pathseeker

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field usability study

Problem

Students do not have enough information outside of their own network to make informed decisions about their career paths, and professionals do not have a sustainable platform to provide mentorship and career advice to those in need of it.

Solution

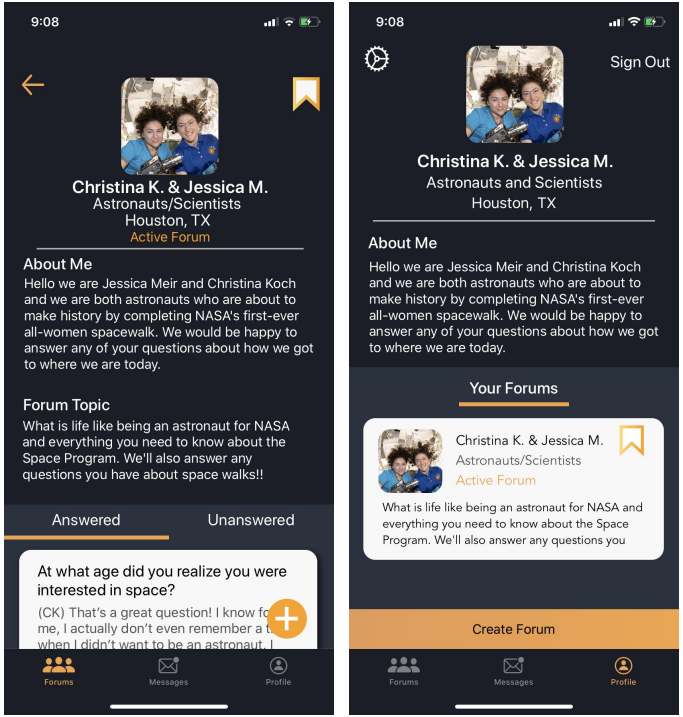
Provide a platform for users to read, ask, and share advice from professionals about their careers so that they can gain a new perspective on these careers.

Value Proposition

Everyone seeks a different path. We can help you along yours.

Purpose of Experiment

- Test new interface designs and changes
- Obtain insights about tasks for professionals:
  - Update profile details
  - Create forum
  - Post an FAQ and answer it
  - Deactivate forum



Road Map

- Method
- Test Measures
- Results
- Discussion

Road Map

- **Method**
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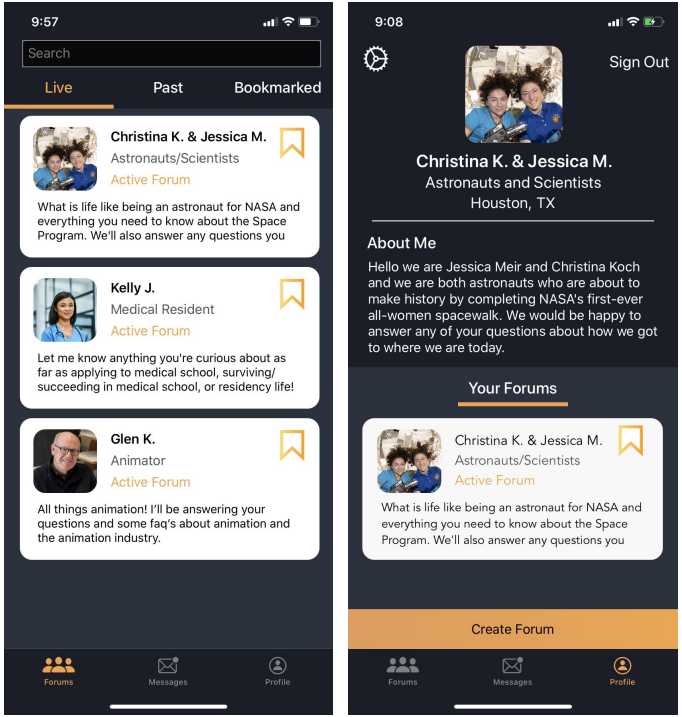
Participants

- Sample size: 5 (3 male, 2 female)
- Age range: 22-58
- Selection: students looking for career advice, professionals with experience in a specific field
- Compensation: $10 Amazon gift card

Apparatus

- Used built-in iPhone screen recorder
- Built prototype on iPhone 11
- Conducted studies at Geocorner, Old Union, Town & Country Village



Tasks

For non-professionals:

- Find a forum related to interests
- Bookmark a forum and access it later
- Ask a new question on a forum

For professionals:

- Create a forum
  - Update profile to current occupation
- Post a FAQ and answer it on created forum
- Deactivate forum

For each task, we looked for:

- Any signs of confusion or confidence
- Emotional investment in completing the tasks
- Overall enjoyment of use

Procedure

For non-professionals:

- Gave a brief introduction to app and provided a brief backstory
  - “You have just downloaded this app and want to gain advice and information about some professions you are interested in.”
- Asked to perform each task and to think aloud
  - Task 1: go into a forum related to your interests
  - Task 2: bookmark a forum and access it in the bookmark tab
  - Task 3: read through answered and unanswered questions, and post a question that has not been tasked
- Asked for any feedback or final thoughts on the app

Procedure

For professionals:

- Gave a brief introduction to app and provided a brief backstory
  - “You have just downloaded the app and created a profile. You would like to give advice and information you have about your profession.”
- Asked to perform each task and to think aloud
  - Task 1: create a forum
    - Subtask: edit your profile to fit your current profession
  - Task 2: answer an unanswered question on your forum
    - Subtask: post a question that you have received before on your forum
  - Task 3: Deactivate your forum when done answering questions
- Asked for any feedback or final thoughts on the app

Road Map

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Test Measures

- Number of clicks
- Number of errors
- Time of completion
- Final comments/thoughts on app

Road Map

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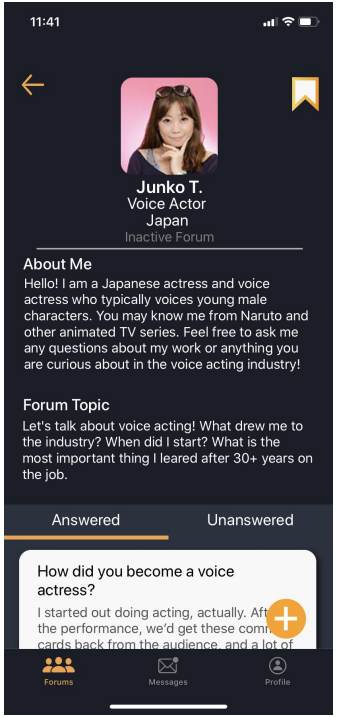
Results - Non-Professionals

	22, Law Student	22, CS Student
Number of clicks	9 | 4 | 5	1 | 4 | 5
Number of errors	1 | 0 | 0	0 | 0 | 0
Time of completion	0:39 | 0:17 | 1:04	0:07 | 0:29 | 0:57
Final comments	“Super cool”, initially thought it would be similar to LinkedIn after hearing about what the app was about but liked how the upvoting system for questions was similar to Reddit’s	Very easy to use, scrolling through questions could be easier, suggested having a bookmark feature for questions rather than for full forums

Results - Non-Professionals

- All tasks were completed by both participants
- 22, Law Student
  - Felt disappointed when she couldn't find forums on law
  - Took time to read through answered questions on a forum about voice acting while completing tasks
  - Completed every task with ease and confidence



Results - Non-Professionals

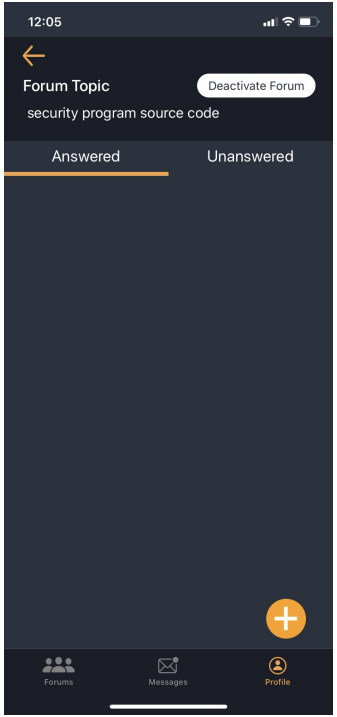
- 22, CS Student
  - Offered a suggestion to make the answered questions collapsible so that it would be easier to scroll through all the questions without having to go through their answers as well

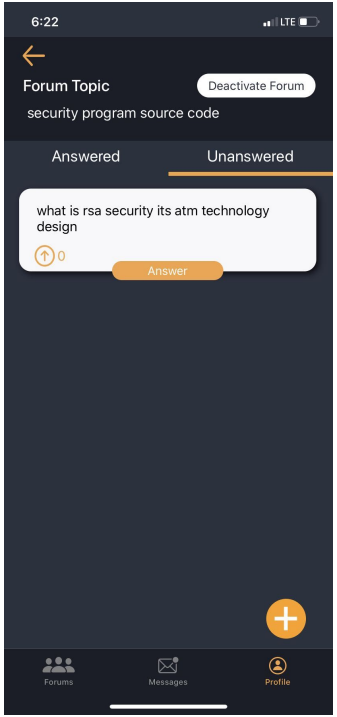
Results - Professionals

	22, CS Student	23, Library Specialist	43, Park Manager	58, Engineer
Number of clicks	11 | 10 | 1	16 | 10 | 1	18 | 12 | 1	21 | 10 | 1
Number of errors	0 | 0 | 0	0 | 0 | 0	4 | 2 | 0	7 | 5 | 0
Time of completion	1:51 | 0:48 | 0:17	1:33 | 1:00 | 0:11	3:50 | 4:40 | 0:20	4:45 | 3:30 | 0:30
Final comments	Didn't understand profile until he realized it had been made for him, overall easy to use.	Looks clean and very easy to use	Mainly had trouble editing profile, felt he could figure things out on his own eventually	Pretty straight forward with practice, felt confident while completing tasks

Results - Professionals

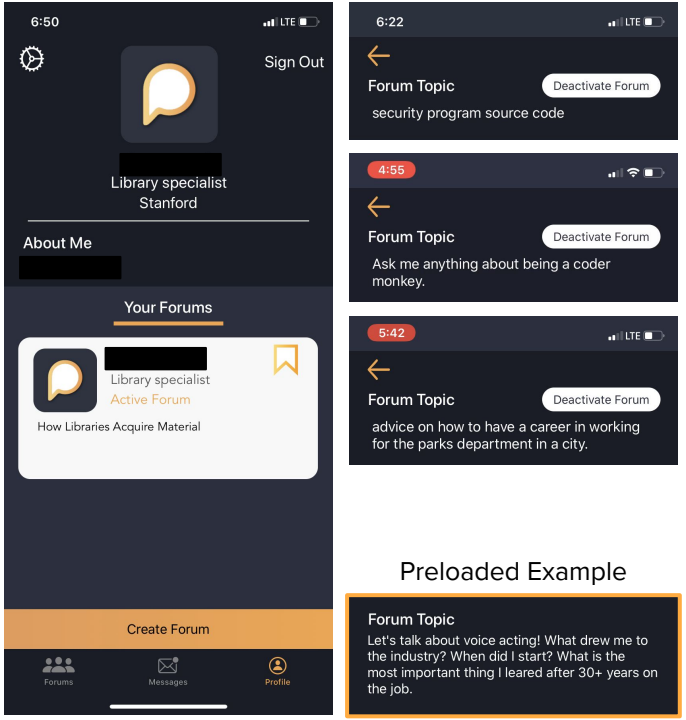
- All tasks were completed except task 2 for 58 year old engineer
  - He had mistakenly thought that adding the question meant that he answered it (even verbally telling us the answer) and confidently stated he completed the task
  - Potential reason: after adding a question, it is added to the unanswered tab, which may not be visible after adding
- Some confusion on pre-filled information in profile (no onboarding implemented)





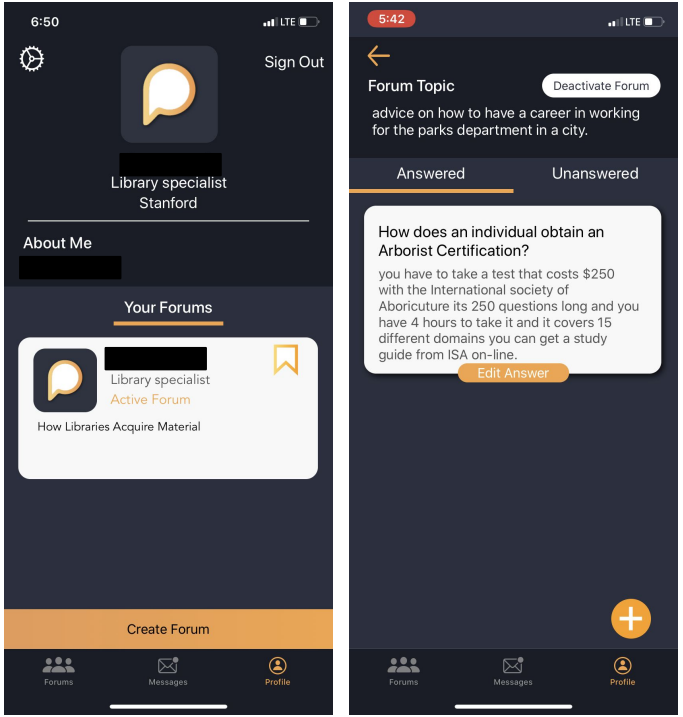
Results - Professionals

- Both older participants initially thought they could add a question to their forum by clicking the “Create Forum” button
- Very short, concise forum topics
- Overall, design is straightforward after some practice and clarifications



Results - Professionals

- Emotional investment when completing tasks
  - 23, Library Specialist
    - (when asked to create a forum as a task) “Oh, look at that. Create forum!”
  - 43, Park Manager
    - Took the time to type out a meaningful question and answer it fully while chatting with us



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What We Learned

- UI changes
  - Using the term “bookmarked” instead of “saved” made completing tasks less confusing
  - Utilizing a solid, dark background to avoid random pops of color causing distractions
- Younger participants completed tasks with nearly no errors, while the older participants had some confusion which were later solved with some clarifications later on
  - Design is understandable and straightforward after practice by participants

Potential Interface Changes

- Add onboarding on sign up to allow for explicit profile creation
- Allow answered question cards to be collapsable to allow the user to browse through answered questions more quickly
    - Click on card to open to a new screen containing answer
- Provide more instructions/suggestions for forum topic format in placeholder text
- Automatically display the unanswered tab after posting a question to a forum to better inform the user of the status of their question
- Add text padding and spacing

Difficulties

- No onboarding implementation
  - Difficult for professionals to understand their profile since they didn’t initially create it themselves
- Testing with a diverse selection of professionals in years of experience and professions
- Video logging allowed us to go back and review anything we may have missed

Summary

- ✓ Achieved our experimental goals
  - Interface changes
  - Insight on tasks for professionals
- ✓ Should include design elements for less tech-savvy users

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