

Discourse

Spec Status: Final Draft

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I want to move forward to build this product with a cross-functional team in the Co.Lab Program.

Yes

No

Sources: College student loneliness statistics and studies:

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Friendship in the US:

<https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss/>

<https://nypost.com/2019/05/09/why-the-average-american-hasnt-made-a-new-friend-in-5-years/>

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Loneliness in US

<https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss/>

<https://www.scienceofpeople.com/loneliness-statistics/#:~:text=Loneliness%20Life%20Hacks-,Are%20you%20lonely%3F,their%20life%20knew%20them%20well.>

<https://socialself.com/loneliness-statistics/>

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Social Media problems

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<https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/why-do-people-use-social-media#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20recent%20survey,purpose%20of%20social%20media%20is.>

<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-october-global-statshot>

Summary

Discourse is an app for college students focusing on taking a collectivist approach to (audio, not just text) group chats via majors, community, interests, backgrounds, or certain hot topics. The app will also help users find/create in-person and online events that the app itself can promote/host, where users can then meet. No profile will show the number of likes or followers, as the app is based on showing your true genuine self with the focus of interacting with others vs. making comparisons etc.

Problem Background

Problem: People want to interact, not react, on social media. People are tired of social media and its algorithm focusing on getting the most reactions vs. people truly interacting with each other. Social media has lost its sense of community and swayed away from its core purposes. Another problem is the legitimacy of users and bots ruining the trust of platforms. Time after time, data shows that increased social media use is linked with increased mental health issues and depression.*

Goals

- Helping users find and join communities they resonate with for them to meet in person through community-sponsored events, eventually
- Get users involved in a timed audio group chat to talk about specific hot topics around them or in general
- Give users access to then broaden their connections with other college students who are using the app as well.

User Stories

Put 3-5 user stories here. Keep it high level. As a <type of user>, I want to <goal to be accomplished>, so that <reason for the goal>.

As a college student, I want to make sure I am getting the most out of making college connections so that I do not get FOMO.

As an undergrad, I want to connect more with students of my background to become closer to my community.

As a freshman, I want to know where to meet people and see what university clubs I fit best with; this way, I don't have to waste time trying to fit in.

As an introvert, I do not have enough extroverted energy to constantly put myself out there, and wish there was a way for me to talk to others more effortlessly but also back out whenever needed.

Raj is an 18-year-old Indian college freshman, he lives in Seattle, Washington, USA; he loves playing video games and soccer and wants to find other people who have similar hobbies/interests as him, as well as a background perhaps. He will get on the app and be able to interact with the community of his background via audio chat and then see and meet other students he would like to talk to and meet through the app event section as well in the hopes that he will see these people in person.

Proposed Solution

- The app only allows college emails as user login, so there are no bots
- University leaders of communities, clubs, greek life, etc., will be able to host rooms for users and will be given the option to approve or disapprove of certain users
- Hot Topics of the day will be on a certain time-to-time basis where students join rooms of max 20 ppl and discuss the topics and get to know each other

Scenarios

Scenario:

- 1) The user wants to meet new people in the city he just moved into.
- 2) The user opens the app.
- 3) User finds and chooses to join chat rooms based on the question topics, community chat rooms, or name of chat room.
- 4) User then can find events in said city that are also relevant to his/her background, interests.

5) User can also choose to invite or meet up with other users that were met in the chat rooms.

6) User can RSVP to events through the app that are public or private.

Measuring Success | Co.Lab Success Metrics

What would you consider success to look like by Demo Day for your team? What would be the definition of done for your product by that point? Note: This should be finalized as a team.

Certain specific necessary features of MVP:

- University email domain login
- Creating a waitlist for users for marketing exclusivity (this can entail something unique depending on certain factors)
- Choosing what clubs, groups, or organizations a user identifies with or wants to become a part of before using the app--*Organizations decide if they want their own chat rooms
- Having Topics of the day chat rooms that open during certain times (5 PM - 2 am) and people get notified that they are live, and if a friend joins one
- Having users able to create rooms and become temporary hosts inside of the Topic of the day's chat room topics
- Users have an aura around them that lights up when they speak.
- Users having a mute button (super essential)
- Users being able to invite people in their contacts to join the waitlist and also able to invite friends who already have the app to join their room
- Users must have a profile picture and can show their age, where they are from, description etc.
- Users should be able to friend others through audio chat rooms and/or community chat rooms.

*New: 3 layers of audio chats

Product Success Metrics

Consider metrics you'd want to measure to consider the product a success. How would we know if we've solved the problem? What are the things we'd want to measure?

Specific software: Possibly use Django in the backend?

We would know we are solving the problems based off user surveys (did the app help you find a community you did not know about very well, help you find friends and meet new people in person, etc.? DAO growth and time on the app should be measured for each user, and these would be very important to see as the overall indicator of success but can vary depending on user experiences. How many times did they engage in a conversation? How many clubs did they join?

Milestones & Timeline

What are the milestones and project stages within Co.Lab? How will you consider your roll-out plan? What about extending beyond?

Will be discussed with my team.

Open Questions / Appendix

***Not everything mentioned will probably make it to the MVP realistically, BUT if data goes in the direction of students wanting to find and join more events on or off campus, I have code from my last startup that is similar to this idea (in react-native) that could help bolster progress if devs are up for it.

Self-explanatory?

Useful Resources

A bunch of templates

On user stories: <https://www.mountangoatsoftware.com/agile/user-stories> On your overall product's definition of done: <https://plan.io/blog/definition-of-done/>

Discourse



(stock photo)

COLAB - The Dream Team.

Link to Live Product:

Link to Spec Document:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xR1yHeQFV4F8oZX7_V0eUC7kQwmd4Y_TBIqI5LMi5QE/edit#

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Product Experience

Problem Statement

Currently, people are yearning for more authentic ways of interacting with others on social media. They want to meet others by joining communities they feel a sense of belonging to and have meaningful conversations based on trending topics. However, social media has swayed to offer ways for people to meet others genuinely or conveniently strengthen their current friendships and community bonds through audio chat groups. This product addresses this problem by providing a solution for more authentic social media interactions.

Problem Space/Background

The social media industry has reached approximately 39.7 Billion dollars of revenue in 2021 according to Grand View Research, and is continued to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 23.6% from 2022 to 2030. Despite this seemingly exponential growth, social media today has continued to brew toxicity, becoming

unsafe for many users. The kind of content that has continued to find its way online is too sensationalized and is increasingly damaging healthy relationships. Most people online seek cheap popularity and attention and are no longer remorseful or sensitive about the information they put out and whomever it hurts. The urge to be the first to share information, to get the most likes, or get the most followers have made people heartless on social media, and they've perpetuated the spread of fake news and propaganda. Social media platforms have allowed the spread of hate speech, facilitated terrorism, and caused depression and interest, and the owners don't seem to care about the consequences. Because of this, many people don't feel safe anymore on social media. Some have deactivated their accounts, while the worst has happened for some; they've committed suicide. This toxic environment became even worse when extremist politicians in Myanmar contributed to the genocide of the Rohingya people after horrific messages were spewed online. This attention-seeking behavior has left people vulnerable to dangerous propaganda and influence campaigns.

Although most social media platforms are free to join and use, they are not as accessible as they're portrayed. There is a price we are all paying, and we are doing so by unknowingly giving the makers of these platforms access to troves of our data when we use their applications. Companies dealing with data are willing to pay millions of dollars to get their hands on this data mined by social media applications, and it's being sold to the highest bidder without the owners' knowledge. The large amounts of data collected every minute from users present a new avenue for collecting more revenue. This data collection has continued to flourish because most social media users don't understand the value of their data and are illiterate about it,

so it's become more common to expose themselves to malicious activity out of gullibility accidentally. Facts: According to McDermott, the number of people using some social media sites ranging from ages 18-24 decreased by 3 percent in 10 months. 81% of social media users feel unsafe sharing their private information.

Social media has become about money; every click or scroll you make today is an ad here, an ad there, an ad up, and another ad down. Social media is more bloated with ads, and even in the individual posts you see on social media, chances are someone is trying to sell you something whether you want it or not. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram are all turning into marketplaces. There's less organic content that isn't trying to sell you something, and the makers seem to be okay with that as long as it brings in the bucks for them. The platforms have become more about quantity and commercialization than a place to connect with friends and family. "In many ways, social media died when it stopped being social and became about making money when we stopped being users and became products." — Enrique Dans. The new generation, Gen z, however, is different. They don't want to share everything and anything with a big group. Instead, they prefer to do everything via chat with a select group or one-to-one. And this is where we see a new trend developing. Chat communication has been around for a long time now. First, it started as text messaging, then it moved to online messaging, and now, website help chat is part of most customer-facing businesses. But even that is evolving. We are seeing more and more elements integrated into this form of communication. And it's no

longer just human to human. With the rise of Alexa and Siri, and now AI ChatGPT, the age of the bot is here.

Gen Z does not want to be sold on social media, even more so than Millennials. They seek value, inspiration, and entertainment. In fact, they care about connections and community. As Gen Z is currently a vast audience, spanning from 10 years old to 24, identify the specific age range you are looking to target. Most active Gen Zers on social media are between 18 and 24. Such a diverse, socially-conscious generation is the driving force of community in the social space and, as such, has seen the rise of crucial differences in the way we market to Millennials and Gen Z.

Social media is at the core of Gen Z and Millennial practices. With the rise of what is known as "positive impact marketing," using social media to showcase and vocalize what you stand for as a company has fast become one of the core content pillars of most dynamic and successful brands. While Millennials are still looking for recommendations and word of mouth as part of their decision-making process online, they also consider the brand's values more than ever before. Socially-conscious brands find massive success in today's market, both as a form of social currency and to make a statement about how they spend their money. Gen Zers are more willing to purchase if your company supports a cause. Research shows that Gen Z has been called the "socially-conscious generation." After all, 70% of Gen Zers are committed to supporting ethical companies and are more likely to engage with raw and unpolished content over sleek branding. As a clear example, Millennials are more active on Instagram (more curated in its style) while Gen Z is a TikTok generation, looking for realistic brands over staged content.

Research Insights

User Pain Points

<https://app.freeonlinesurveys.com/1697531/analyze/-1>

Using a survey about peoples general media consumption and problems, we found that 100% of all participants said they use social media for keeping in touch with friends, all participants have at one point compared themselves to other people because of social media, all participants have taken a break from social media, and 90% of all those participants benefitted from taking that break.

During user interviews, we found that many participants have taken a break from social media platforms such as instagram and facebook because it takes too much time from them and has shortened their attention span to the point of where they get sucked into “doomscrolling” (scrolling on different reels non stop). And because every giant social media company has been copying tik tok’s short form videos, escaping doom scrolling and reels is almost impossible unless you delete all social media, this even includes youtube because of Youtube Shorts.

Feedback

Our research let us know the pain points of users and we were able to identify which we are able to address with the solution. The pain points are essentially maintaining and forming new friendships through social media by an organic interaction that is similar to real life, but not so much so that it becomes metaverse-esque and uncomfortable.

Solution Explanation

Based on our target users' painpoints, we knew we wanted to make sure we create features that help foster the environment where the problem can be solved, such as subscribing to communities or groups before even using the app, not having any follow counts, making sure that audio chat rooms (not a part of a community) are only up to 20 people at a time, and creating incentives for people to meet each other in person as a result of using our app.

Implementation Details - we suggest the Devs take lead here

Technical implementation

Where is it hosted?

What is your tech stack?

High level journey of a request

Technical challenges

What was the hardest part of development?

Does your app have any scaling issues?

What are some key takeaways?

Future Steps

I plan on hopefully being able to launch this product to at least one university and use the KPI's as measurement of my teams success and have this product be a great reason to have us be hired.

Co-lab learnings

Through these 4 weeks I've learned that framing my questions to get more meaningful data about the problem is more important than trying to get data from questions about the solution we think can solve the problem.

I should always come in with a problem first approach, because having a solution in mind can create bias

I must be able to plan accordingly with when to finish deadlines and understand a more efficient manner in which not to get behind