

Heuristic Evaluation of [courtesy]

1. Problem/Prototype Description

Courtesy is a mobile application that helps people prepare for approaching court dates by consolidating planning resources for lawyer arrangements, transportation, childcare, and more.

2. Violations Found

1. H1: Visibility of System Status / 4 / Found by: A, B
 - a. Problem Description: It is not clear whether the daily task's box is checked manually by the user or automatically by the system.
 - b. Rationale: When I completed the "Task of The Day" to "take some time to consider "my" transportation options," the box next to the task was not updated by the system. I also didn't see an option to check the box myself. Users may be confused about how to make progress on tasks, which may limit their motivation to actually complete the tasks.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Allow users to check the box when they complete the task.
2. H1: Visibility of System Status / 1 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: When searching for message board posts, you cannot see which posts you already upvoted, read, commented on, or shared.
 - b. Rationale: Users may waste time upvoting, commenting, or sharing posts that they already interacted with in a similar way previously.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Darken the font color of a post's upvote button or share status, for example, when a user has already upvoted or shared that post.
 - d. Note: We understand that this may not have been implemented because this is the medium-fidelity prototype. Be sure to consider this for the high-fidelity prototype.
3. H1: Visibility of System Status / 2 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: There's no indication that a user's post has actually been posted to the public.
 - b. Rationale: After I make a post, my post does not appear in the search for posts. My post also isn't saved to my profile or any other page, which is problematic if I want to refer back to my post, edit it, or even delete it.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Save a user's posts to their profile so they have a central location where they can review their digital footprint.
 - d. Note: We understand that this may not have been implemented because this is the medium-fidelity prototype. Be sure to consider this for the high-fidelity prototype.
4. H1 Visibility of System Status / 2 / Found by: B, C
 - a. Users are not able to track their progress towards making a plan. Fix: Adding a bar that fills as tasks have been completed.

5. H1: Visibility of System Status / 1 / Found by: C
On the “MY PLAN” page, there are only text differences between done and not done tasks. Hence it takes a bit of effort/delay to read the text and recognize when a task is done vs. not done, and adds friction to reviewing the checklist and recognizing what is still left to do.
Fix: Add color coding and/or icons to more clearly visually delineate done vs. not done tasks.
6. H1: Visibility of System Status / 4 / Found by: C
Shouldn't time of court appearance also be tracked?
Fix: Add time to the settings page (perhaps also home page).
7. H2: Match between System and World / 2 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: The “let's figure out” pages have the option to discuss each logistical area with “other Courtesy users,” which might not be the best word choice.
 - b. Rationale: Calling people “Courtesy users” depersonalizes the process, and it seems like you're trying to make the app as personalized as possible otherwise. People are more likely to rely on others for help if they're portrayed as welcoming humans rather than “users.”
 - c. Suggested Fix: Reword to “ask other people with similar experiences”
8. H2 Match Between System and World / 4 / Found by: B
 - a. The calendar for users to enter their court date is off by a day as 4/27/22 is a Wednesday, not a Tuesday. Fix: Updating the dates.
9. H3: User Control and Freedom / 2 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: It is not clear who will see the user's posts. Are posts public or private to a certain group?
 - b. Rationale: If the user does not want all Courtesy users to see their post, then there is no way for them to decline that. Perhaps their post is very personal and they only want a certain user or group of users to see it.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add a box to the post-writing page that says “make public,” and another that says “make private” to whichever subgroups your app may have (if any).
10. H3: User Control and Freedom / 3 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: The user cannot preview a post before it's posted.
 - b. Rationale: As soon as the user clicks “Post,” their words are posted. A confirmation message or page would be helpful because it would encourage users to proofread their posts for any issues they might have missed.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Pop-up that says “Are you sure you want to post?”
11. H3: User Control and Freedom / 3 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: The option to call the court automatically goes to the iPhone keypad page without asking for user permission.
 - b. Rationale: The option “click here to call the courthouse” is kind of close to the green call button, meaning if users double-tap, they may be making a call that

they do not want to make. Also, Courtesy should ask users for permission before they access their dial page.

- c. Suggested Fix: Add pop-up that says “Are you sure you want to call [insert courthouse name] at [insert phone number]?”
12. H3: User Control and Freedom / 3 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: When users set up their account, it is not clear how their name will be used and who will see their court appointment date.
 - b. Rationale: Legal issues are extremely personal, and users may be nervous to use this app or be honest if their name and court date can be shared with the public or the authorities. If courtesy does not share this information, that should be clear when users are making a choice about whether to type in their real name and real court date.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add a message below “Welcome to Courtesy” that says “Courtesy will not share the information below with any other users or authorities”
13. H3 User Control and Freedom / 2 / Found by: B
- a. Users are not able to search for a topic in the message board. Fix: Implementing a search feature so users can quickly find what they are looking for.
14. H4: Consistency & Standards / 1 / Found by: C
- Parts of the text in the app are all lowercase (ex. “You have court in 20 days”) and other parts of the text are formatted normally with capital-case at the start.
- Fix: Consistency across casing choices would make the app visually more intentional/cleaner.
15. H4: Consistency and Standards / 3 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: The bookmark icon for “my plan” and the “checklist icon” for daily tasks could be interpreted as referring to either page.
 - b. Rationale: A user’s plan can be visualized as a checklist, while tasks can be visualized as stuff users would bookmark for later.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add titles under each icon.
16. H4: Consistency and Standards / 2/ Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: On the message board page, the button with just a pencil means the same thing as the button on the next page that says “make a post” next to a tinier pencil.
 - b. Rationale: Users may be confused by these different button styles and waste time investigating both even though they lead to the same page.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Make both buttons have the exact same design: “Make a post [pencil icon].”
17. H4: Consistency and Standards / Severity 3 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: On the homepage, the boxes for the court date and location look like buttons even though they aren’t.
 - b. Rationale: These boxes have the same shadow and curvature as the other buttons on the page, meaning users are likely to waste time clicking them.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Make these boxes have a different design from the buttons. Perhaps they could be uncurved with no shadow.

18. H4: Consistency and Standards / Severity 1 / Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: On the “make a post” page, the prompts for the user to enter information are not consistent. “Topic” and “description” are much shorter prompts than “give your post a title.”
 - b. Rationale: If your app is trying to personalize the user’s experience, it would be more consistent to make all the prompts on this page friendly. “Give your post a title” is friendly while “description” isn’t exactly welcoming.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Change “topic” and “description” to “What is your post about?” and “Write your thoughts here.”
19. H4: Consistency and Standards / Severity 3/ Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: The listed posts on the message board have upvotes, but they are not sorted in order of most upvoted to least upvoted.
 - b. Rationale: Users may be disincentivized to upvote posts they like if there is no option to sort posts by most upvoted.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Give user the option to sort the posts in order of upvotes, newest posts etc. It is reasonable for the current arrangement to be the default as we don’t want the newest posts to be hidden.
20. H4 Consistency and Standards / Severity 3/ Found by: B
 - a. I clicked stressed for my mood and then went to read a testimonial and my mood had changed to productive when I went back to the home screen. Users may be frustrated if their mood for the day doesn’t save. Fix: Keeping the selected mood for the whole day
21. H4 Consistency and Standards / Severity 3/ Found by: B
 - a. The initial background choices are not taken into consideration when making your plan (Users can say they have a car but transportation plans are not automatically filled in). Fix: Automatically filling in the plan based on those initial answers.
22. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 4/ Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: Users can write a title or description that is too long for courtesy’s aesthetic and storage purposes.
 - b. Rationale: There is no character limit for the title or description.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add a character count in the corner of each box as well as the character limit, and add an error message when a user types over this limit. Or prevent a user from typing additional characters once the character limit is reached.
23. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 2/ Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: Users can write the wrong information in the “description” box of a post.
 - b. Rationale: The word “description” is not intuitive because it’s not clear what the user should describe. Perhaps a user may write short notes about their thoughts, expecting a later prompt to share their full story. If the goal is to have a user post their thoughts in their entirety, then that’s what the prompt should indicate.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Change “description” to “write your thoughts here.”

24. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 4/ Found by: A, B
 - a. Problem Description: On the settings page, users may put the wrong location for “edit location.”
 - b. Rationale: It is not clear whether “edit location” refers to the location of the user or the location of the court. This is especially important in case users put the wrong location to begin with.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Change “edit location” to “edit court location” or “edit my current location.”
25. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 1 / Found by: C

I expected that tapping “make a post” while under a search category would pre-populate the “topic” as that search category, but it did not.

Fix: Pre-populate the “topic” as the search category when making a post from that search category results page.
26. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 2/ Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: When confirming details for a plan, such as transportation, the user must remember their “transportation choice,” or “childcare choice,” etc.
 - b. Rationale: The user is forced to recall their choice and phrase it in a concise way that fits in the box rather than scroll through their transportation options and recognize the best choice.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add a dropdown menu for the “choice” bar.
27. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 2/ Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: When writing additional notes for a plan, there is a large, intimidating, blank space.
 - b. Rationale: The user is forced to recall important information regarding their choice instead of being prompted to recognize important information by courtesy.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add preliminary text in the “additional notes” box that has an example of important notes. Users can then delete this default text to type their own important notes.
28. H6: Recognition not Recall / Severity 3/ Found by: A
 - a. Problem Description: When typing in their information on the login page, users must remember their court date and appointment location.
 - b. Rationale: The user is forced to recall specific information without help as to how they can find this information. Perhaps they don’t know where this information is recorded.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add an “i” icon for information that has suggestions as to where this information can be found. Similar to how when you redeem a gift card online, the website provides a photo of where the PIN is located on the card.
29. H6 Recognition not Recall / Severity 2/ Found by: B
 - a. The court date countdown is only able to be seen on the homepage and nowhere else. Fix: Adding the countdown as a permanent blurb in the corner.
30. H7: Flexibility and Efficiency of Use / Severity 4/ Found by: A

- a. Problem Description: The page for resources regarding each logistical category like “transportation” and “childcare” is only accessible by clicking the bookmark icon and traversing through several pages.
 - b. Rationale: If users go into the app knowing that they want to do a task using the map feature, for example, they can’t just click the map on the home page. They must remember the exact pathway to the feature they want.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Create a common shortcut on the homepage. Perhaps the map on the home page could lead to a generalized map page that allows users to not only locate the court but also lawyers, childcare centers, etc.
31. H7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use / Severity 1/ Found by: B
- a. When on the message board page, the navigation bar at the point is too big and covers the last topic when users scroll to the bottom. Fix: Either making the navigation bar smaller or allowing for users to scroll up even more.
32. H7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use / Severity 3/ Found by: B
- a. When completing a daily task users are given the option to go to the message board. If they choose to do so and then choose to go back they will be taken to the messages page and not back to the task they are working on. Fix: saving the state so that users are able to go back to their task.
33. H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use / Severity 4/ Found by: C
- Once a task is done, it appears that it only shows the notes and no longer shows any of the resources tabs (i.e. “access resources” and “discuss”). What if the plan falls through and the user needs to find another solution, or if they decide they want to explore alternative options for any reason (ex. Cheaper, closer, etc)? I think it’s important to maintain access to options even when a task is done.
- Fix: Keep “access resources” and “discuss” tabs even for completed tasks.
34. H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use / Severity 4 / Found by: C
- There doesn’t seem to be a way to “clear” a completed task (i.e. revert back to “NO PLAN YET!” state) which seems important if plans change and the progress bar needs to be updated to reflect that. Perhaps clearing all text for a plan accomplishes that, but that would be guesswork.
- Fix: Need a “reset/clear” button in addition to “edit”.
35. H8: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design / Severity 2 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: The settings page asks redundant questions.
 - b. Rationale: It is wordy to write “remind me a week before my court date” and “remind me the day before my court date.” This takes up extra space, and the user may be too fatigued to read every word.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Consolidate the prompts. For example, there could be a drop-down menu after “remind me” where users can choose a week, a day, etc.
36. H8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design / Severity 1 / Found by: B
- a. The background strip of color behind the “compare pricing” text is very similar to the background of the screen and it makes it a little hard to read. Fix: Changing the color to stand out more or removing the strip entirely.
37. H8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design / Severity 1 / Found by: B

- a. The background strip of color behind the “find a lawyer near you” text is very similar to the background of the screen and it makes it a little hard to read. Fix: Changing the color to stand out more or removing the strip entirely.
38. H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design / Severity 2 / Found by: C
- It’s a bit confusing to me on the “TASKS” page when “Task of the Day” is the same size and not visually different than “Yesterday’s Task” to guide the user towards clicking “Task of the Day”.
- Fix: Make the bounding box of “Task of the Day” to be bigger and a more visually-attracting color than “Yesterday’s Task”, which is not as important to address.
39. H9: Recognize and Recover from Errors / Severity 4 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: When initially logging in, there are no error messages when users fail to fill in a field.
 - b. Rationale: Users may not type in a court date or location. It is not clear how this will affect the user’s experience of courtesy. It seems like if a user does not provide this information, they cannot use the app.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add asterisks to required information so users know they cannot proceed until this information is provided.
40. H10: Help and Documentation / Severity 3 / Found by: A,C
- a. Problem Description: On the home page, it is not clear how a user can change the emotion expressed in the welcome message.
 - b. Rationale: The user is asked about their emotions when first logging in, but it is not clear that the emotions change going forward by clicking the underlined emotion. Users may be confused, thinking they can only change the emotion via settings.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Have a daily or one-time pop-up pointing to the button that asks users how they’re feeling. This will teach them how to change their emotion.
41. H10: Help and Documentation / Severity 3 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: It is not clear how users can interact with the transportation options graph or compare options.
 - b. Rationale: This app can help more users if it not only provides information but also pointers on how to interpret information.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Point out the best option for the user and/or allow them to click on different bars on the graph to explore their options.
42. H11: Accessible / Severity 4 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: The home-page option to call court is not accessible to people with hearing or speech issues.
 - b. Rationale: Users looking to contact court right away will need a method where they can clearly express their concerns and understand the information presented to them.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add an email option in addition to the call option.
43. H11 Accessible / Severity 1 / Found by: B

- a. The text on the message board is fairly small without much contrast which may make it difficult for some users to read. Fix: Increasing the font size or color contrast.
44. H12: Fairness and Inclusion / Severity 1 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: The text and images on the home page and message boards may be too small to read.
 - b. Rationale: Users who are looking for a quick way to access information may be wasting a lot of time eyeballing important content.
 - c. Suggested Fix: When a message or an image is clicked, perhaps a bigger version of it could pop up like a magnifying glass effect.
45. H12: Fairness & Inclusion / Severity 4 / Found by: C
- It is possible for a user to have multiple court dates; the current prototype doesn't reflect that, in the settings and home page especially.
- Fix: Update the design to be inclusive of users that have multiple court dates.
46. H13: Value Alignment / Severity 3 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: The negative emotions in the emotion list overwhelm the positive emotions.
 - b. Rationale: This implies that users should feel more negative about their approaching court date than positive. Certain users may value more optimism during times of adversity.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Add more positive emotions to balance out the emotion options.
47. H13: Value Alignment / Severity 2 / Found by: A
- a. Problem Description: The "No Plan Yet!" message on the planning page is somewhat aggressive.
 - b. Rationale: The exclamation point after a message with a negative connotation can be interpreted as yelling at the user. Users may value taking their time with each task, and this message seems to rush them.
 - c. Suggested Fix: Change "No Plan Yet" to "Start Your Plan"
48. H13: Value Alignment / Severity 1 / Found by: C
- A major part of courtesy is to emotionally support the people with court summons (which I love!); however, "making" the users decide how they feel is potentially burdensome (which I recognize you are making efforts to address with the "skip" button, which is awesome! I do think that there could be an even more empathetic way to get that information).
- Fix(es):
- * Have an additional screen of "would you like to share how you feel about your upcoming court summons today?" to gently query the user first if they want to share.
 - * Not just have a text change on the home page based on emotions, but perhaps have an intermediate screen like a "you've shared with us that you're feeling <insert emotion>; we're here to support you!" to highlight the app responding to their mood sharing (or perhaps you were intending to have some sort of corresponding temporary animation on the home page, which is not able to be represented in Figma?)

49. H13: Value Alignment / Severity 2 / Found by: C

Some of the emotions keywords are close in meaning and having to decide which one is truly representative could pose additional friction/burden.

Fix: Have less words/less overlap in emotions, and perhaps have a user input if they want to express their feelings in a way that isn't represented in the existing buckets.

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
H1: Visibility of Status	0	2	2	0	2	6
H2: Match Sys & World	0	0	1	0	1	2
H3: User Control	0	0	2	3	0	5
H4: Consistency & Standards	0	2	1	5	0	8
H5: Error Prevention	0	1	1	0	2	4
H6: Recognition not Recall	0	0	3	1	0	4
H7: Efficiency of Use	0	1	0	1	3	5
H8: Minimalist Design	0	2	2	0	0	4
H9: Help Users with Errors	0	0	0	0	1	1
H10: Help & Documentation	0	0	0	2	0	2
H11: Accessible	0	1	0	0	1	2
H12: Fairness & Inclusion	0	1	0	0	1	2
H13: Value Alignment	0	1	2	1	0	4
Total Violations by Severity	0	11	14	13	11	49

Note: check your answer for the green box by making sure the sum of the last column is equal to the sum of the last row (not including the green box)

4. Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C	Evaluator D	Evaluator E
Sev. 0	0%	0%	0%		
Sev. 1	6.12%	8.16%	8.16%		
Sev. 2	18.37%	6.12%	2.04%		
Sev. 3	20.41%	6.12%	6.12%		
Sev. 4	12.2%	2.04%	8.16%		
Total (sevs. 3 & 4)	32.61%	8.16%	16.33%		
Total (all severity levels)	57.1%	22.45%	24.49%		

*Note that the bottom rows are *not* calculated by adding the numbers above it.

5. Summary Recommendations

This Medium Fidelity prototype was very easy to navigate, and I could see it being very helpful for users with approaching court dates. The blue and white colors are very calming for users that are likely to be very stressed out, and most pages are well-balanced and not too cluttered. I also appreciate the diversity of logistics you encourage your users to think about: things like transportation and childcare are easily forgotten yet they can make or break whether someone appears in court. Regarding the heuristic violations, there's a trend in that users are not always prompted as to what information they should provide. On pages such as the login page, setting page, and make a post page, it is not clear exactly what the user should be doing. The prompts for these pages should be more descriptive, especially because entering the incorrect location for a court date, for example, can completely mislead the other suggestions on the app.

Moreover, the app feels a bit tedious at times. If users have to click through several pages to access the information they want, such as the price of an Uber vs a Lyft, they have to click several buttons. Also, it was difficult to remember which page would lead to which kinds of information. Your users likely do not have much free time, and the information they need access to is incredibly important. If your app had more shortcuts for users rather than relying on them to have time for extra clicks, that would make your app more accessible.

I do think it's important to not lose emphasis on the "get the user over the finish line" of prepping for their court date in pursuit of emotionally supporting the user; in other words, I would love to see more design to actively remind the user of the tasks they have to complete and get them to do it (in ideally a fun, non-stress-inducing way). Also, I couldn't go directly back to my tasks after navigating to the message board from them.

The first task mentioned in your slides is to view your plan, and I think redesigning the homepage a little bit can make it even easier for users. Currently, users have to navigate to an entirely different page to do so and it would make it easier if it was either viewable or directly

linked to the homepage along with the countdown and map. I would also like to highlight the need for intentionally-designed task flows to allow users to modify their existing plans, either to reset and start from scratch or to explore alternative options for whatever reason! It would have been nice to see such options (even as unclickable buttons for placeholders) to be allotted space in this med-fi prototype.

Another issue I found was how the navigation bar is a little too big/high up on the screen causing it to cover some of the posts/text at the bottom of the scrollbar. I like your color scheme, however, there are some instances where the text is hard to read and may be even more difficult for users with color deficiencies to read. The calendar dates are also not aligned correctly, but I also know that this is not the full implementation of it and was most likely just a screenshot for prototyping's sake.

Overall, I think you guys did a really great job and I'm excited to see your hi-fi prototype!

Severity Ratings

- 0 - not a usability problem
- 1 - cosmetic problem
- 2 - minor usability problem
- 3 - major usability problem; important to fix
- 4 - usability catastrophe; imperative to fix

Heuristics

H1: Visibility of System Status

- Keep users informed about what is going on

H2: Match Between System & Real World

- Speak the users' language
- Follow real world conventions

H3: User Control & Freedom

- "Exits" for mistaken choices, undo, redo
- Don't force down fixed paths

H4: Consistency & Standards

- Words, actions, and UI elements should be consistent across the entire platform
- Follow platform and industry conventions

H5: Error Prevention

- Minimize error-prone conditions
- Remove memory burdens, support undoing, and warn your users when necessary

H6: Recognition Rather Than Recall

- Make objects, actions, options, & directions visible or easily retrievable

H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use

- Accelerators for experts (e.g., gestures, keyboard shortcuts)
- Allow users to tailor frequent actions (e.g., macros)

H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design

- No irrelevant information. Focus on the essentials.

H9: Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors

- Error messages in plain language
- Precisely indicate the problem
- Constructively suggest a solution

H10: Help & Documentation

- Easy to search
- Focused on the user's task
- List concrete steps to carry out
- Not too large

H11: Accessible

- Users can interact with the system using alternative input methods.
- Content is legible with distinguishable contrast and text size.
- Key information is upfront and not nested for screen readers.

- Purely visual or auditory content has text-based alternatives for users with low vision and low hearing.

H12: Fairness and Inclusion

- Users shouldn't feel that the design is not made for them.
- The design should meet all users' needs equally and prevent the reproduction of pre-existing inequities.
- It should not create additional burdens for members of disadvantaged populations.

H13: Value Alignment

- The design should encode values that users can understand and relate to.
- Conflicting collateral values should not emerge when the user interacts with the product.
- Encoded values should match users' values in a broad set of use-contexts.