

Career Coach

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[<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/4-signs-hire-career-coach-0129>]

Problem and Solution Overview

Attending career fairs and networking events is an important part of career development for undergraduates and young professionals. However, from our own experience and research, we have learned that these events cause particular stress for introverts, or individuals who gain energy from being alone instead of with others. Our research indicates that introverted individuals consider networking events to be high-stimulus and think they are not able to show their best selves in the short interaction at a career fair booth. Because these interactions can ultimately play a large role in whether or not an individual receives a job, it is important that these interactions go well. In order to help introverts make the most out of their career fair experience, we focused on two main problems: how to manage their emotions during a networking event and how to follow up on connections. We propose the Career Coach, which is an AI interface using an earbud, a ring, and an app. The earbud can sense the emotions of the customer by analyzing vocal intonation and can take vocal commands¹. It can also use summarization techniques of recruiter interactions in order to provide the participant with information needed for follow up. The ring works to scan business cards and important contact information.² The ring also allows the individual to receive a response from the earbud by twisting it. The earbud can communicate with the ring to light up and vibrate to indicate it has a possible response. By using scanning and machine learning to match conversations to business cards, the person can later look at this information in the app. If any contact information does not match correctly, the person can manually match them. When looking in the app, the person can see synthesized conversations, contact info and more to help with follow up.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t75uUoY4zdl>

² <https://www.salesforce.com/products/einstein/ai-research/tl-dr-reinforced-model-abstractive-summarization/>

Design Research Goals

For our design research, we interviewed UW students around campus who both go to career fairs and identify as introverts. In order to measure the introversion level of these students, we asked them to describe what introversion means to them and how they identify with these traits. We found participants through friends, attendees of the SWE Career Fair and Evening with Industry, and a Facebook post. We chose these participants because we wanted to hit a population of students who already understood what it was like to network at a career fair as an introvert. We specifically aimed at undergraduate and graduate students because our product is aimed at people with minimal industry experience. Moreover, we chose to interview our participants because we thought directly observing our participants or using contextual inquiry would introduce an observer effect, significantly altering the interaction between recruiter and networker. Likewise, by observing our participants, we could negatively affect an important interaction a participant is having with a recruiter. Additionally, the interview process alleviated the scheduling barrier that comes with scheduling multiple people for a focus group, which proved infeasible in our time frame. Our stakeholders are the students using this to network and our secondary stakeholders are the recruiters at the career fair.

Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders for our project are people with minimal industry experience attempting to network at career fairs or other social events. Secondary stakeholders are recruiters and individuals representing their companies at the career fair.

Research Participants

Elderberry: An undergraduate student who wants to major in Electrical Engineering. While standing in line she takes time to research additional information about the company. She suffers from an inferiority complex when comparing herself to other students at the career fair and prefers the in-person interaction to online resources.

Honeydew: An undergraduate in Informatics at UW who will be graduating next year. She finds career fairs to be busy and overwhelming, preferring more low-key social environments to network where she feels more capable of making a meaningful connection. Her conversations at career fairs feel forced and she doesn't know how to convert her interaction with a recruiter into a connection. Preparation for Honeydew involves googling the companies, looking at their website, and listening to podcasts relevant to her desired role.

Cantaloupe: An undergraduate student at UW who went to the SWE Career fair to get a job and an internship. Her main focus in career fairs is on adding recruiters on LinkedIn and following up via email info gained at the fair.

Indigo: A graduate student at the iSchool at UW. She expressed a good deal of nervousness at the career fair, despite spending time researching companies prior. Forming a meaningful relationship with a recruiter appeared to be rather difficult for her as she feels she gets a lot of one-sided conversations.

Strawberry: A HCDE junior. She believes that career fair interactions tend to be superficial and has had more success at organized social events where she can get time to have a conversation rather than a sales pitch about herself. At career fairs, she feels the need to masquerade as an extrovert, which is uncomfortable and exhausting. On top of that, the crowdedness of career fairs is overwhelming for her.

Jackfruit: A freshman interested in majoring in computer science. She attended both the career fair and the evening with industry, and preferred the low-key nature of the evening with industry. She felt unprepared for this year's career fair and didn't know how to properly follow up on her conversations.

Apple: A junior who is studying HCDE at UW. She attended the SWE career fair. Her plan to take summer classes created a less stressful career fair experience due to not needing an immediate job. She focuses on researching a limited number of companies to have in depth conversations with the recruiters in order to stand out. She relies on following up on contact information gained at the fair, but struggles to show authenticity over email.

Mint: He is attempting to get his Masters of Science in Information Management through the iSchool at UW. At career fairs Mint goes straight for the contact information and primarily relies on follow up messages to establish a conversation. However, even though he feels like he can start an interesting conversation with a connection, building relationships from that one-off encounter is perhaps his most challenging hurdle. He thinks that career fairs are unhelpful and not worth the stress because the conversations are just inauthentic attempts at selling yourself.

Design Research Results and Themes

Our interviews helped us in gaining a good understanding of introverts' experiences and their thought process during a career fair. It also helped us in understanding what kind of tasks might be helpful to them. We began by interviewing individuals right after the career fair which proved to be ineffective because these people wanted to do very short interviews. This shifted us to longer interviews a little further away in time from the career fair and asking more questions to clarify why these individuals identified as introverts.

After interviewing our research participants, one theme that clearly stood out was managing emotions and anxiety. Career fairs can be a stressful event for many introverts, leading to anxiety and even impostor syndrome. Moreover, career fairs can be highly competitive, which can create a feelings of overwhelm and anxiety. Several participants complained about not being good enough and lacking relevant work experience compared to other students at the career fair.

The second theme that stood out was getting contact information to follow up with the recruiters. Most of our research participants felt the need of getting the contact information of the recruiter so that they could follow up with them after applying for a job or internship position and get feedback on their profile. However, many of them struggled on how to best follow up with the information they gained to form long-term connections.

Another theme that we observed was how to impress a recruiter. Students at the career fair know how important a career fair can be to land a job or an internship. They want to do research on the company and ask relevant questions. A question that follows from this is what makes a conversation with a recruiter good and what information leads to good conversations with recruiters. The participants whom we interviewed were concerned with the fact that many other qualified students are attending the same career fairs. They were interested in knowing what they could do to stand out in the crowd and make a lasting impression on the recruiter. This was particularly important to introverts because they often felt like they had to behave in an extroverted manner in order to make this good impression.

Task Analysis Questions

Who is going to use the design?

Introverted undergraduate students and young professionals will use our design. Based on our data, these groups are specifically looking for employment but may experience anxiety and overwhelm during a career fair environment. This design may also work for extroverts but they are not our main focus in this design process. This design is meant to be used in a career fair format, but could also be used in a smaller networking environment. However, based on our research introverted students don't typically attend smaller networking events so we will not be aiming our design at this particular interaction.

What tasks do they now perform?

Based on our current research, our current population of undergraduates and graduate students attend career fairs and do not participate in other forms of networking events. These students speak to recruiters at career fair booths, hand over their resume, and collect various contact information. They also often complete research about the variety of companies and roles before the career fair to inform their conversations. Some students end up following up after these events and forming longer term relationships.

What tasks are desired?

The tasks that are desired are decreasing anxiety at career fairs during stressed out moments, and both gathering and keeping track of various pieces of paper that are gathered at career fairs, including but not limited to business cards and brochures. The other tasks that were desired is follow up after the career fair with recruiters and connections.

How are tasks learned?

These tasks are learned by attending career fairs and other networking events. These skills are also learned via word of mouth from other friends who have attended a career fair in the past. Additionally, people can attend career workshops sponsored by their university.

Where are the tasks performed?

The tasks of dealing with overwhelm happens during the event as well as gathering pieces of contact information. Keeping track of the contact information and completing follow up emails is done after the fact, whenever an attendee has time.

What is the relationship between the person and the data?

The relationship between the person and the data is that the person is either producing or gathering the data. In the case of anxiety, measures about heart rate and voice change can provide information about mood. In the case of recruiter contact information and conversation topics, the individual is gathering them either through conversation or gathering small pieces of paper.

What other tools does the person have?

The tools that a person can use are various applications like handshake, researching companies on the internet, and learning about how to handle career fairs via word of mouth. Also they can consult resources like the career center on campus

How do people try to communicate with each other?

People communicate with each other via email after the event and by talking to recruiters at the event.

How often are these tasks performed?

Besides follow up, these tasks do not occur very often unless there are many career fairs on campus. These events could happen in quick succession during heavy recruiting type events but then may not occur for a long period of time after that.

What are time constraints on the tasks?

For the interactions about anxiety, making a first impression and gathering information, this happens during the career fair or event, which as an event would last maximum a couple of hours. The follow up type emails typically are expected to follow either a few days or a week after the event.

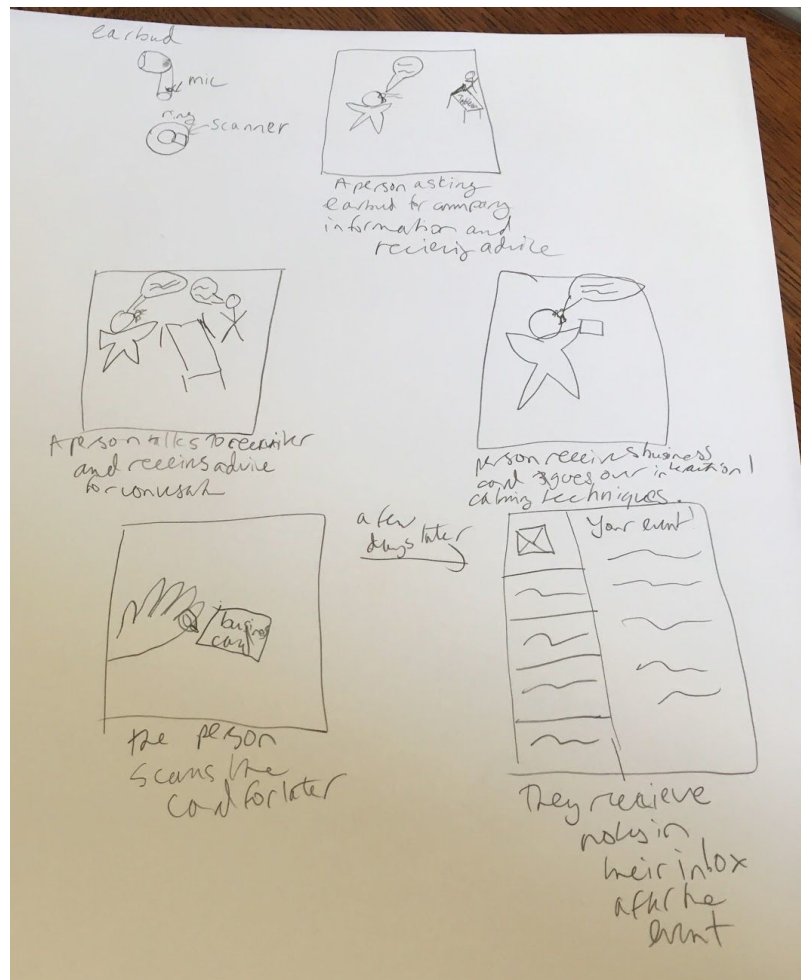
What happens when things go wrong?

When things go wrong, the students have a negative interaction with a recruiter or other contact which can negatively affect their job prospects. Likewise, they can forget to contact individuals from either forgetting or losing contact information, which would again limit opportunities for students who are looking for jobs and employment.

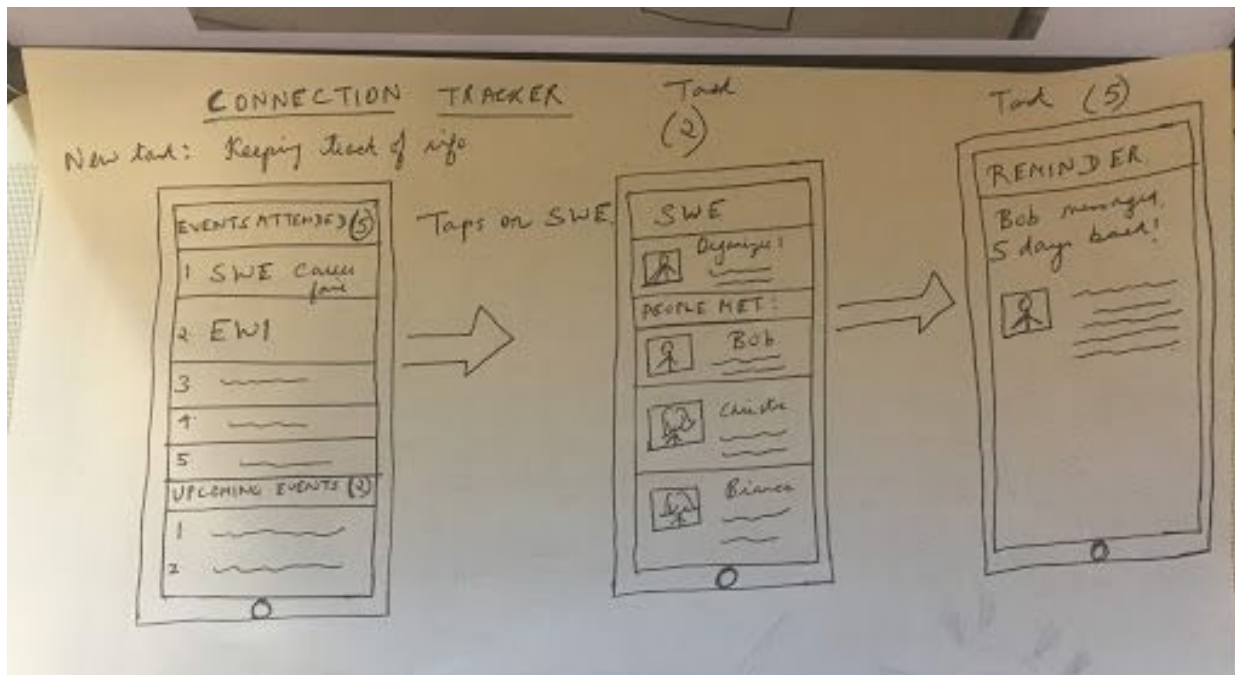
Proposed Design Sketches - "3x4"

Design 1, Career Coach

This design is an earbud a customer wears along with a ring that can be used to scan documents such as business cards. The tasks that this design supports are (1) figuring out how to impress a recruiter, (2) following up after the career fair, (3) helping the individual manage emotions, and (4) keep track of information gained at a career fair. For task (1), the person can ask the earbud facts about the company in question, and the earbud can suggest conversation topics that might lead to a positive interaction. Task (2) is supported by the ability of the ring to scan documents like business cards, which might contain essential information for following up (like the email address), and that the earbud can also gather important parts of the interaction, which can be brought up by the user in the follow-up process, and this also supports task (4) by keeping track of information at the same time. For task (3), the earbud can analyze voice anxiety via analysis of voice intonation. Then the ring can vibrate and flash to indicate to the user that they can get a response from the earbud. Then the user can twist the ring and begin a Q and A interaction with the person to work through stress via advice, quick exercises to reduce stress or answering specific questions.

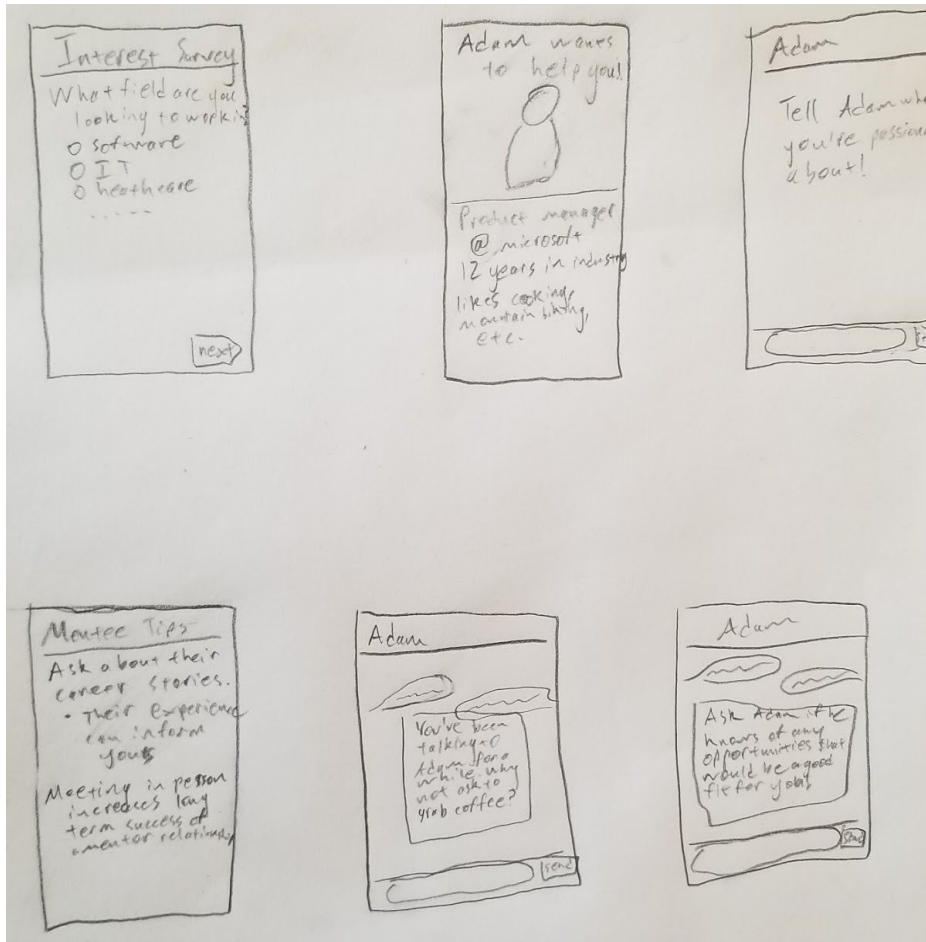


Design 2, Connection Tracker



This design is a connection tracker that keeps track of individuals you wish to connect with professionally at various events. The tasks that this design supports are (1) finding a mentor that is relevant to career goals, (2) following up on contact information, (3) maintaining contact with connections, and (4) keeping track of contact information. For task (1), the app allows the user to keep track of people he/she met, which in turn might help them in finding a mentor. For task (2), the app can remind the user to follow up on people met at which event by giving notifications. For task (3), the reminders in the app and encouraging follow up helps encourage the customer to follow up with their professional connections. Finally, for task (4), by allowing both an interface that can take you from event to connections and connections to events, the customer can remember when they met connections and how to contact them.

Design 3, Mentor Matcher



This design is meant to be an application that helps introverts connect with mentors in industry. The tasks it addresses are (1) finding a mentor, (2) maintaining contact with a mentor, (3) getting access to opportunities through a mentor, and (4) learning from a mentor's career story. It supports task (1) by having both the mentor and the mentee fill out a survey/questionnaire and encouraging a first meeting, this application helps the mentee find a mentor who clicks with them. Then it supports task (2) by offering suggestions about what to talk about with the mentor and encouraging a certain message frequency, this application helps facilitate long term contact. For task (3), by encouraging both the mentor to talk about opportunities and the mentee to ask about opportunities via prompts, this can allow the mentee to connect with later opportunities. Finally, task (4), by encouraging reflections via prompts after the mentor and mentee meet or message, the application encourages the mentee to make the most out of the relationship and relate what they have learned to their own career goals.

Design and Tasks Chosen

We have decided to go with our first design i.e. Career Coach. We found this design compelling because it involves wearable components and combining an application with wearable components, which we thought would be interesting to work with. Likewise, we were excited about including an AI element to help individuals interact with others and get the most out of social interactions. The 2 main tasks that are chosen are helping the user manage emotions and keeping track of information at a career fair. We chose to focus on anxiety because it was a common theme from our participants and we focused on keeping track of information because it fit with our findings and allowed us to show how the ring, earbud, and application work together. Also, by showing the synthesizing of information that the ring does we can show how that information could be important for other tasks like follow up for example.

Written Scenarios - "1x2"

Task 1 - Managing Emotions:

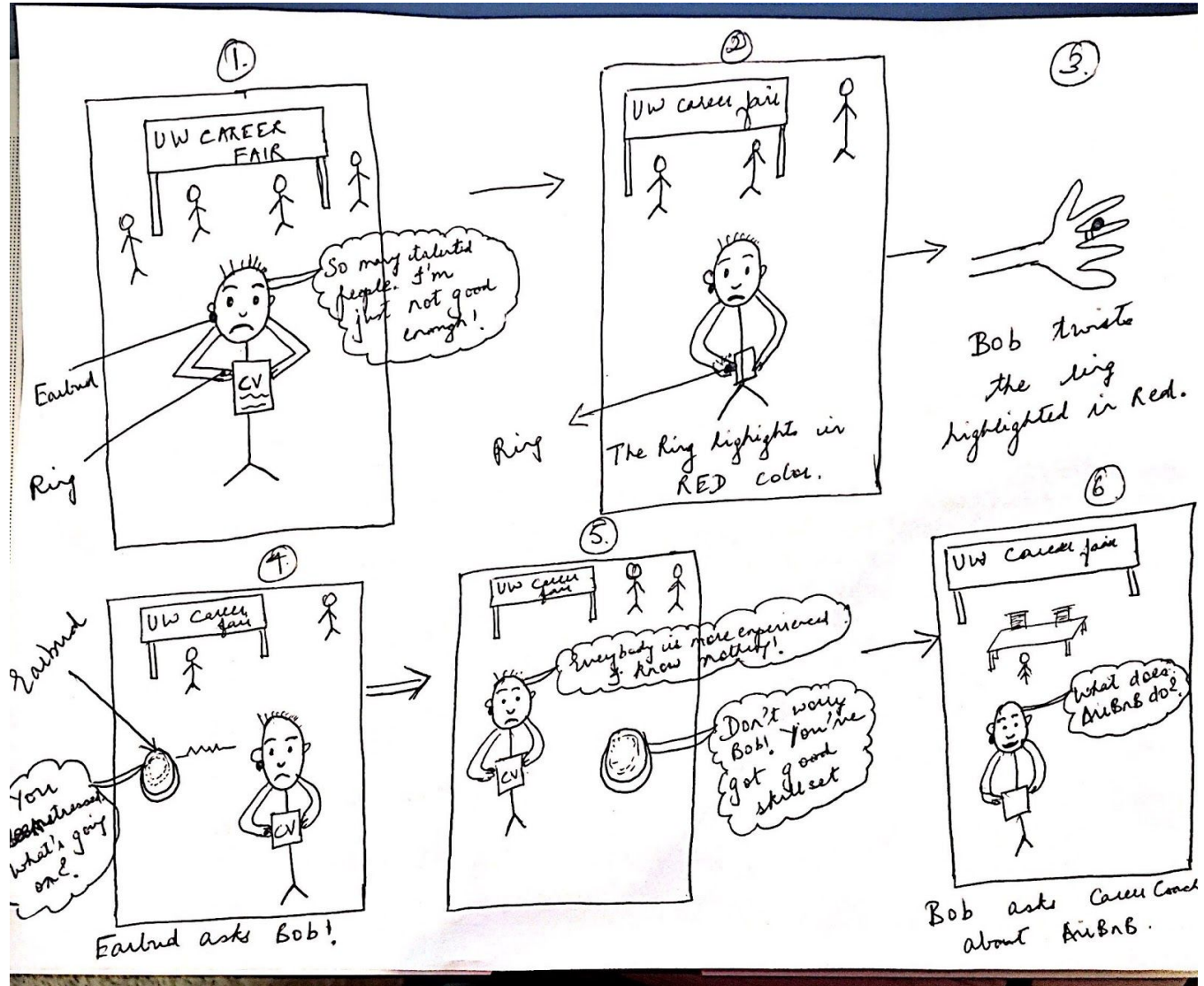
For one of our two tasks we decided to focus on managing emotions. Jackfruit, a new attendee to the career fair begins to feel overwhelmed. Her heart starts beating faster and voice trembles when she talks to other people give her away. In response to this, the ring highlights in red and vibrates to indicate that she can get a response from the ring if she wants. She twists the ring and the earbud mentions she appears to be stressed and asks what is going on. Jackfruit explains in more detail that she is feeling overwhelmed and experiencing impostor syndrome. The earbud offers support and comforting advice that this occurs often to others too and makes her feel more comfortable approaching her next company. She mentions that part of the reason she is stressed is that she knows nothing about the company she is in line for does. Therefore, she asks the ring and it supplies answers about general facts about the company gathered from a Google search for example.

Task 2 - Keeping track of information at the career fair

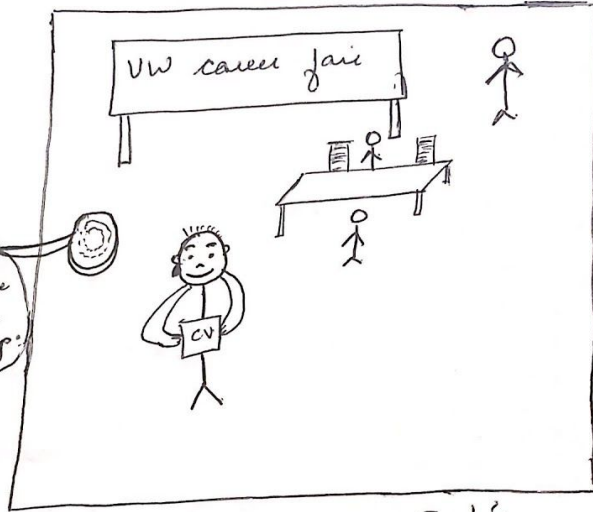
For our second task, we decided to focus on keeping track of information at the career fair. In this frame, Bob speaks to a rep from his favorite company about internships. For the sake of this strip, let's call this company Company X. While he is talking to the recruiter and asking questions, the earbud of career coach is listening to the conversation in order to summarize later. Because the conversation went particularly well, Bob asks for the rep's business card to exit the conversation. He immediately scans in the card using the top of the ring. This scanning keeps the card's image scanned in and extracts out the contact information and name right after the conversation to be saved for later. A few days later, Bob is able to go into the app, click on Company X and receive information that includes a summary of the main points he heard and the contact information he gained. If the information was not matched appropriately he can go to scanned images and match it manually. This allows Bob to look over this information and then use it to formulate responses for later without losing the important pieces of information.

Storyboards

Task 1: Managing Emotions



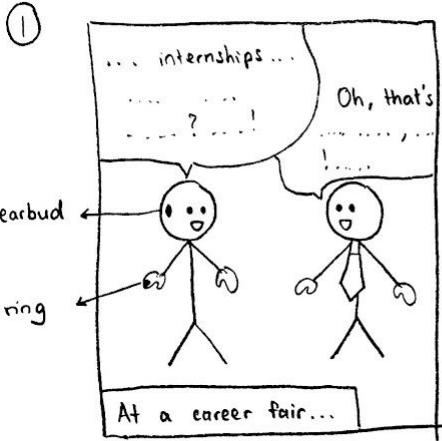
4.



Airbnb is an online marketplace. People use it to arrange lodging & homestay.

'Career Coach' answers Bob's question.
Bob is now confident & happy
to face the recruiter.

Task 2: Keeping track of information at a career fair.



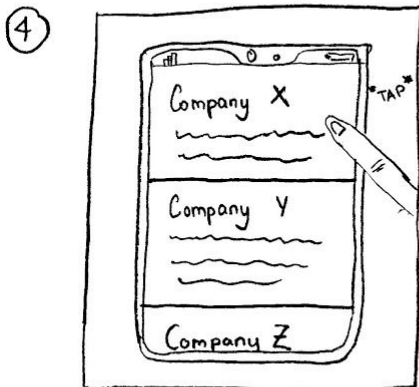
Bob speaks to a rep from his favourite company about internships.



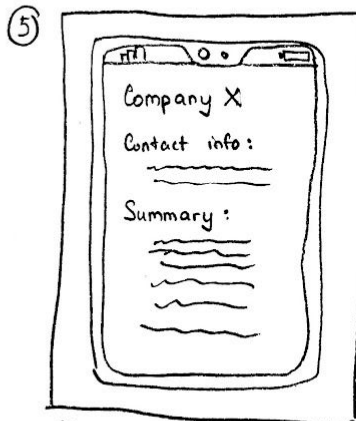
Bob asks for the rep's business card in the end.



Bob scans the business card to enter the information into the system.



A few days later, Bob goes to review his conversation with Company X.



Bob opens up to see the contact info and summarized points from talking to Company X

Contribution Statement

Braydon Hall: 25%, worked on intro paragraph & Design Research Goals, wrote Research Participants, came up with ideas to address feedback from 2f, planned out storyboard for managing emotions, made the cover page, reviewed others work, and formatted the report.

Ridhi Joshi: 25%, worked on intro paragraph, wrote Design Research and themes, Storyboard for task 1: Managing Emotions.

Nicole Riley: 25%, worked on intro paragraph, wrote answers to the task questions, worked on the overall design choice paragraph, wrote description of 1 by 2 designs, wrote rough draft of storyboard 2 and plan for storyboard 2, edited all parts.

Alejandro Akiffary: 25%, worked on Storyboard for task 2: Keeping track of information at a career fair, Proposed Design Sketches.
