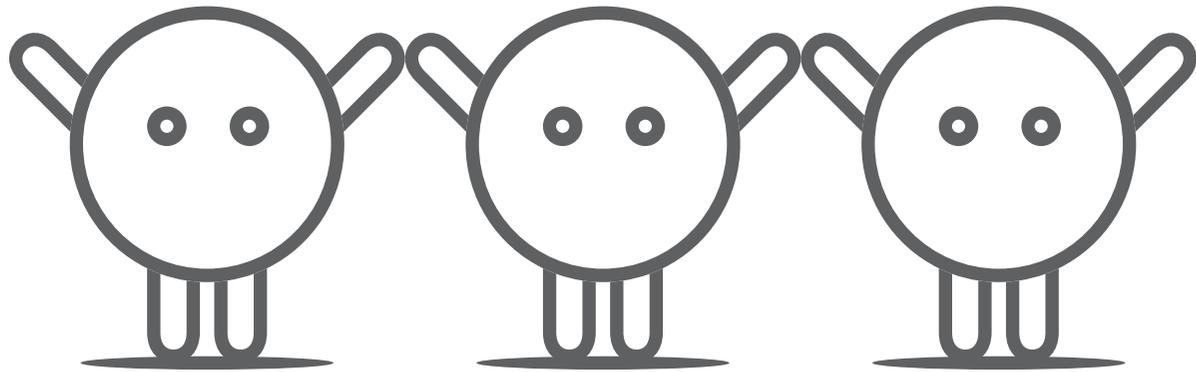# Flexing the Social Good Muscle:
Small Changes for Big Impact

RISD Industrial Design Senior Studio 2014
Tess Feigenbaum

Setting

In 2013, Deloitte conducted the Millenial Innovation Survey, surveying approximately 4,900 degree-educated and employed millenials (people born in 1982 onwards) around the world. Through the survey, some interesting trends became apparent.

Thirty-six percent of millenials surveyed felt that the key purpose of business is to improve society, outweighing generating profit.
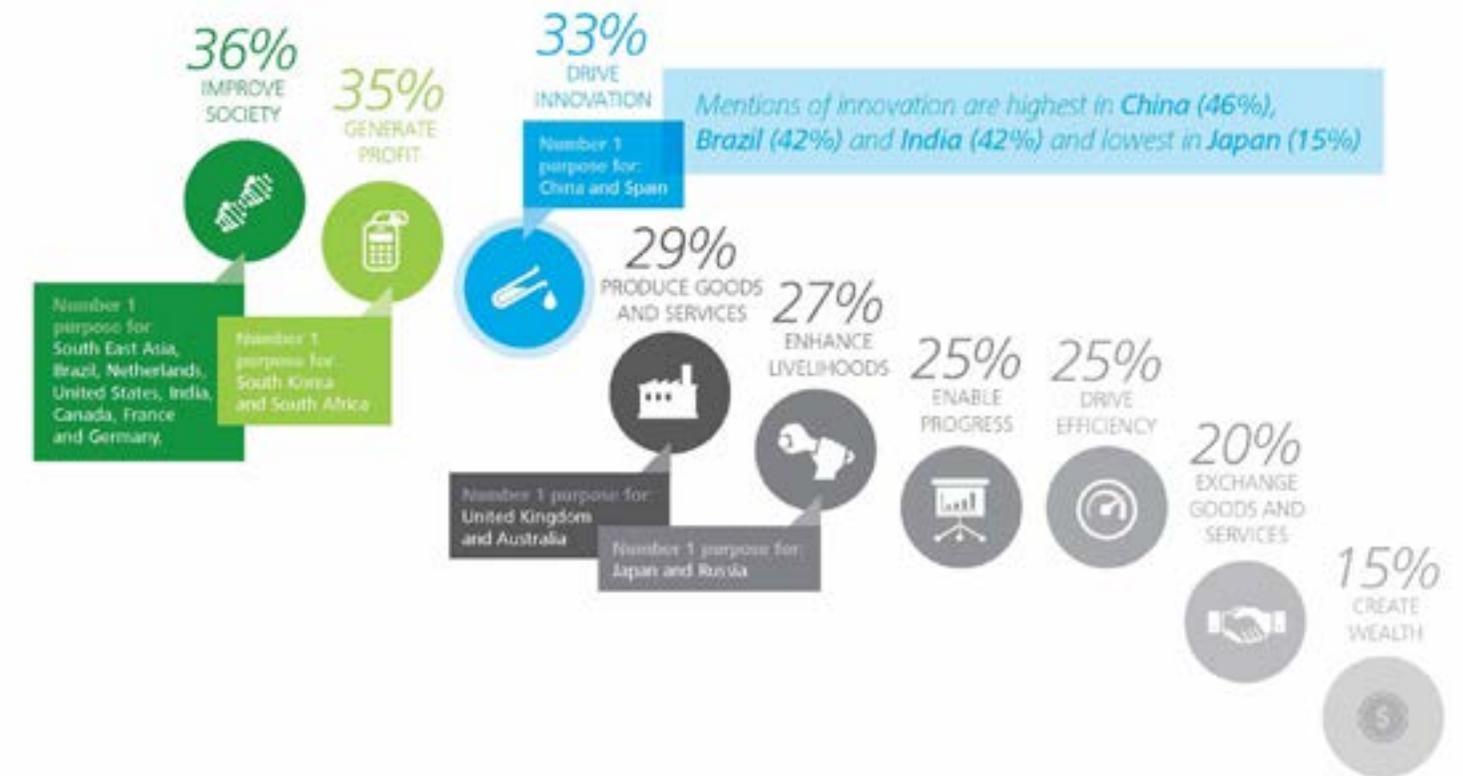Sixty-four percent indicated that the sector most in need of innovation is the public sector.
The vast majority felt it is acceptable to profit from social innovation.

These opinions indicate a new perspective from the generations prior, one significantly more focused on innovating in the direction of building towards social good. It is a clear identifier of big changes to come, and a significant paradigm shift in the definition of value and purpose.

In the face of paralyzing inherited global issues, millenials work through the lens of fixing, innovating, and building. **Society is shifting towards a more socially-focused agenda, directing business towards promoting and generating positive impact**. This presents massive new opportunities for innovation, creation, and, ultimately, an entire shift of mindset.

The purpose of business is to...

36% IMPROVE SOCIETY
Number 1 purpose for South East Asia, Brazil, Netherlands, United States, India, Canada, France and Germany.

35% GENERATE PROFIT
Number 1 purpose for South Korea and South Africa

33% DRIVE INNOVATION
Number 1 purpose for China and Spain
Mentions of innovation are highest in China (46%), Brazil (42%) and India (42%) and lowest in Japan (15%)

29% PRODUCE GOODS AND SERVICES
Number 1 purpose for United Kingdom and Australia

27% ENHANCE LIVELIHOODS
Number 1 purpose for Japan and Russia

25% ENABLE PROGRESS

25% DRIVE EFFICIENCY

20% EXCHANGE GOODS AND SERVICES

15% CREATE WEALTH

Q. Which of the following words and phrases match your own belief as to what business is for? Base: All 4,982 respondents

9 Millenial Innovation survey

Deloitte Millenial Innovation Survey

The Challenge

If we're so inclined towards becoming socially-focused, why aren't we there yet?

In order to be a high-functioning society with a positive impact, values need to be aligned throughout communities, both local and global. Without shared goals, individuals move against each other, and the scale of impact shrinks considerably, rather than sharing value and creating all-encompassing growth.

How can we make this happen? How can we make people alter their behaviors, choose something a little less self-serving, or entirely sacrifice individual benefit for the benefit of an entire community? Throughout this exploration, I've learned that convincing people to change their behaviors is an incredibly grueling, and often fruitless, activity. Even the best-intentioned people have trouble forming new habits, or changing their perceptions.

Working with the subjects of behavior, interest, and perceived value, I aimed to develop tools that provide steps towards adopting the changing values of society. By adopting and working with systems that encourage regular altruistic, communal, or reflective behavior, users develop a familiarity and space for more positive, mindful behavior in their daily lives.

I've iterated several different models to drive engagement with social good. My research and deliverables explore how to promote impact on a variety of scales. Throughout the process, a framework for engagement and motivation became evident, with the understanding that my iterations enter at different levels.

The Solution

Mindfulness is a skill, and like all skills, it requires practice to become second nature.

The project targets millenials facing the atrophy of this skill. Performing small altruistic or reflective actions that breach one's comfort zone are akin to socially exercising one's muscles. So how do we practice? I've developed two tools, one engaging on the individual scale, and one engaging on the group scale, to exercise social good skills.

The first, a low-commitment self-challenge game drives individuals to make small positive changes, adding up to larger cumulative good. The second, a social network capitalizing on personal excess capacity to redefine what value is, creates communities working to develop more responsible and creative ways of getting things done.

I've developed tools to exercise the social good muscles.
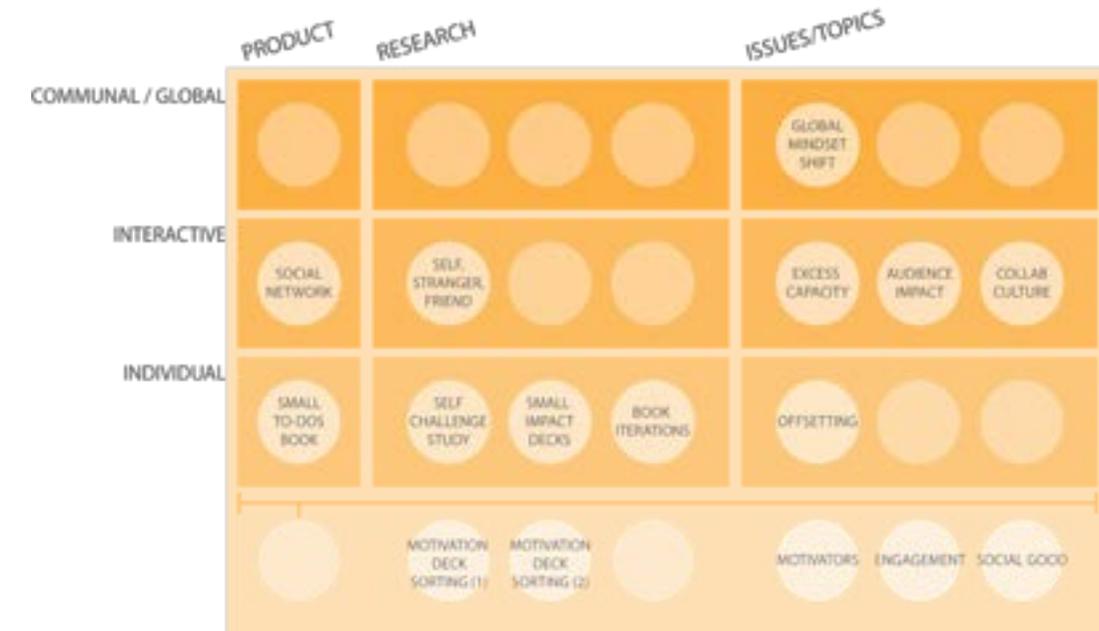
My two concepts engage at the scale of the individual and the scale of the group. The individual scale reflects models largely working through intrinsic motivation, utilizing self-selection and aiming to develop ways to push the individual to perform an action. The group scale plays more directly with interaction, asking individuals to work together to find value in existent and potentially shared resources. The two final iterations engage at these two different levels: individual and interactive, leading towards an ideal third level of global engagement, while the third provides the stage for the hypothetical future.

Little Good Books

The Little Good Books provide a low commitment way to work on mindful, altruistic, or extroverted behavior. They ask the user to complete small, feel-good tasks at their own pace, through a fun and engaging medium. The Little Good Books commodify social good, providing a tangible, fun and gratifying product, as well as means of generating more mindful behavior on a regular basis.

Each task asks for no more than a half-hour commitment to completing a manageable challenge, such as complimenting a stranger, or finding three beautiful things throughout the day to photograph. These tasks push users to make small windows for more mindful behavior, and provide positive reinforcement for such behavior.

The books provide a variety of interesting alternatives for engagement from their straightforward use. Users can challenge one another, trade tasks, and obtain new books or sets of tasks to work with. They also provide an opportunity for a crowd-sourced collection method to obtain ideas about little changes we each can make, allowing users to take part in creating and inspiring the change.
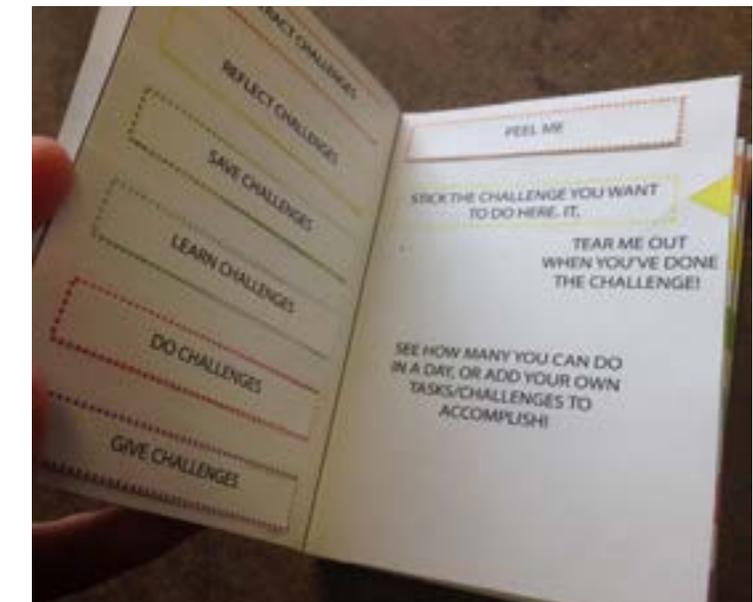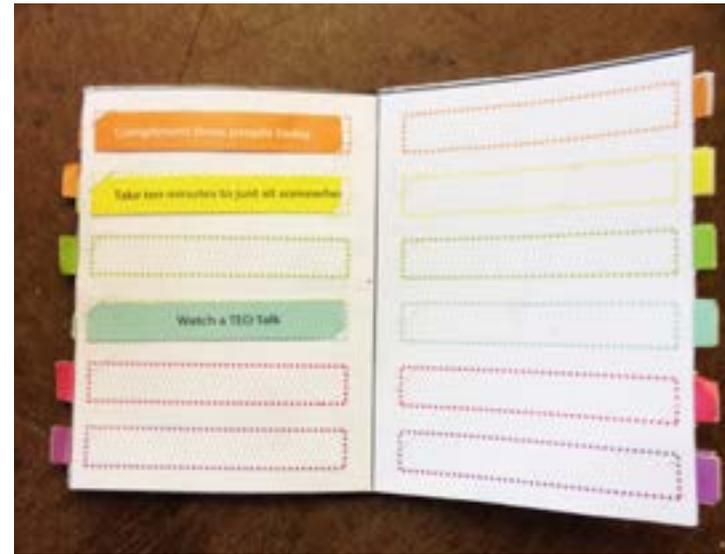
Using the same language as a children's pop-up book, each task is written on the page, but also concealed by a tab with the task written on it as well. Each task becomes a little delight as they're uncovered one by one. Users then tear the tab with the task out, and place it into any given slot on a to-do-list page, creating their own schedule of tasks. The slots are otherwise blank so that users also have the option of writing in their own tasks.

When users accomplish a task, they tear off the small colored tab on the edge of the page, making the edge of each page an indicator of their daily successes, not unlike a planner with folded corners, or a calendar with days crossed out. These little actions provide gratifying feelings of accomplishments throughout one's engagement with the book, driving motivation to continue completing tasks.

The books fall into the market somewhere between the generally ineffective habit-developing app and the travel card game. One would purchase a book either with a targeted focus (Learn, Reflect, Interact, Do, Play, Create, Give, or Save) or a mix of a variety of types of tasks. The books are small and light. They're easily portable, small enough to fit in a purse or pocket, and would be used in moments of boredom, like a lunch hour or daily subway commute, as an entertaining toy. Around the quality level of a small Moleskine field notes book, they are just precious enough to save, but not too precious to modify or use thoroughly.

A completed book is an anthology of the bits of good the user has created. At the end, the user has a collection of revealed tasks, followed by a series of to-do-list pages showing how many were accomplished and when. The books push the user's definition of his or her comfort zone, and leave the user a more aware, empathetic, and mindful person.

The Social Economy
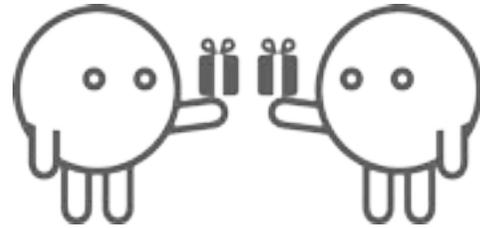
"I will do will do 'x' in exchange for 'y.'"

The idea behind the generation of a social network is to create a money-free economy, powered entirely by utilizing the unique skills and capacity of each user to fulfill the needs of others. Users' individual excess capacity or abilities become a "social currency," which fuels the site.

The site would connect users to people able to provide a skill, service, or product in exchange for something they deem equivalent. Paul can make dinner for Eric in exchange for help putting together his IKEA furniture. Jess could teach Laura a recipe if Laura will give her a ride to the grocery store, utilizing Jess's skills and Laura's empty car seats. Building off the concept of Fiverr, an online marketplace in which users declare what service they are willing to provide for five dollars, the model asks users to only engage as deeply as their are innately willing to.

Profile Building

Users would essentially build a profile of their skills or abilities. They would then be able to seek out users able to fill their needs, and make bids on what they'd be willing to do in exchange for someone else's offer.
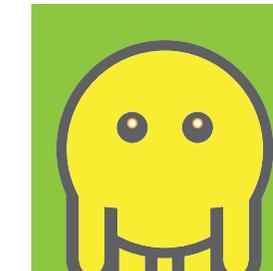
Skills / Offers

Talk about your problems! Social Advice

Help code a website Tech Computers HTML

Teach you how to code Tech Computers HTML Skillsharing

Be a coffee buddy Social Advice Company

Needs / Interests

Learning a creative skill Skillsharing

Ride Sharing (for groceries) Daily Errands Ride Sharing

Frisbee buddy (Saturdays) Social Exercise

Bartering

In order to set up a trade with another user, one need simply search for a need they might have, using either tags or specific keywords. Once an ideal match has been chosen, the user would select the offer on the match's profile, and make his or her offer of what he or she would give in exchange. The ability to negotiate can be an optional addition.
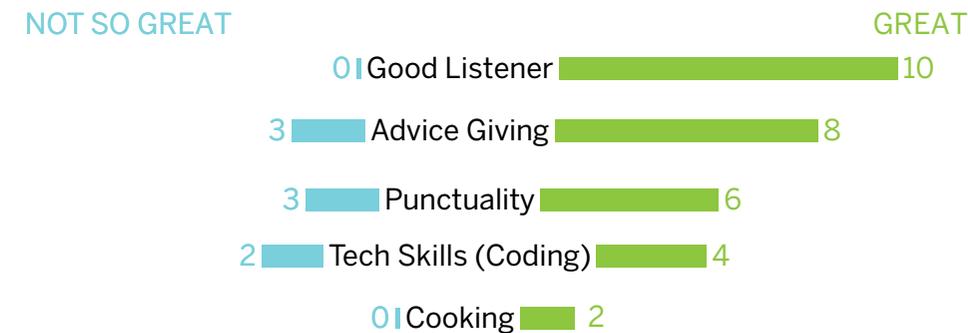
Be a coffee buddy Social Advice Company

Make an offer!

I need someone to work on a project with and occasionally provide some advice.
I'll provide the coffee for your feedback and company.

Scaling System

Using a horizontal scaling system, users can rate other users once they've interacted with them. Users set their own terms for rating, but participants need only rate one another based on three of the terms, allowing the most important or relevant ones to come to the forefront, developing a more accurate persona for each user, realistically portraying their strengths or weaknesses in relation to certain tasks.

NOT SO GREAT   GREAT

0 | Good Listener ████████████ 10
3 ███ Advice Giving ██████████ 8
3 ███ Punctuality ███████ 6
2 ██ Tech Skills (Coding) █████ 4
0 | Cooking ██ 2

The network provides a tool both for making things happen in a more mindful way and making users think about what they have to offer, what is uniquely valuable about them, and what their personal excess capacity is. This consideration opens people up to consider more intelligent, altruistic, and efficient ways to get things done, and allows users to attribute non-monetary value to their own offerings in ways they couldn't have before, all while building meaningful relationships, creating unique stories, and developing better-connected communities.

Given time and growth, this network could scale in terms of options and creativity of offerings. It could provide opportunities for people with developed relationships to motivate others to make positive life changes, transforming "I'll give you a ride for dinner" to "I won't use my car this week if you won't use disposable water bottles." It can also generate communities of people supporting one another through similar needs, such as finding a gym buddy with an equivalent commitment level, or someone to partner with to quit smoking. The leading question ultimately has the opportunity to morph into "What are you willing to give to see something you care about happen?"

Motivating the Unmotivated
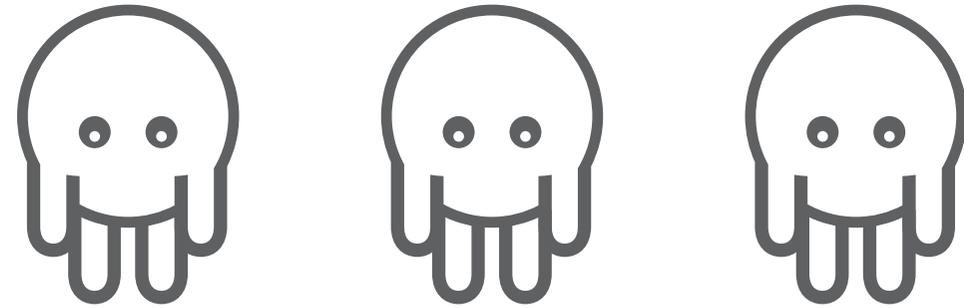
In the face of such astounding global issues, it's easier to entirely embrace apathy, and simply live in stasis, rather than try to generate change.

Identifying what drives current behavioral patterns is crucial to bending them towards more meaningful actions. Through a variety of research methods, I've developed and iterated tools to develop these positive regular behaviors, making small windows to lead to a significantly larger cumulative change. The consistent struggle throughout the entire project has been defining and working with what most effectively motivates people.

I've discovered and summarized some of the evident insights and assumptions I came across throughout my research:

Offsetting

There is an entire subset of the millenial population who are employed and educated, and yet feel as though they are unsatisfied. There is a pervading feeling of discontent, a lack of larger purpose, impact, or fulfillment. This is where the concept of offsetting comes into the picture.

Offsetting feelings of guilt, boredom, disinterest, or dissatisfaction. In the same way that Verizon is the fifteenth largest charitable corporate donor in the world as an attempt to offset being a leader in the most toxic, short-lived, industry in existence with the highest turnover in product, people want to offset being dissatisfied with their decisions or feel as though they are part of something bigger than themselves by engaging in meaningful actions outside of their daily routines.

Audience Factor

One thing that social media and digital means of publication have proven is that audience has a massive impact. Audience alters content quality, engagement level, and feelings of validation or significance. People are more likely to generate more meaningful, higher quality content when they feel as though they are creating for an audience. The window for criticism, feedback, and discussion created by engaging with an audience significantly drives a deeper level of refinement of the content.

Audience also creates a sense of obligation to generate content, as the creator is working for an expectant and devoted viewer. Feedback and discussion provide positive reinforcement for content creation, providing encouragement, support, and continuing to increase motivation to repeat the process.

Self-Challenge Study

What small thing can I do to make my (or someone else's) life better?

For a week-long period of time, participants were asked to respond to this question by committing to performing one small action on a daily basis. They were provided with a journal structure to record their successes, failures, and reflections, and were asked to record at least one photo per action.

The intent of this experiment was to track how well the participants could stick to a new resolution on a day-to-day level, and what extrinsic or intrinsic forces motivated them to either succeed or fail.

The success and failures were mostly evenly distributed. Participants were largely motivated by the actions or investment of others in their commitment, be it a gym buddy or feeling as if they owed someone.
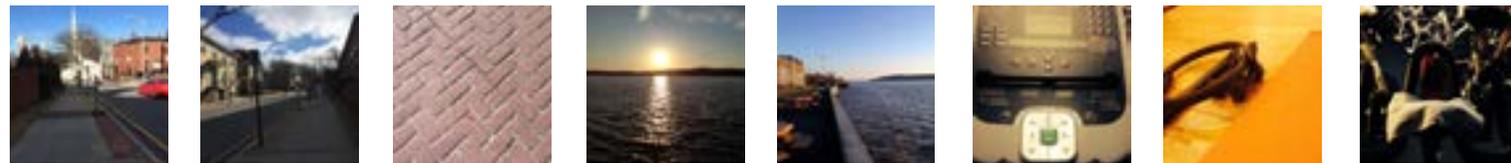
Challenges

Go to the gym/exercise
Make a point to eat breakfast everyday.
Run daily
Have a new experience every day
Read at least one chapter of a book every day
Walk down to the Hudson River once a day
Keeping track of depression, and also trying a therapy method to combat it

Successes

Having a teammate or cheerleader:
"A co worker asked me to go and so we decided to go together."

Owing or committing to someone else:
"My motivation for doing this [was] my promise to the person who asked me to do this experiment"

Reinforcement based on having a good experience:
"Why don't I do this every day? It's why I've been here so long. It's magnificent. Brings a whole new perspective to my day."

Guilt Alleviation:
"The fact that I hadn't done any reading over the weekend."

Failures

Not having reminders:
"I mostly failed due to forgetting."

Daily variations in schedule or environment:
"I didn't keep it up the entire week... it started getting disgusting out."

Self/Stranger/Friend Exercise
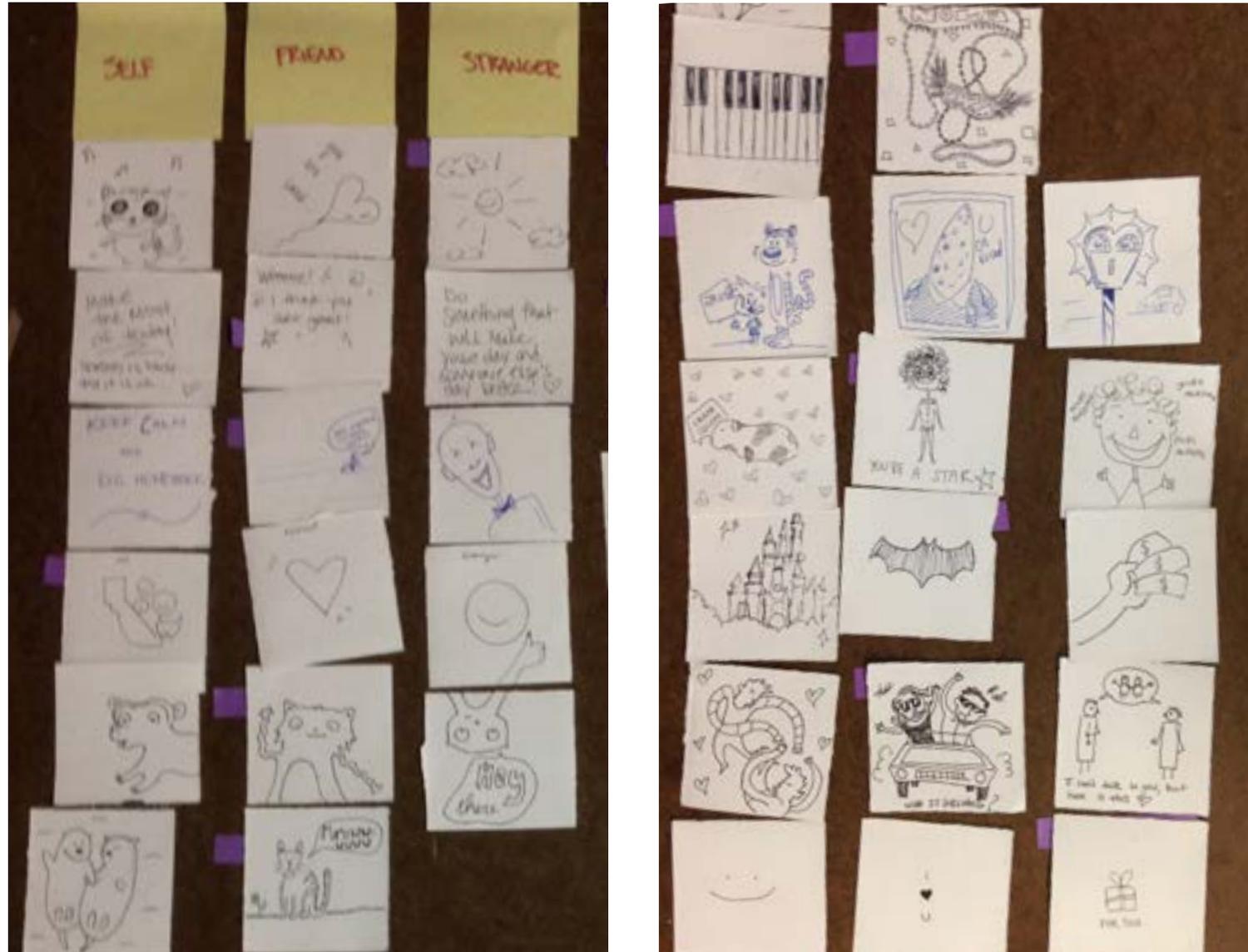
As a first iteration of my experimentation in further studying how audience impacts content quality and user engagement, about twenty participants were asked to try an exercise. Each participant was given three blank cards and asked to draw three things, one on each card:

1) Something that would make the participant smile.

2) Something that would make a specific friend of the participant smile.

3) Something to make a stranger smile.

Upon finishing, each participant was asked which card they felt they'd put the most effort or thought into (Marked with purple).

Of the fifteen participants,

5 put the most effort into the card for themselves

8 put the most effort into the card for a friend

and 2 put the most effort into the card for a stranger.

It became clear that the majority of the participant group cared much more about what someone they knew and/or respected received from them than a total stranger or themselves, and spent significantly longer trying to draw out images of inside jokes or more meaningful thoughts for others.

This opened up a variety of questions about how best to leverage this increase of effort and meaning devoted to people we know and care about. Can we use these relationships to push each other towards action through challenging one another, providing positive reinforcement, or providing reciprocal behaviors? What kind of different group behaviors can be used to generate action? How can we generate meaning or dedication with a stranger?

The Nine Motivators

Based on the results of the previous exercises and the discussion they generated, several recurring sources of motivations became apparent. In order to identify and clearly refer to what motivates people to do difficult tasks in the following experiment, I defined and illustrated nine major motivators as simplified stand-ins for larger concepts.

Mentorship

A one-on-one relationship providing personal guidance, training, or support.
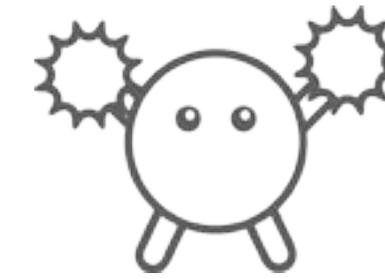
Sponsorship

Instilling a sense of personal obligation or responsibility through investment in someone.
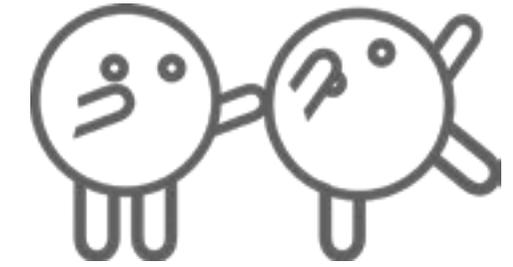
Cult Culture

Lessening social anxiety through adopted/provided group behaviors.

Fear / Punishment

Leveraging the threat of an unwanted result if action goes undone.

Peer Pressure

Leveraging social anxiety (wanting to fit in) to make someone perform an action.

Exchange / Reciprocity

Encouraging action through expectation of receiving what you give.
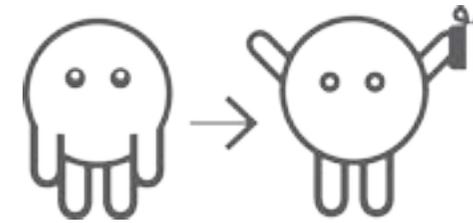
Positive Reinforcement

Leveraging a reward (such as profit, or positive feelings).

Negative Reinforcement

Leveraging the removal of something unpleasant (such as guilt or boredom).

Altruism

Selfless generosity, giving for the sake of helping others with no expected reward.

Motivation Card Sorting Exercise

For the first iteration of this experiment, I produced decks focused around a generally unpleasant or unexciting task. Each deck included a card representing one of the motivators, and an example of what that would look like in each situation. A definition of the motivator was on the back of each card.

Participants were asked to choose two of the decks, and sort what would be most likely to least likely to motivate them to do the task. Once the sorting was completed, they would flip the cards, read the definition of the type of motivator, and discuss apparent consistencies between their two sortings.
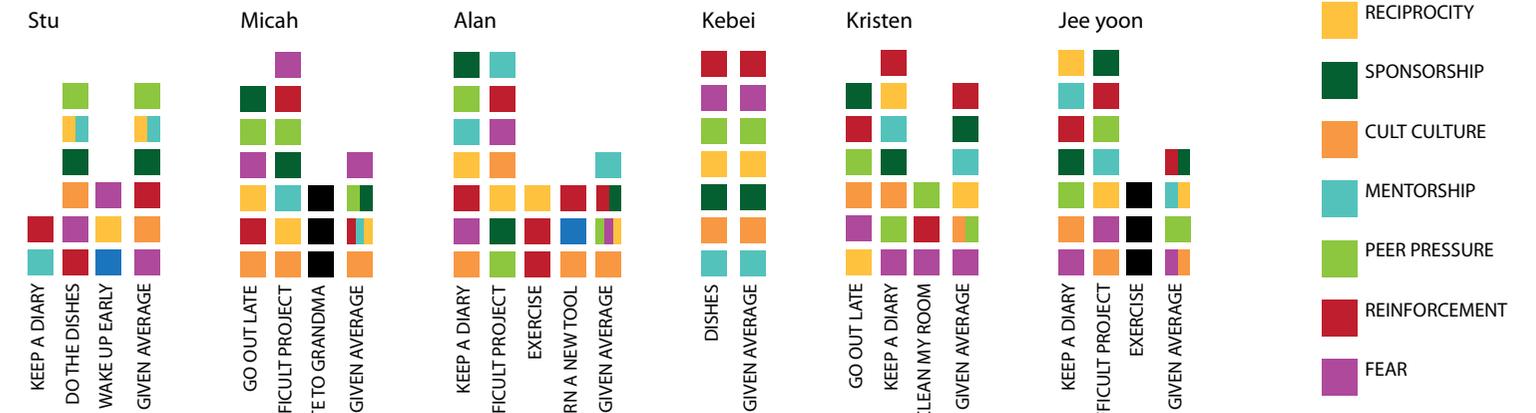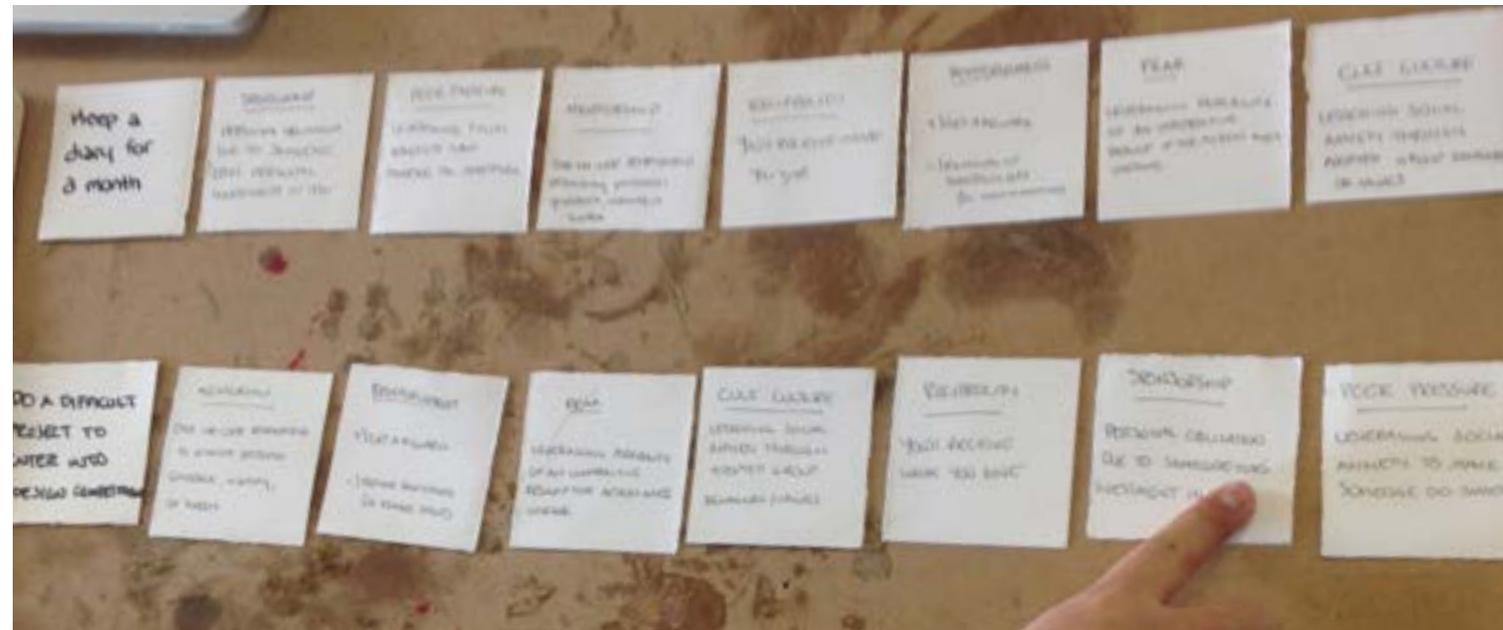
Participants were asked to follow the exercise by brainstorming a similarly difficult task for them, as well as three things that would push them to do it. The results indicated a clear focus on the impact of other people upon the individual's behaviors, such as having someone be dependent on them, or having someone invested in providing coaching or mentorship. I also found that the addition of a card for pure altruism or generosity was necessary.

Motivation Card Sorting Exercise (Part Two)

Responding to the suggestions and feedback collected from the first iteration, I further clarified the "motivaor" terms, and developed six better developed decks. The new cards were not labeled by motivator, but were color coded so they could be identified after sorting without a bias. Like the prior iteration, participants were asked to choose two of the tasks, and sort the accompanying decks from most to least likely to motivate them to perform the task.

I recorded and averaged each motivators' ranks for each of the approximately 30 participants, and repeated the action based on task. Again, fear of punishment was a clear leader in motivation, followed by peer pressure and reciprocity. Most participants felt that having a support system or other people engaged in pushing them to follow through with an action made them significantly more likely to do so.

This experiment reinforced the concept that audience and collaboration plays a crucial role in getting meaningful (and difficult) things done. People require support, positive feedback and rewards for their behavior, and feelings of mutual committment from others in order to feel driven to achieve.
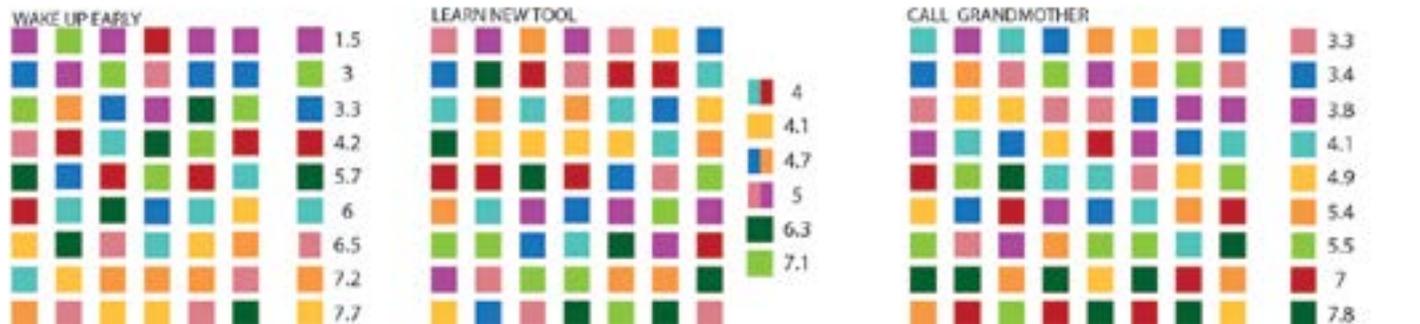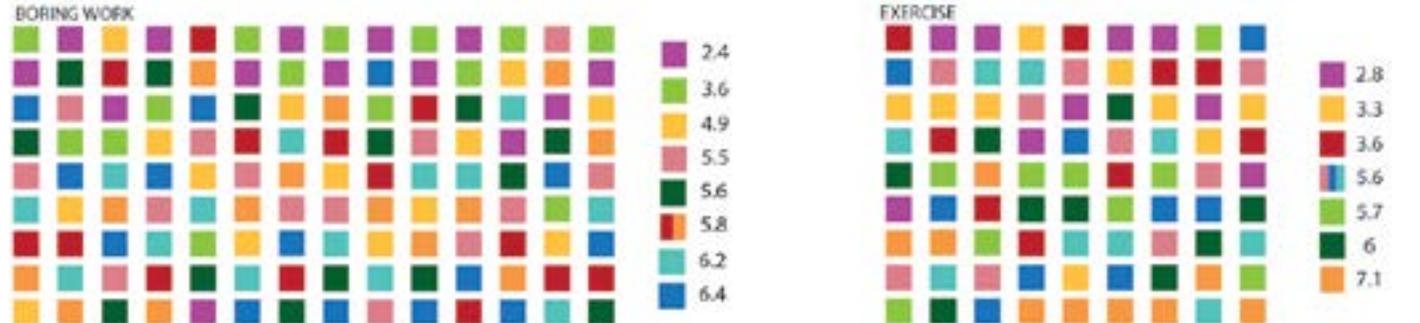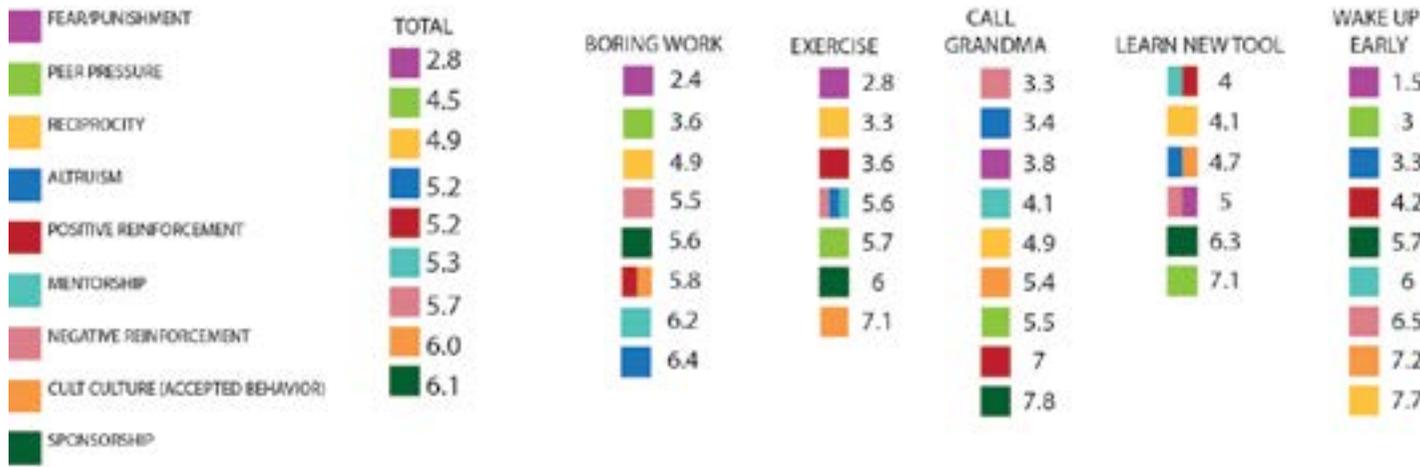
Little Good Books - Process

The Idea:
Taking small steps to make your or someone else's life better
adds up to big impact. Small Step Decks guide users to do just that.

Each deck provides you with a collection of small, daily challenges
focused on improving one of the following categories.

Do   Learn
Create   Play
Interact   Reflect
Give   Save

Each card asks you to complete a small challenge,
and briefly reflect on the experience.

The decks are a low-commitment, easy way to learn to factor these
behaviors into your daily life, and cultivate a more mindful lifestyle,
while providing a small step outside of your comfort zone.

The First Iteration:

6 Themed decks comprised of 15 cards.   7 Participants / 7 days   1 card per day

Participants were asked to build a deck comprised of three themes, follow the instructions on each card,
and record the experience on the back.

INTERACT   DO   SAVE

LEARN   GIVE   REFLECT

Compliment a stranger.

Take a mile-long walk.

Read for minutes.

Distribution:

Interact

Reflect // Do

Give // Learn

Save
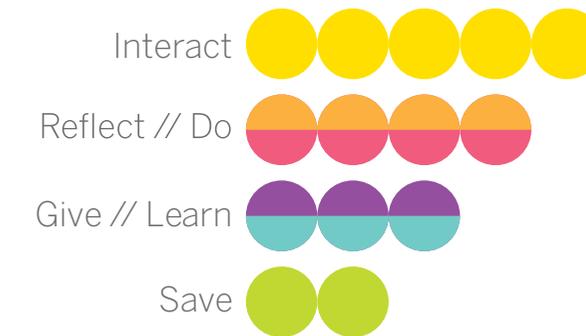
The Results:

3/7	1/7	3/7	7/7	6/7	3/7
Preferred a purely physical model.	Preferred an app.	Wanted a combination of the two or a social network.	Felt one theme would be more effective than multiple.	Chose decks based on qualities they felt that they alreadyfocus on.	Felt space for reflection or writing was a priority.
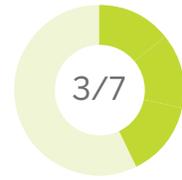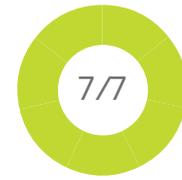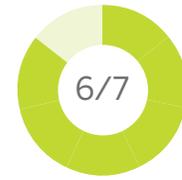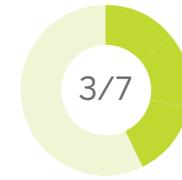
Insights:

Concerns:
- Environmental impact
- Tech vs Tangible (Which is more effective)
- Continued engagement / motivation - "Enjoy the journey"
- Taking advantage of social network or
second degree connection

Needs:
- More precious or valued packaging
- Valued enough to drive engagement
- Modifiability or multiple versions, based on personal priority
- Portability/convenience

The Iteration:
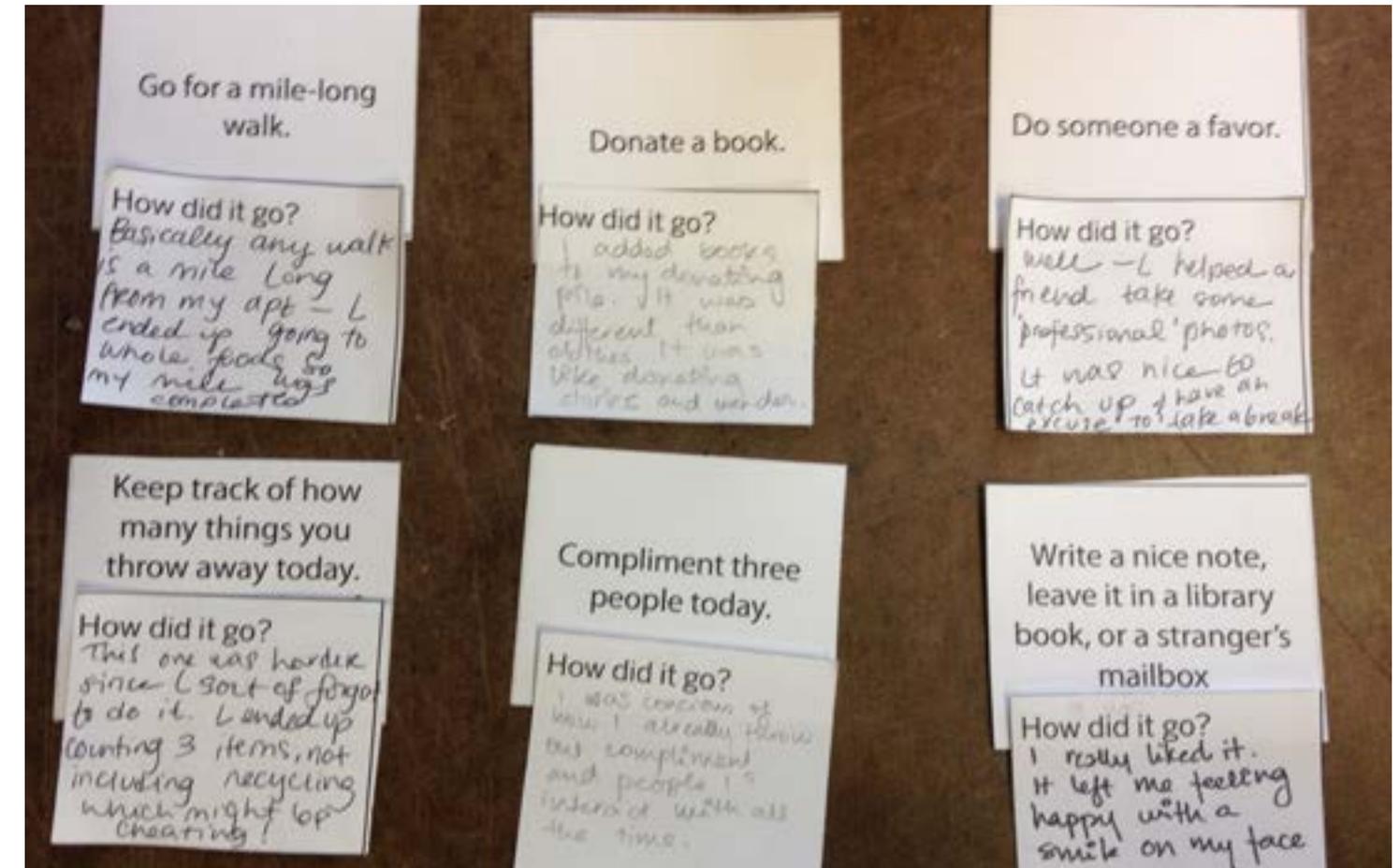
Iterations:

Combination Card Holder / Notebook
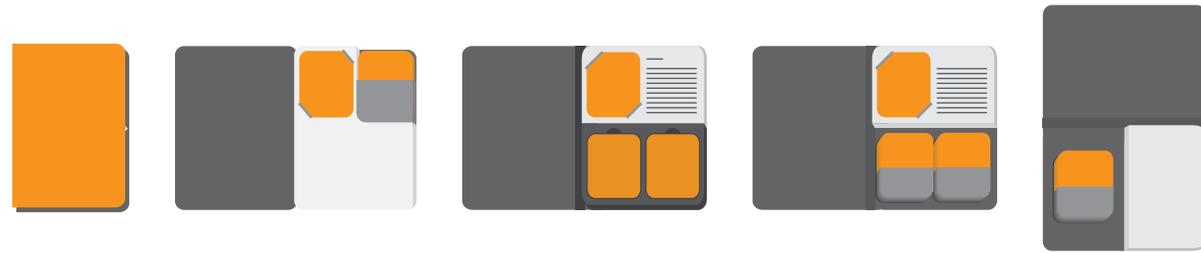
Iterations:

Notebook with Seperate Deck

Prototypes:

I experimented with a variety of different small journal/planner type prototypes, distributing them to participants to test out and respond to.

Sunday // April 26, 2014

TO DO TODAY:
PEEL ME

TO DO TODAY:
PEEL ME

TO DO TODAY:
PEEL ME TO GET A CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY!

USE ME TO WRITE DOWN DAILY PLANS OR TO-DOS

WHEN YOU ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING, TEAR OFF THE CORRESPONDING TRIANGLE

INTERACT CHALLENGES

REFLECT CHALLENGES

SAVE CHALLENGES

LEARN CHALLENGES

DO CHALLENGES

GIVE CHALLENGES

Friday // April 25, 2014
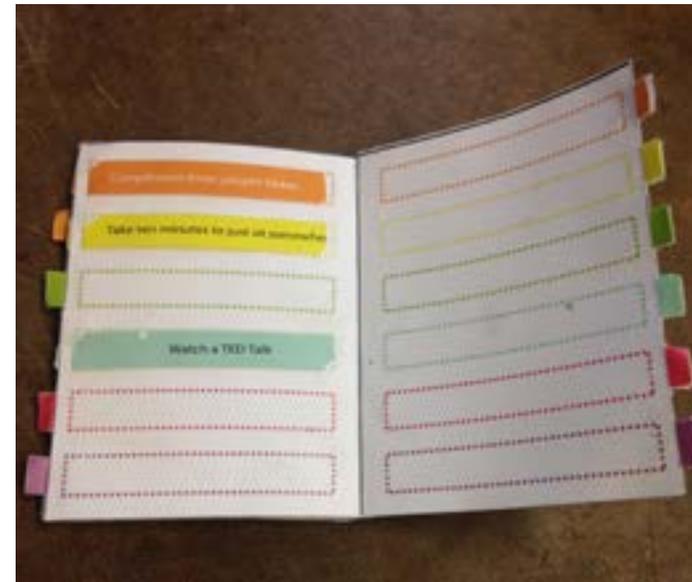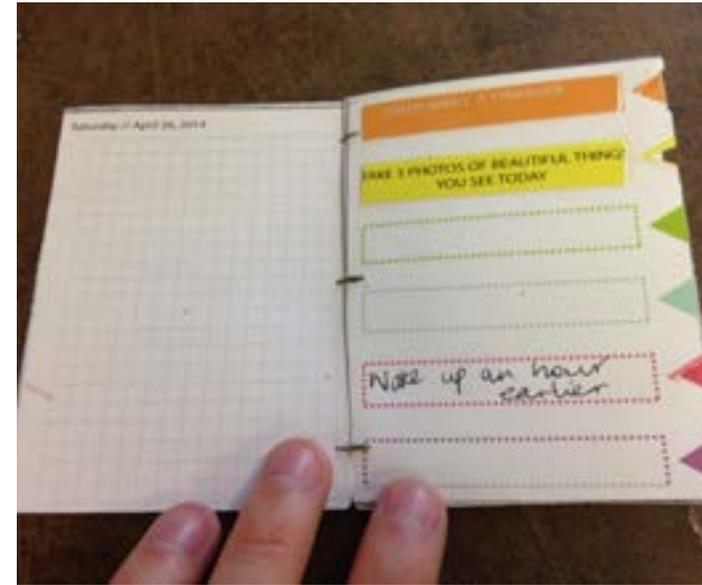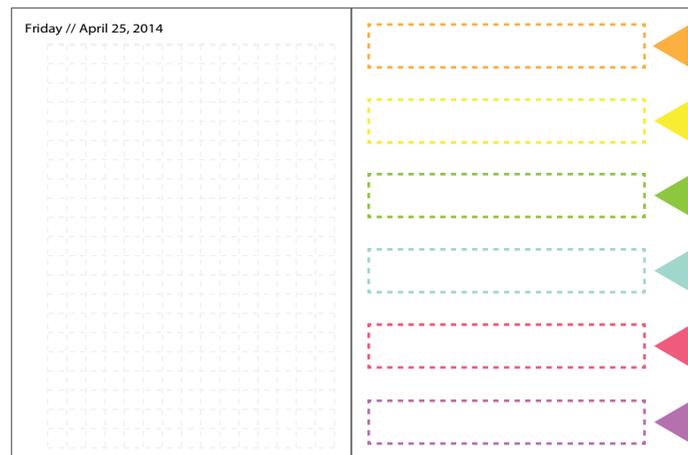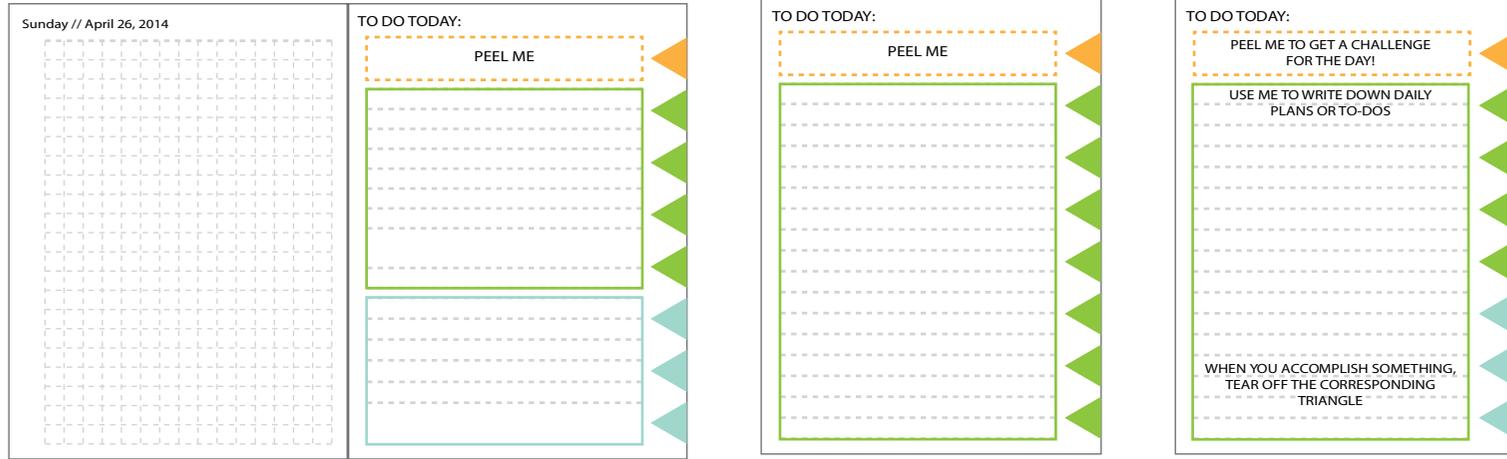
Social Economy - Process

In order to attempt articulate and prototype the concept of a favor-driven social network, I created a google doc based program, with the intent of testing how such a network would work within the RISD campus.

I asked approximately fifty people to fill out a brief google form, in which they were asked to compile a list of tasks or favors they were willing to provide in exchange for something else, by checking off options from a provided list. These options were categorized into physical, small daily favors, technical, creative, and organization categories, and each list provided an "other" option, which participants were encouraged to try to fill in creatively.
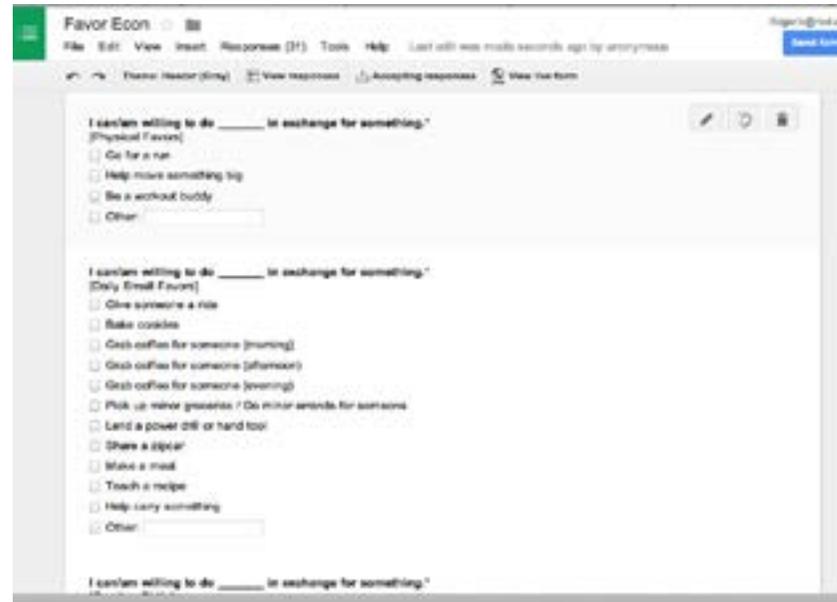
Using the results of the 31 responses I received, I proceeded to develop a pair of google spreadsheets intended to mimic the functionality of a similar social network.

The first document, titled "Trading Profiles," provided each user with an individualized sheet intended to serve as their "profile page." This page showcased their name, offered skills, contact information, and an optional wishlist function to fill in with services or trades they may have been seeking.

The second, and more utilitarian, doc was titled "Search by Skill," and provided participants the ability to do just that. Each sheet is dedicated to one of the categories of skills, and every user willing to provide any skill or task is listed underneath it. The document also included a "classifieds" page, with the intent of people essentially listing needs and seeking out participants for them. The document allowed users to seek out specific things, and e xplore what others had listed or added. Using both documents, users could get inspired, add their names to lists, communicate with others, and edit their profiles.

Some interesting suggestions were listed in the classifieds, but very little action actually occured besides some casual skillsharing in studio., most likely as a result of the fact that the last two weeks of school are rarely the peak of altruism or commitment for students.

Despite producing minimal actionable results, the spreadsheet proved how easy it can be to build a database based on unique skill, willingness, and interest, and could really be a useful tool so long as users become fluent, comfortable, and accustomed to using it. It offered some clear windows for collaboration, sharing, and creative use of a community, simply based on the responses people filled it with.

Going Forwards

Facing the end of my exploration, I'm forced to truly consider the larger intended impact of this project, and where I see it going in the future.

We live in a time where developing new, innovative, exciting tools is truly easy. The affordability of such innovation offers the same dilemma as every major industrial and technological movement before now: how can we build towards something not just profitable monetarily, but profitable socially? How do we develop new, and simultaneously fix the problems we've generated in the past?

Despite the seeming hopelessness of environmental, political, and social issues, we have the ability to move forward and create more rapidly effective solutions than ever before: the kind that grow on the exponential scale.

Taking small steps towards becoming a more efficient, responsible, aware, and mindful society begins by doing so on the individual level. Ideally, models such as mine will help people begin to make the transition from simply existing, driven by an individual purpose, to providing, building, and benefitting society at large.