

getOUT

doSOMETHING

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CSE 440 | Contextual Inquiry

October 20, 2009

Problem and solution overview

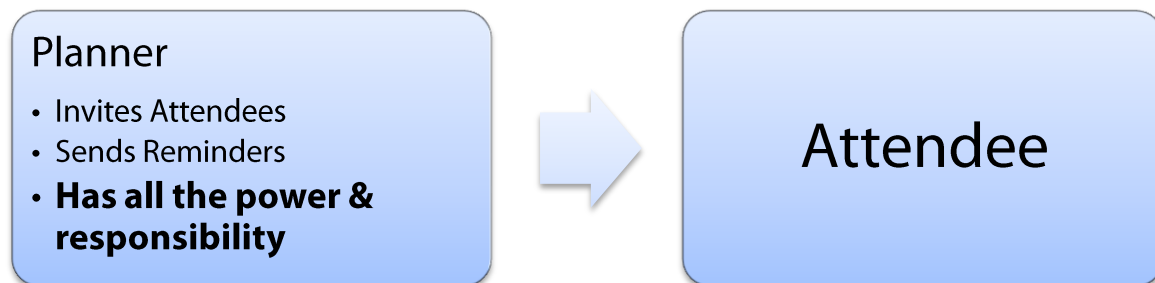
getOUT is for the average citizen who wants to take part in their community. People *want* to be involved and do something in their communities – clean up a neighboring park, play a soccer game, see a representative speak, or take advantage of a big sale – but too often they just don't know about it. Some of these events are currently advertised in newspapers, magazines, or online, but until now, there has not been any centralized interface where someone can get all this information.

getOUT makes discovering events and activities easy by finding local, personalized events based on a user's preferences and GPS/location technology. The user's mobile device uses its GPS capabilities to place the user on a map, then queries getOUT's online database for results nearby. The user has the ability to limit results to certain criteria, such as events within walking distance or events that are free. getOUT is the easy to use, complete collection of all the events going on in America. All you need to do is pick up your phone and *getOUT!*

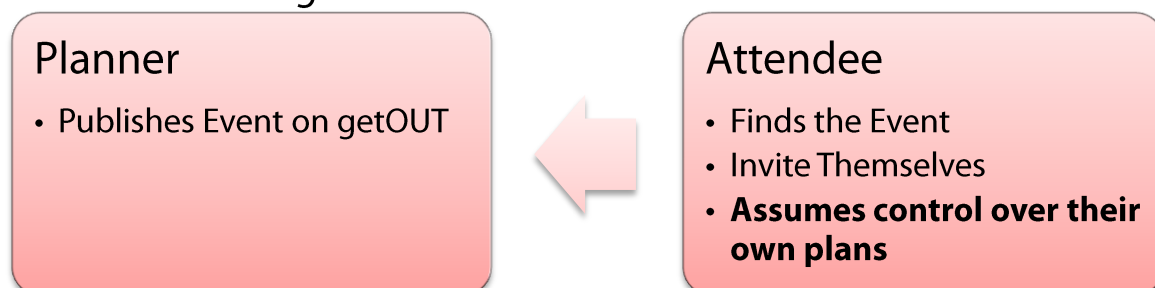


The Big Idea

Traditional Event Model



Event Model with getOUT



Contextual inquiry participants

getOUT has two target audiences – the people looking for events to attend and the event planners looking to publicize their event. For our contextual interviews, we found people from both sides to help us with the creation of a complete product that works well for both types of user.

Event Publishers

Jolynn is an officer of a registered student organization (RSO) at the University of Washington. She was chosen as an interviewee because some of her key duties as an officer include organizing and publicizing club activities, and we needed to understand the actions of both promoters and attendees. Her club's activities are meant to promote cultural awareness, socialization among members, and service and community outreach. As a student, she has to balance her many commitments and find a way to carry out her responsibilities, hopefully in the easiest and most timely way possible. In her room, we observed how she went about planning and executing an advertising campaign for an event via different media, including online listings, emails, Facebook events and messages, posters, and flyers. All the while, we asked her to explain why she chose specific avenues to reach her target audiences and what methods she thought were most important in accomplishing her task. Because of the inherent in-group nature of clubs, many RSO's have trouble reaching constituents outside their membership or the university's student body, even when they hold events that are open to the public.

Jody is a middle-aged mother who works as a campaign manager for Terri Caditz, a politician running for a position on the Mercer Island School Board. Her responsibility is to organize events where the community can meet and discuss issues with Ms. Caditz. She has also coordinated fundraisers for Mercer Island High School and knows the difficulty firsthand of letting the public know about events: making her a perfect master of organization to learn from! During the contextual inquiry, she wasn't planning any events, so we role-played to her most recent event to learn what she had done. She talked about the different advertising decisions she had to make. She also calls upon her trusted email list to help get the word out. She feels that there's never enough she can do when advertising an event. When we proposed what we were working on, she was very excited and gave some valuable input!

Event Attendees

Gabrielle is a senior in college as well as a social butterfly. We chose to interview her because she lives in a sorority and is constantly surrounded by fun activities. She likes having fun with her friends and going to as many events as possible in one night. School is important, but so is socializing. She is invited every week to multiple parties and usually has a hard time deciding which ones to go to. We followed Gabrielle's decision process throughout the night, especially monitoring how she kept in contact with friends. The major deciding factors in her choice to attend events include: how much homework she has, which friends were invited and the amount of friends that are attending.

Chance was a model for a large demographic we were trying to learn about; someone new to an area with free time and an open schedule. Being a Freshman at the University of Washington, he clearly represented this demographic! We desired to understand how a new Freshman went about deciding what to do with his or her Saturday, given that it was unlikely that a new Freshman would have already established strong social groups or regular routine activities in Seattle. He is currently the roommate of one of the project group members, which allowed the contextual inquiry to occur in his own room, beginning as soon as he awoke Saturday morning. The apprentice asked Chance to go about his morning as he usually would, thinking out loud as he determined what to do. Notes were taken on his actions and reasoning, and questions for more information were asked as needed.

Contextual Inquiry Results

Coordination with Friends

One of the common high-level themes that had a profound impact on event decision and scheduling was the activities of friends. Chance, for example, wanted to know first thing in the morning what his other friends were doing, which of them had free time and may be looking for something to do that day, and what activities his friends may already be planning to attend. This information was the primary guide for scheduling the use of his free time throughout the day. Gabrielle reiterated that what events her friends were planning on attending was the primary factor in determining which events they would attend – interest in the event itself was almost always secondary in determining whether or not they would go. Friends were also the primary source of event options, as searching for an event would usually only occur if no friends already had events they were planning on attending.



Discovering available events

While friends were the most significant factor in event scheduling, it was closely followed by the desire to learn of desirable events going on that day. Participants related that if friends didn't have strong or appealing plans, they then wanted to be able to find an event to make good use of available free time. Locality, type of event, and cost were all important in finding an event that looked like fun. The weather forecast for the day was also brought up as an important consideration, as the weather in large part dictated what events were viable as well as what transportation options were viable. Participants noted that a consolidated listing of local events would be greatly desirable, however most knew of no single resource that fulfilled that need.



Publicizing events

Advertising is always an issue for any organization, particularly so when resources are limited. One can use a local newspaper, sidewalk signs, post flyers, buy a radio commercial, etc. to get the word out. Some of these methods are expensive or take significant work to prepare or maintain. Event publishers we talked to also used email chains; they would email their friends and ask people to forward the email along. This isn't very efficient because people who aren't connected to this email chain may never hear the announcement. Another issue is that every one of these methods used individually will only reach a limited audience. To announce an event to the whole public an advertiser must use a diverse set of advertising methods, which is likely to be expensive.



New and existing Tasks

Easy: Find an Existing Event



It's Friday, and James just finished his sushi dinner at Umi Sake House in downtown Seattle with a group of friends. The night is far from over (after all, the early Happy Hour ends at 8), and they're anxious to move on to their next activity. However, they all came to the restaurant without a plan for what happens after, preferring to just wing it and go with whatever piqued their interest. Sometimes, they simply want to lie low and frequent a favored bar, or go back to one of their places for video games and movies. Other times, they find a copy of this week's *Seattle Weekly* and make their way to a local concert featured within its music calendar, look up show times for the latest blockbuster movie, or call up some friends to see what others are up to.

James and his friends epitomize the people who are just looking for something to do relatively soon on a night with some extra free time. Comfortable just hanging with friends, they also wouldn't mind something more new and exciting if it seems accessible, affordable, and fun. Despite having opportunity beforehand to research different sources and find out events, they either prefer to be more spontaneous, want to decide with everyone in the group, or are too lazy to do any advanced planning.

Moderate: Publicize a New Event



Fred is a promoter for a local rock band, The Flying Mongooses. They've just booked a 21+ show next month at Neumos and they need to get the word out soon so that people can take advantage of pre-sale prices. He goes about his normal routine for advertising band. First, he posts up notices on all the sites and periodicals that disseminate local music concert information, such as Craigslist and *The Stranger*. While online, he also updates the band's social networking sites (including MySpace and Facebook), notifying fans of the concert and the early-bird special. Then, he delegates advertising duties to his workers, assigning streets for them to cover with The Flying Mongooses posters. However, Fred is still not satisfied. These measures, along with word-of-mouth, are enough to ensure a venue decently filled with fans. But, he wants to expand the band's fan base and entice more people to come to the show.

Like many promoters, Fred feels like he can never do enough public relations work for an event. He already has a set routine of things to do that manages to get the word out to a loyal fan base and the 'regulars' in the Seattle rock scene, but there is room for improvement and additional methods of distributing information to those who would find it most useful. His success as a promoter is dependent on the number of people who show up to the event, which is largely in part influenced simply by the number of people who find out about the event and would be interested in it.

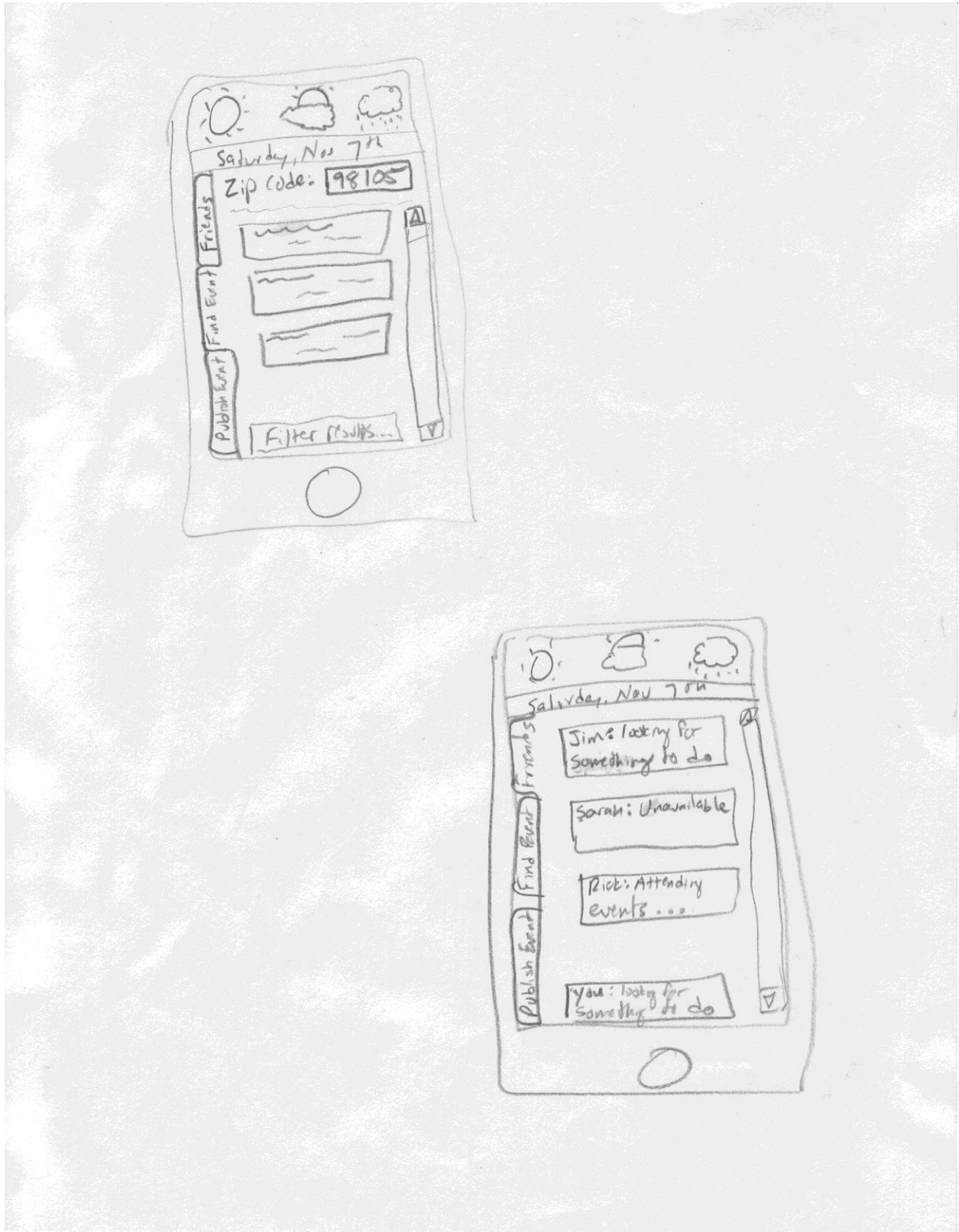
Difficult: Coordinate with Friends



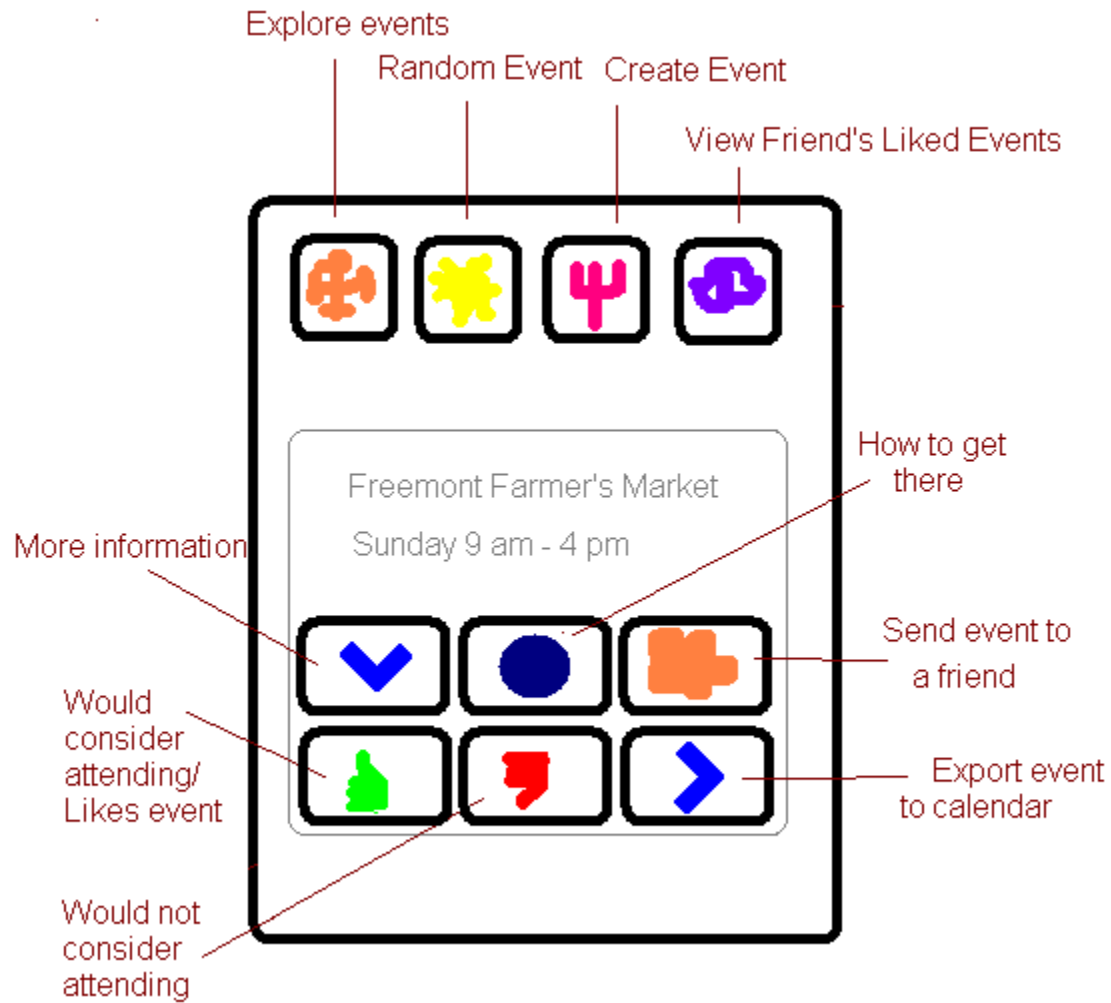
19-year old Lauren wants to try something new in Fremont because it's one of the closest cities to her current residence. She has no idea what she wants to do and doesn't really have a preference. As long as there is a new event, close to her house and free, she'll be happy. However Lauren does not like to attend events alone and wants to know which of her friends are available and what events they would be interested in going to. Coordinating this information among all her friends, however, is not always an easy task.

She has many friends that could be doing all sorts of things at the moment. In addition, sometimes her friends are flaky, saying they'll go to an event and then backing out at the last minute, which causes others to back out because the group size has dwindled and leaves Lauren with nothing to do. Lauren would love a way to quickly and easily discover the current status of all her friends as far as if they are free and looking for something to do, as well as a way to propose events to her friends and get feedback on which ones they think are interesting enough to truly commit to.

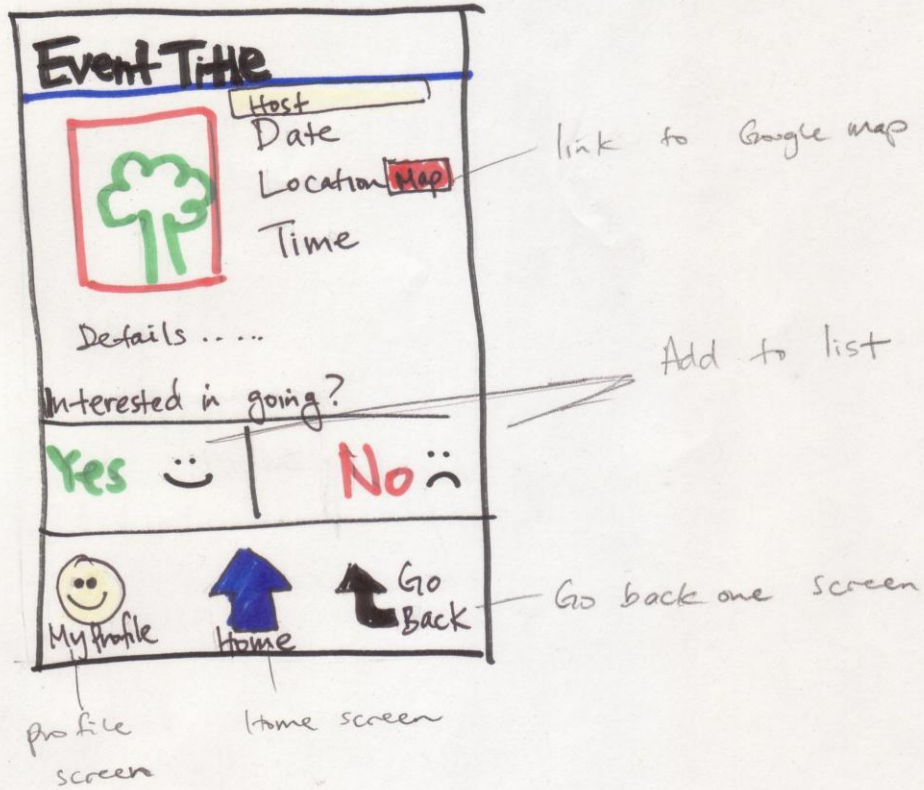
Sketches (1 of 4)



Sketches (2 of 4)



Sketches (3 of 4)



Sketches (4 of 4)

