

## P4: Conceptual Use Study

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**A | Low-fi prototype: FreeSwitch** [Click here to view the prototype](#)

**B | Dark horse prototype: FreeMate** [Click here to view the prototype](#)

**Core user task:** Discover diverse opinions, find constructive and insightful ideas from other sides and keep the conversation going, so as to get a rewarding experience<sup>1</sup>.

### Study procedure

Our study can be roughly divided to two parts: discrete measurements for quantitative analysis, and survey questions for qualitative analysis.

For discrete measurements, we wanted to first record the time it takes for the tester to make sense of how to proceed with each page. Since we will be giving a high level description of what our website does to the testers before we proceed with the use study, ideally this time should be fairly short; otherwise it suggest the interface of that particular page does not afford the sub user task at their first glance. Next, we want to count the number of clicks our tester makes before successfully proceeding to the next page, for each step of interaction in our prototype, so as to identify misleading elements in our design. Finally, we are using a table to record the level of how self-explanatory our pages are, so that we can determine when and where to add tooltips to help users proceed with our workflow.

The survey questions are more high level feedbacks that we ask our testers to provide, which probes them to think about the overall experience with the two designs, how likely the designs will retain them to become resident users, and how closely they relate to our core user task.

Because of the tight timeline (10 minutes per testing group), we propose to take a minute or so to give high level descriptions of both prototypes before proceeding, leave around 3 mins for the testers to play with each prototype and give them hints if they stuck, and use the last minutes to ask the testes the formed survey questions. The discrete measurements will be taken in parallel by three of our teammates and the last teammate will monitor the testers and provide instructions when needed.

## Discrete measurements and Results

\* Due to logistical overheads team 1 did not have time to test on our dark horse prototype.

1. **The time it takes for the tester to make sense of how to proceed with each page.**  
(Scale: instantly <5s / fairly quick 6-10s / took a while 11-20s / took a long time >20s)

### For FreeSwitch

1. Team 1 took 20s to choose a topic from the homepage, while team 2 took 8s.
2. Team 1 took 1min 27s to understand the UI of the quotes, while team 2 took 50s.
3. Team 1 took 13s to upvote a quote while team 2 took 10s.
4. Team 1 took 10s to publish a quote while team 2 took 9s.
5. team 1 took 8s to downvote a quote while team 2 took 4s.
6. Team 1 took 1min 02s to understand the history portion while team 2 took 16s.

### For FreeMate

1. Team 2 took 15s to search for a topic.
2. Team 2 took 21s to explore the UI of search results and choose one to view details.
3. Team 2 took 4s to click on “request to join”.
4. Team 2 took 52s to explore the UI of confirmation page and send a message to host.
5. Team 2 took 4s to view who’s going.

2. **The count of clicks tester makes before successfully proceeding to the next page, for each step of interaction in our prototype.**

### For FreeSwitch

Main page -> topic page: 0 errors made for both teams.

Upvoting: Team 1 made 1 extra click as they were trying to make comment while they can’t. Team 2 made 1 extra click as they were trying to click on the most upvoted quote but observed nothing happening.

Publishing comment: Team 1 made 1 extra click as they hit the send button before inputting any text, Team 2 made 0 error clicks.

Downvoting: 0 errors made for both teams.

Others: Team 1 made 1 extra click on the history section and observed nothing happening. They were also looking for a back button to explore another topic.

### For FreeMate

Main page -> search result page: 0 errors made.

Search result -> details page: 0 errors made.

Request to join: 0 errors made.

Send message: Team 2 made 1 extra click as they were trying to enroll in the event before sending message to the host.

**3. Task based:**

<b>FreeSwitch (Team 1)</b> Completion level \Task	Dive into a topic from homepage	Upvote for the other side	Publish comment	Downvote for own side
Completed without assistance				
Completed with assistance				
Partially completed without assistance				
Partially completed with assistance				
Fail to complete the task				

<b>FreeSwitch (Team 2)</b> Completion level \Task	Dive into a topic from homepage	Upvote for the other side	Publish comment	Downvote for own side
Completed without assistance				
Completed with assistance				
Partially completed without assistance				
Partially completed with assistance				
Fail to complete the task				

<b>FreeMate (Team 2)</b> Completion level \Task	Search for a topic hosted in some location	Click in a listing to view detail	Join the event	Post comment	View who's coming
Completed without assistance					
Completed with assistance					
Partially completed without assistance					
Partially completed with assistance					
Fail to complete the task					

## Survey questions

1. How was your experience in using both prototypes? Which one do you think is more interesting to play with?
  - a. Team 1 takes some time to explore and understand the UI of FreeSwitch, and they make some extra clicks when trying to complete tasks. They think this prototype is interesting, since they feel like they are playing games when interacting with others. However, due to logistical overheads they do not have time to test on FreeMate.
  - b. Team 2 spends more time in understanding our dark horse prototype FreeMate than understanding FreeSwitch, and they fail to complete one task in FreeMate. But they think FreeMate is more interesting since they can ask friends to attend the same event and it is easier to make new friends on FreeMate.
2. Which one of the prototypes invites you to use the design again in the future?
  - a. Team 1 states that if we can make FreeSwitch more interactive (for example, shorten the time frame), they will be more likely to use the design in future.
  - b. Team 2 is more likely to use FreeMate than FreeSwitch in the future, since they also consider that users might not return to FreeSwitch as 30-minute is too long, and FreeMate allows them to search for interesting topics whenever they want.
3. Our core user task is [1]. Which prototype is more effective in helping you achieve the task in your opinion?
  - a. Team 2 considers FreeSwitch is more effective in discovering diverse opinions, since the mechanisms force users to dive into different perspectives as they can only upvote the constructive and insightful quotes from other sides.

## Reflections

In the process of conducting the survey, Team 1 and Team 2 could both easily understand what our prototype aim to do, especially the dark horse prototype given the Airbnb analogy. They also liked the FreeSwitch idea as it's gamifying the free speech process, which they found pretty interesting. Furthermore, they did not come across too much difficulty in the testing process, once we give them some minimal hints. So in our opinion, our prototype is reasonably intuitive.

There are still some parts that can be improved. For one thing, we need to consider our downvote operation in the FreeSwitch. This could be confusing, since testers did ask why they need a button to downvote for their own side. Therefore, we should find a better way to implement this function. For example, we can add another operation for users to report the ideas which are not actually from or relevant to their side. Besides, for FreeMate, many testers

are not likely to post their comments, which is not easy for the hosts to review. So we might add some hints which shows the importance of those comments, like what we often find on LinkedIn; that is, the hosts are 20% more likely to accept your request once you complete the comment.

Also, both teams mentioned that we need to re-think about the timeframe of how often we switch sides, because 30 minutes is a bit awkward. They suggested that we can either make the timeframe longer (e.g. a day so that people only need to check back on a daily basis) or shorter (e.g. 10 minutes so that people will stay for a number of rotations to get their ideas exposed). Some moderation and sufficient user traffic is also crucial to the success of both our prototypes.