refreshed list of events is displayed.

The user can select a desired event, transferring them to the Event Details page. Here further information is displayed, and the user can click "Bookmark" in order to save this event for future reference.

Medium task: After opening the getOUT application, the user clicks on the "Add Event" menu option in the lower right. This takes the user to the Add Event page, where the user can input all the event information. After the information has been entered, the user clicks "Add Event" and the event is added to the getOUT database.

Hard task: After opening getOUT, the user wants to see the status of their friends. By selecting "Friends" in the bottom menu, the Friends page is displayed, and the current status of each friend can be viewed.

To then find an event, the user clicks on "Find Event" from the lower menu, and selects an event.

This takes them to the Event Details page, where they can choose to "Share" the event.

Doing so will present them with options of sharing, including setting it as their status and posting the event to their Facebook wall.
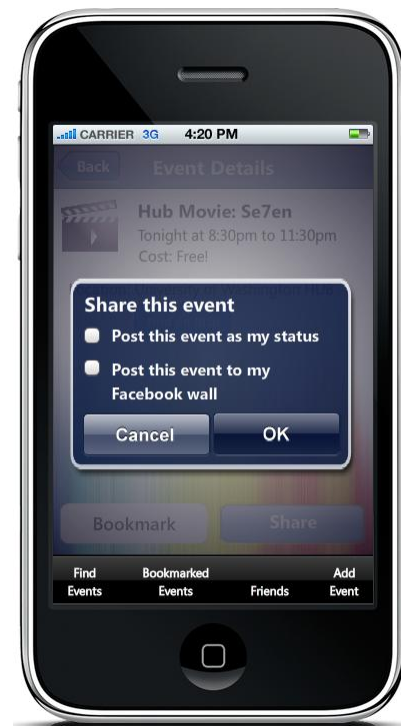
Tools Used:

We used Adobe Flash for our interactive prototype.   Flash gave us the flexibility to create smooth effects and simple interaction with the user.   This flexibility was important to us because we had designed special widgets for our program that required some advanced design. With these easy to use design tools we were able to create the Widgets exactly as we had discussed.   Flash's intuitive timeline control helped us achieve our interactivity by simply stopping the movie where we wanted input, and resuming it when the user gave the correct response.   Flash also was the most compatible program with Photoshop, which are both made by Adobe. This was important to us because we had downloaded a Photoshop file of iPhone OS elements to make our prototype look as real as possible.

The downside to using Flash was that it is a complicated program, and while we progressed consistently, it was very slow progress. Using Flash made us appreciate the simplicity of paper prototypes and their value for evolving designs. If we needed to change something drastic now in Flash, that could mean hours of work.

Unincluded Features:

As this interactive prototype is designed to be in general a fixed path prototype for the specific scenarios above, much of the functionality is unimplemented. For example, no select widgets other than cost are usable, though the cost widget should provide a good example of how the other widgets would function. In addition, other areas that are not in the path of the above tasks are unimplemented, such as adding or removing friends and setting up getOUT initially with your facebook login credentials. Sharing was also simplified in creating the interactive prototype to just setting the event as your status and posting to your Facebook wall. With additional time, the interactive prototype could be extended to include all of the above features.

Wizard of Oz Techniques:

Our primary Wizard of Oz technique is a magic database of events and an algorithm for displaying events that the user will find relevant. We tried to signify that this component of the interactive prototype is "Wizard of Oz" at the moment by displaying generic events (Event 1, Event 2, etc). Some possible real solutions to these aspects include information extraction and machine learning techniques for pulling data from the Internet, mechanical turk for manual entry, and various algorithms that are already in widespread use to customize content for an individual users habits.

Prototype Screenshots

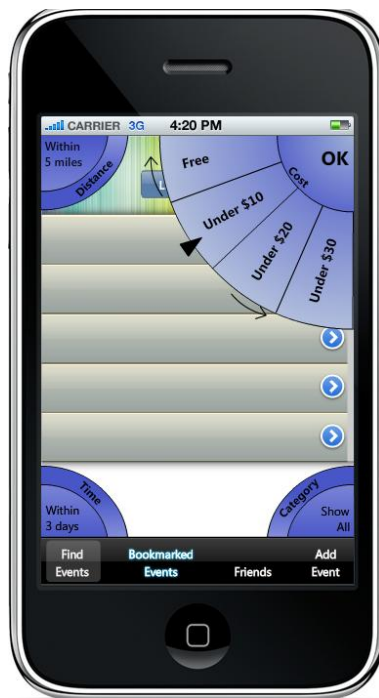Figure 1 – Find Events

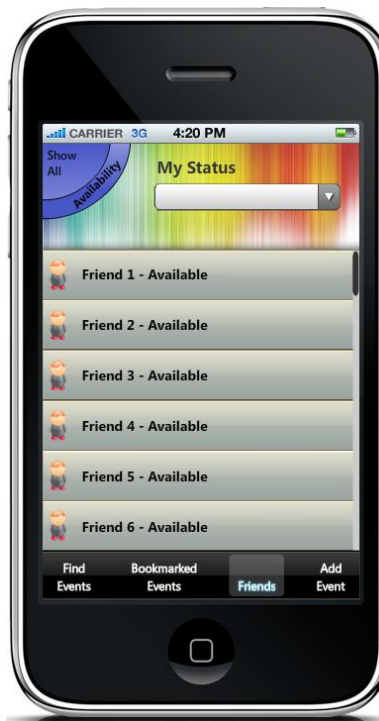Figure 2 – Widget in Action

Figure 3 – Event Details

Figure 4 – Share Event

Figure 5 – Friends

Figure 6 – Add Event