

Inclusive design + Precise implementation

Nikita Larter's Design Portfolio

I'm Nikita

A product designer from the Western Arctic! During my five to nine, you can find me at local queer events, creating art, or exploring Toronto's bike trails. I am also:



Bug's mom

AKA Baby Cat



A Mariah fanatic

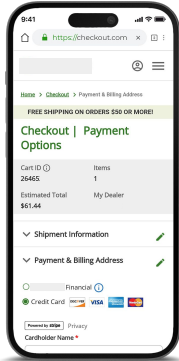
Do you know about her acting career?



A thrill seeker

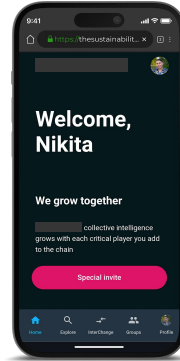
Find me on the biggest coaster

Recent works



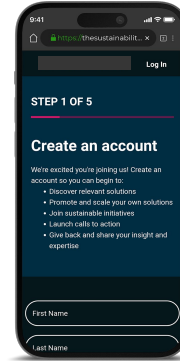
**A Smooth
Checkout Process**

UX Strategy



**Shaping Functionality
for Impact**

Product Development



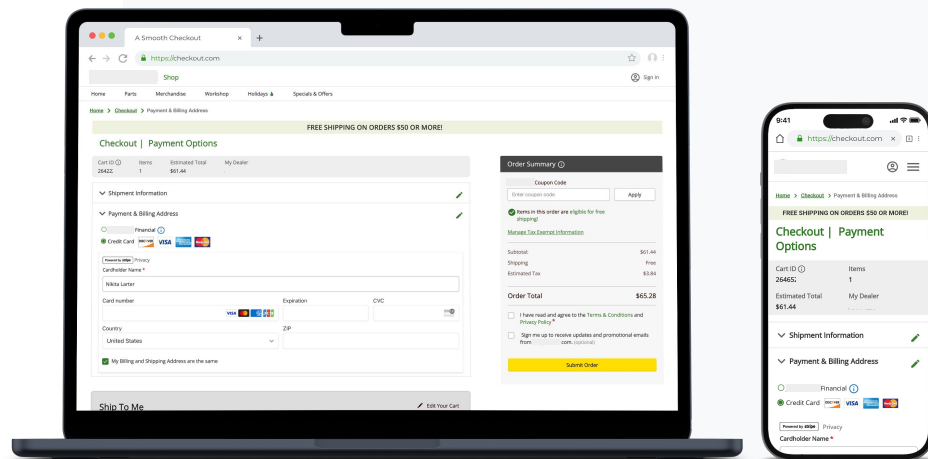
**Making Sign-up
Intuitive**

Product Redesign

UX Strategy

A Smooth Checkout Process

Optimizing the e-commerce checkout for a leading agricultural solutions provider to increase revenue and enhance user experience.



Background

Our client launched a new e-commerce platform in 10 months, centralizing key products and services.

Six months later, the rapid deployment and feature prioritization led to substantial technical debt, hindering strategic goals.

I joined the project when analytics revealed a significant revenue gap, requiring the attention of the product teams.

Retail

Duration

4 months

Team

Individual designer working with 3 teams

My role

Business analysis, design mentorship, strategic planning, UX research

Tools

Adobe Analytics, Confluence, Figma, JIRA, MURAL, SharePoint

How can we increase conversion rates to the level of the previous website?

Challenge presented to product owners

Feature work took priority over BAU and tech debt, leading the UX team to believe solutions lay in team backlogs. The amount of UX debt also raised concerns about its impact on the checkout flow.

The UX team hypothesized that addressing this debt would enhance the checkout experience and improve conversion rates. The challenge was prioritizing this work in sprint planning.

Client product owners:

**Which UX
improvements should
we include in sprint
planning?**

Recognizing the growing tech debt, client POs asked the UX team to prioritize the UX debt.

Already at capacity, the UX team tasked me with compiling findings from various projects and creating a shortlist of UX priorities.

Approach

Not assigned to a product team, my approach was to:

- Gather historical context from teams
- Audit check out flow
- Prioritize UX backlog with product and UX teams
- Create detailed documentation

Process

Conduct UX audit

Collate opportunities

Clean data

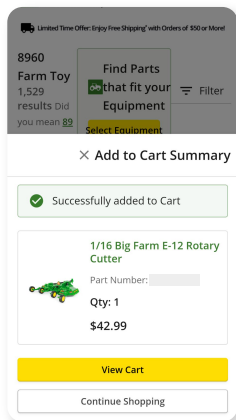
Create backlog

Identify key opportunities

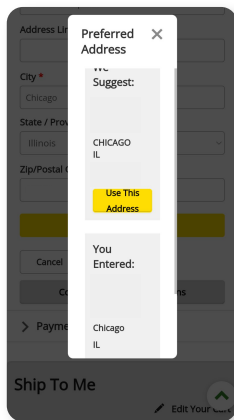
Develop recommendations

Conduct UX audit

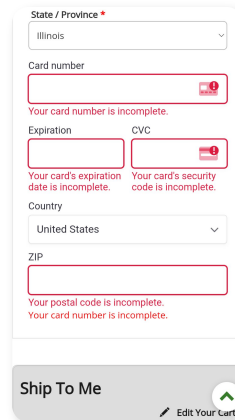
I carefully reviewed the desktop and mobile e-commerce journeys, documenting pain points, opportunities, and evidence to validate with the UX team.



A floating "Add to Cart" title with poorly responsive catalog in the background.



A modal with insufficient width for legibility and poorly responsive buttons.



Field errors with unclear required status indicators and a double error message.

Collate opportunities

Without a formal process, UX enhancements were scattered across team workspaces. I consolidated captured work in MURAL and collaborated with the UX team to define the project's scope.



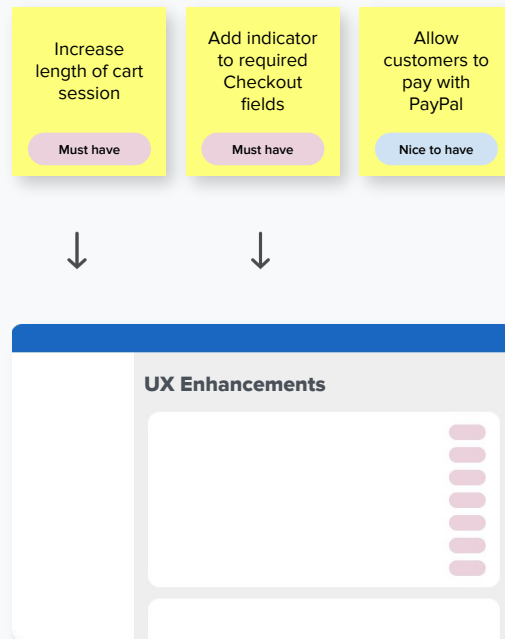
Clean findings

I organized opportunities by size, story type, and location in the flow. Then, I collaborated with product managers to categorize them into "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves."

Create backlog

After creating a JIRA backlog for the "must-haves," with a label to track its progress, I conducted the following analysis:

- Cross-referenced existing work in JIRA
- Finalized stories with analysis and assets
- Consolidated design work into one Figma file



Identify key opportunities

With the newly prioritized UX backlog, we aimed to identify key opportunities for improving conversion rates. Cross-referencing analysis with analytics, we pinpointed three areas in the checkout flow with the highest drop-off rates:



Develop recommendations

Problem areas identified, we moved into solution development. I formulated recommendations based on existing research and analysis from the audit, and shared them with product and UX leadership.

We opted for two recommendations per area: one to address the customer barrier and another to enhance the user experience.

Step	Suggested solution	Suggested enhancement
Account sign-in	Remove sign-in page from flow	Prompt sign-in within Checkout
Validate address	Remove excess CTAs	Develop consistent form error patterns
Submit order	Validate all required fields when order is submit	Validate fields upon interaction

Results

Organizing UX opportunities yielded two outcomes: strategic recommendations for quarterly planning and a prioritized UX backlog for sprint planning.

Client leadership approved and prioritized the recommendations for the upcoming quarter.

3

strategic recommendations presented to client leadership for prioritization

50%

reduction in cart abandonment through implementation of recommendations

\$3.6 million

in additional annual revenue from retained carts

Reflections

Create the processes you need

I led this project independently, as it surpassed the capacity of siloed teams. Initially, I relied on existing processes and team collaboration to deliver the recommendations. However, after exclusion from key meetings and struggling with team schedules, I realized there were processes hindering the work.

With guidance, I developed new processes to foster collaboration and advance the recommendations. This experience highlighted the importance of establishing effective workflows and confidently advocating for project needs.

Reflections

Build a network of trust

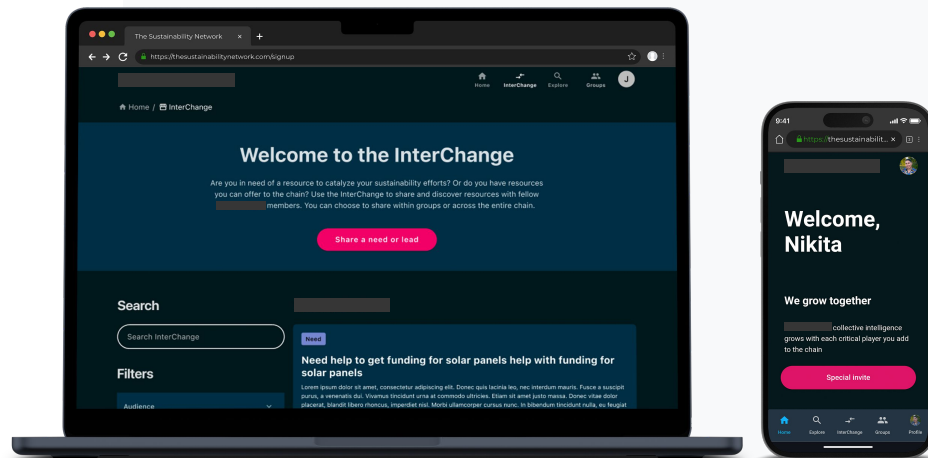
During this project, I faced ongoing resistance from key stakeholders who I thought understood and supported the work. To gain their cooperation, I hosted sessions to explain the work, answer questions, and gather input.

Ultimately, sharing the work with tertiary stakeholders shifted their participation from passive to active. As more leaders and teams became invested, I was able to secure the support of reserved stakeholders and deliver the project.

Product Development

Shaping Functionality for Impact

Leveraging user research and iterative product development to design the core features of a social media platform.



Background

My team managed Sustainability Network*, a social media platform accelerating progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals by connecting initiatives with resources.

After re-launching in 2020, we focused on improving platform capabilities to foster strategic partnerships and grow our membership base.

*pseudonym

Non-profit

Duration

4 months

Team

1 of 2 designers on an 11-person team

My role

Feature discovery, UI design, user research

Tools

Confluence, Dovetail, Figma, Google Analytics, JIRA, MURAL

Develop two features to secure a partner and boost site engagement

Challenge presented to team

A prospective partner expressed that Sustainability Network didn't fully meet their needs. To secure the partnership, our client POs promised two new features: a customized solution and a machine-learning recommendation feed to boost site engagement.

Our challenge was to deliver both within a tight timeline.



Our goal:

**Define and deliver two
feature MVPs
simultaneously**

This was our team's first opportunity to define new features. Each feature posed a unique challenge: the recommendation feed was a specific product idea while the second feature required conceptualization. We wanted to understand the client's goal for these features to ensure they achieved the desired impact.

Approach

To meet our deadline, we brought in an external team to build the machine learning engine. This allowed us to begin ideating the second feature, and we employed iterative product development to deliver both features on time.

Process

Ideate 2nd feature

Gather feed requirements

Design and scope features

Launch with new design system

Ideate 2nd feature

The second feature was for our partner but we wanted it to benefit existing members too. Guided by our UX lead, we conducted user research to identify product opportunities.

Comparing our partner's goals with user research insights, we found a common desire for a public forum, which guided the development of the new feature.

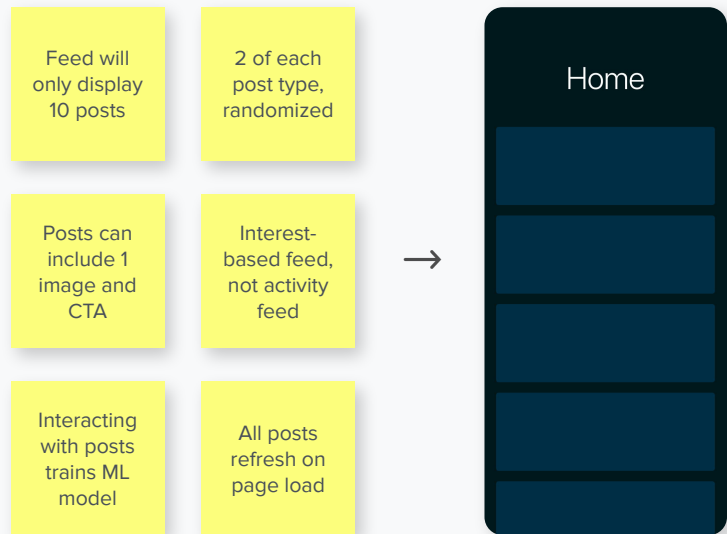
**A space for our teams
to share their work
with each other and
Sustainability
Network members.**

Partner organization

Gather feed requirements

We weren't involved in the external team's discovery for the recommendation feed, which made understanding the initial requirements challenging.

To address this, the UX lead and I created design artifacts to convey the concept to our team, allowing us to refine it with our technical and user expertise.

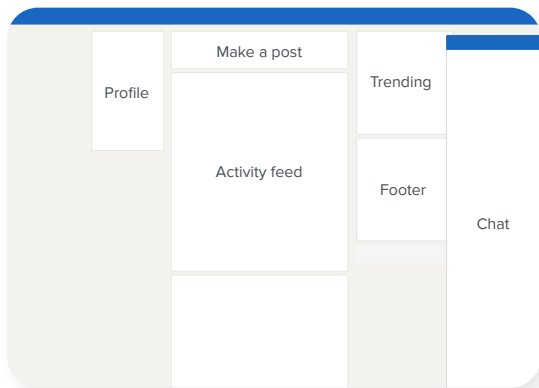


Examples of requirements for the new home feed.

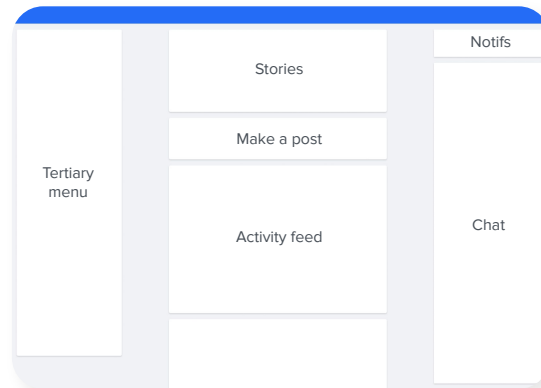
Mockup to visualize requirements.

Design and scope features

With concepts for both features, we created mockups inspired by social media platforms from our competitive analysis. Mid-fidelity mockups revealed detailed microinteractions, prompting close collaboration with our POs to decide on MVP functionality.



LinkedIn was as our primary reference, since most of our users were familiar with it.

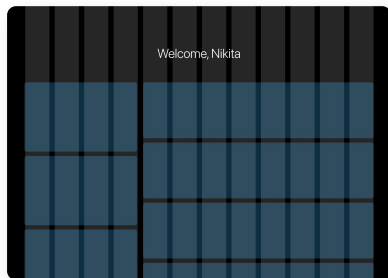


We also referenced sites like Facebook to identify essential social media functionalities.

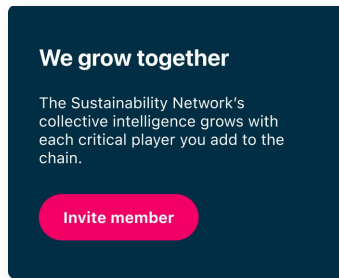
Apply new design system

To meet the client's demands for ambitious functionality, we heavily relied on our component library during design. This reduced the need for new components and helped us meet our deadline.

Existing components

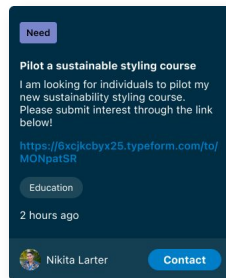


We applied an 8:4 desktop layout to align with other pages.

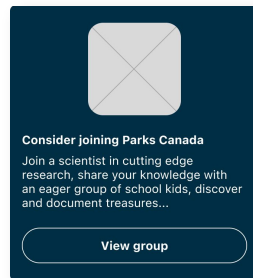


Example of a card component we used for secondary menus.

New components



Example of a forum post.



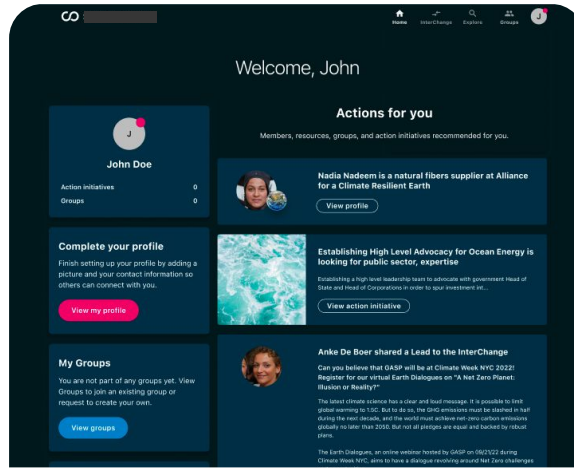
Example of a home feed post.

Results

We launched both features just in time for our partner's onboarding event. While they were the first iteration of the final products, we were proud to deliver core functionalities that significantly drove user engagement.

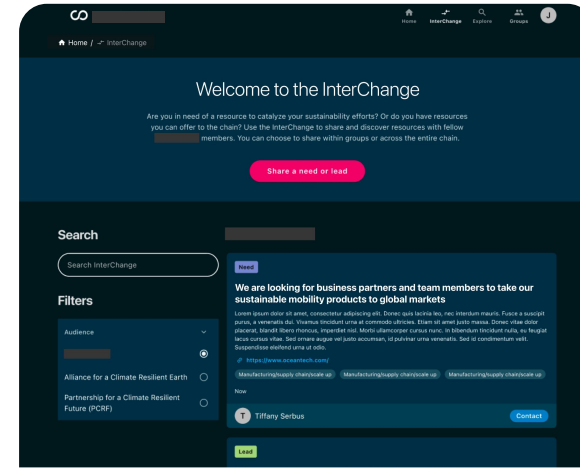
Davinci

A recommendation feed powered by machine learning.



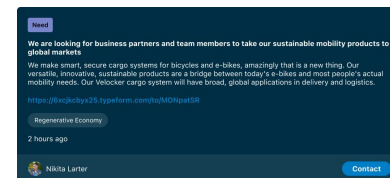
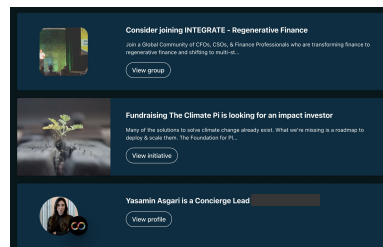
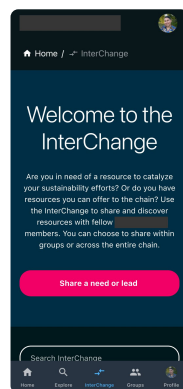
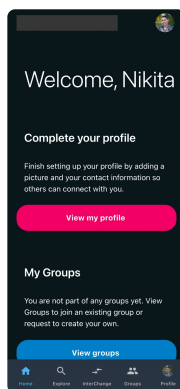
The InterChange

A forum for sharing opportunities and resources.



Design challenges

This project challenged our design process, with both technical constraints and creative differences to navigate. Only post-launch did the UX lead and I realize how these challenges had affected our designs, highlighting missed opportunities:



The Davinci and Interchange feeds were below the fold due to the secondary menu and hero banner.

There was little resemblance between posts on the Davinci and InterChange feeds.

Reflections

Iterate beyond MVP

Limited resources meant our features were often MVPs rarely revisited post-launch. This turned each release into a costly experiment, hindering meaningful user interactions and data collection. Despite having feature enhancements in our backlog, we would move on to the next feature.

When tech debt started affecting product quality, I realized the need to balance feature refinement with product development. This taught me to advocate for better resource allocation to enhance features and deliver quality products.

Reflections

Enable success with KPIs

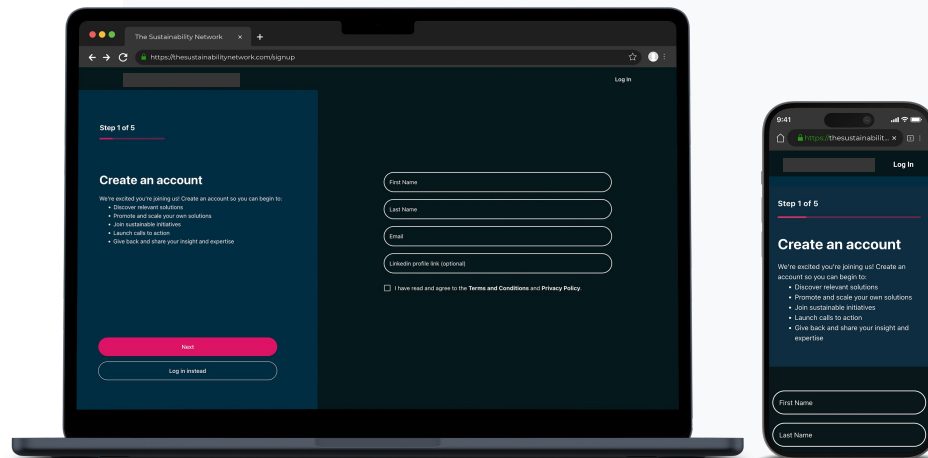
As users struggled with new features, our team's confidence in the product dropped. We aimed to create user-centric features but felt disconnected from our product strategy. Vague expectations, like building features for strategic partners, left our direction unclear.

Realizing the importance of clear goals in project success, I learned to establish KPIs for every project, big or small, to measure and guide effective product development.

Product Redesign

Making Sign-up Intuitive

Designing a simplified and consistent sign-up process to improve site membership and connect sustainability leaders.



Same team, different project

After re-launching Sustainability Network* in 2020, we focused on improving platform capabilities to foster strategic partnerships and grow our membership base.

* pseudonym

Non-profit

Duration

3 months

Team

1 of 2 designers on an
11-person team

My role

Design system management,
feature planning, UI design

Tools

Confluence, Dovetail, Figma,
Google Analytics, JIRA, MURAL

How can we improve site membership and engagement?

Client product owners

Despite grounding product decisions in user feedback, site membership and engagement were declining. We recommended focusing on site membership first, as having more members would help us understand and improve engagement. While our client focused on partnerships to attract new members, we analyzed the sign-up flow, which every member had to complete.

Our hypothesis:

**Streamlining sign-up
should directly
improve membership**

Our sign-up process was longer than most social media sites, with six to eight steps. It hadn't been updated since we relaunched and client POs often had to assist members through it. This mix of qualitative and quantitative data strongly supported the need to redesign the flow.

Approach

We began an iterative redesign process, using insights from analytics and user testing to identify key opportunities. Expecting mostly front-end updates, we were eager to implement our new design system and make the flow accessible.

Process

Identify user problems
Cue technical issues
Update design system
Implement with new styling

Identify user problems

We identified two key drop-off points: providing job information and specifying sustainability efforts. Members expressed confusion and overwhelm at these steps, highlighting opportunities for enhanced content and visual design.

PROVIDE YOUR JOB INFORMATION

Company

Position

Next

← Cancel

Users: Why do we have to provide this information?
Volunteers: Do I specify where I work or volunteer?

SELECT YOUR CHALLENGES

ADAPT DECISION SYSTEMS TO INTEGRATE/FULLY REFLECT ESG INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION

ADAPT FINANCIAL MODELS TO BE ASSESS ESG INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION

ADOPT INTEGRATED REPORTING SOLUTIONS FOR COMPREHENSIVE ESG MEASUREMENT, TRACKING AND PLANNING

BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT

CHEMICALS USE AND DISCHARGES

CONFLICT MINERALS SOURCING

CONSUMER CARE (WASHING CLOTHES, REPAIR, END OF LIFE)

DISCLOSURE/TRANSPARENCY

DISPOSABLE AND SINGLE-USE EQUIPMENT/ PRODUCT USE AND MANAGEMENT

DISTRIBUTION GHG EMISSIONS

Next

← Cancel

This 52-item list left users uncertain about whether to choose based on their current pursuits or personal interests.

Cue technical issues

While validating usability issues, our team discovered poor code quality and significant tech debt. Recognizing that it fell below our technical standards, we compiled the tech debt to renegotiate the project scope with our POs.

Examples

Inconsistent button styling

Typography styled incorrectly

Improper typography hierarchy

Inaccessible components

Manually-styled input fields

Missing validations for input fields

Apply and expand design system

With the project's scope expanding to address tech debt, we also updated our design system. This included modernizing our typography styling and increasing the contrast of our brand colors. We finished by establishing clear standards for:

- Typography & buttons
- Spacing & page break points
- Custom components

h1

72 px, bold

h2

48 px, bold

h3

28 px, bold

h4

24 px, bold

H5

20 px, semi-bold, caps

H6

16 px, semi-bold, caps

body1

16 px, regular

body2

12 px, regular

h1

3 rem, light

h2

1.75 rem, bold

h3

1.5 rem, bold

h4

1.25 rem, bold

h5

1.125 rem, bold

h6

1 rem, bold

body1

1 rem, regular

body2

.75 rem, regular

Left: Previous typography styles

Right: Updated typography styles

Implement with new styling

Using our updated style guides, we rebuilt the sign-up flow with component-based development. This effort focused on internal housekeeping, addressing knowledge gaps, adopting best practices, and refining our QA processes. These changes, along with using the component library, allowed us to precisely implement the new sign-up flow.

Buttons and links

- Desktop CTAs are as wide as the content in the button
- One primary button per page
- If there are additional buttons they become secondary or tertiary depending on the hierarchy
- Links are white or blue depending on where the link is
- CTAs with really short text (save, close, etc) are lengthened to 2 columns wide so as not to look awkward
- There are 3 variations of button sizes in the design system (S,M,L) we use exclusively /large with a couple instances of medium
 - the difference between sizes is height
- there will either be 1.5 or 2.5 rem between other content and the button so that it is easy to tap in mobile

Desktop buttons

- Dynamic widths based on length of copy
 - exception: Edit pages are 4 columns wide
- One primary per page ideally
- There can be multiple secondary + tertiary CTA per page
- There is only 1 instance of tertiary/error (delete X)
- Secondary medium button used in submenus
 - There is only 1 secondary medium button (view profile)

Hi

Secondary large (desktop)

Tertiary large (desktop)

Delete X (desktop)

Secondary medium (desktop)

Results

Members could sign up independently, resulting in a 200% increase in site membership within six months.

- ✓ 2 steps shorter
- ✓ WCAG 2.0 AA compliant
- ✓ Reusable UI components
- ✓ Enhanced validation criteria

Step 1 of 5

Create an account

We're excited you're joining us! Create an account so you can begin to:

- Discover relevant solutions
- Promote and scale your own solutions
- Join sustainable initiatives
- Launch calls to action
- Give back and share your insight and expertise

First Name

Last Name

Email

LinkedIn profile link (optional)

Step 2 of 5

Where do you work?

This will help us better connect you with relevant players, solutions and sustainability efforts underway

Position

Organization

Next

Back

Step 3 of 5

What is your role in sustainability?

Please select all of the roles you play in sustainability. This will help the system drive more meaningful connections and recommendations.

☒ **IMPACT INVESTOR**
I invest in sustainability projects and solutions

☐ **INNOVATOR / SOLUTION PROVIDER**
I provide a process, product or service solution that addresses sustainability challenges

Step 4 of 5

Which sustainability challenges are you working on?

Please indicate which sustainability challenges you are focused on towards solving. This helps the system drive more meaningful connections and recommendations.

Challenges

Solutions (optional)

Next

Back



Reflections

The cost of assumptions

Our team was surprised by the tech debt uncovered during the sign-up redesign, which doubled the project's size. Poor code quality and implementation bugs highlighted gaps in our QA processes.

To prevent future tech debt, we implemented tighter controls throughout development. More importantly, it emphasized the need to create an open environment for asking questions and learning together, alongside agile rituals and principles.

Reflections

Support decisions with evidence

I advocated for redesigning the sign-up flow and was excited when it was prioritized, marking my first opportunity influencing work prioritization. However, I was taken aback when the project came under question after the work had already begun.

Fortunately, the project's goal of removing membership barriers prevented deprioritization. This emphasized the importance of having a clear goal and evidence to support prioritization decisions and rally support.

My knowledge +
Your vision

Let's connect



Calling...

Nikita Larter

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