Case Study: Social Media

Reddit

An existing feature, crossposting, was popular but difficult to access. I redesigned it as a first class feature.

By Erica Firment

Who, What, Where, When

I was a Senior UX Designer at Reddit, in 2017. I worked in San Francisco, onsite at a leadership level within a team of UX designers, researchers, and visual designers.

The Product Request

“We want to make cross-posting a first class feature so people can “retweet” other people’s posts. This will help our business, improve search, and help people discover new content.”

What I Did

- IA
- UX

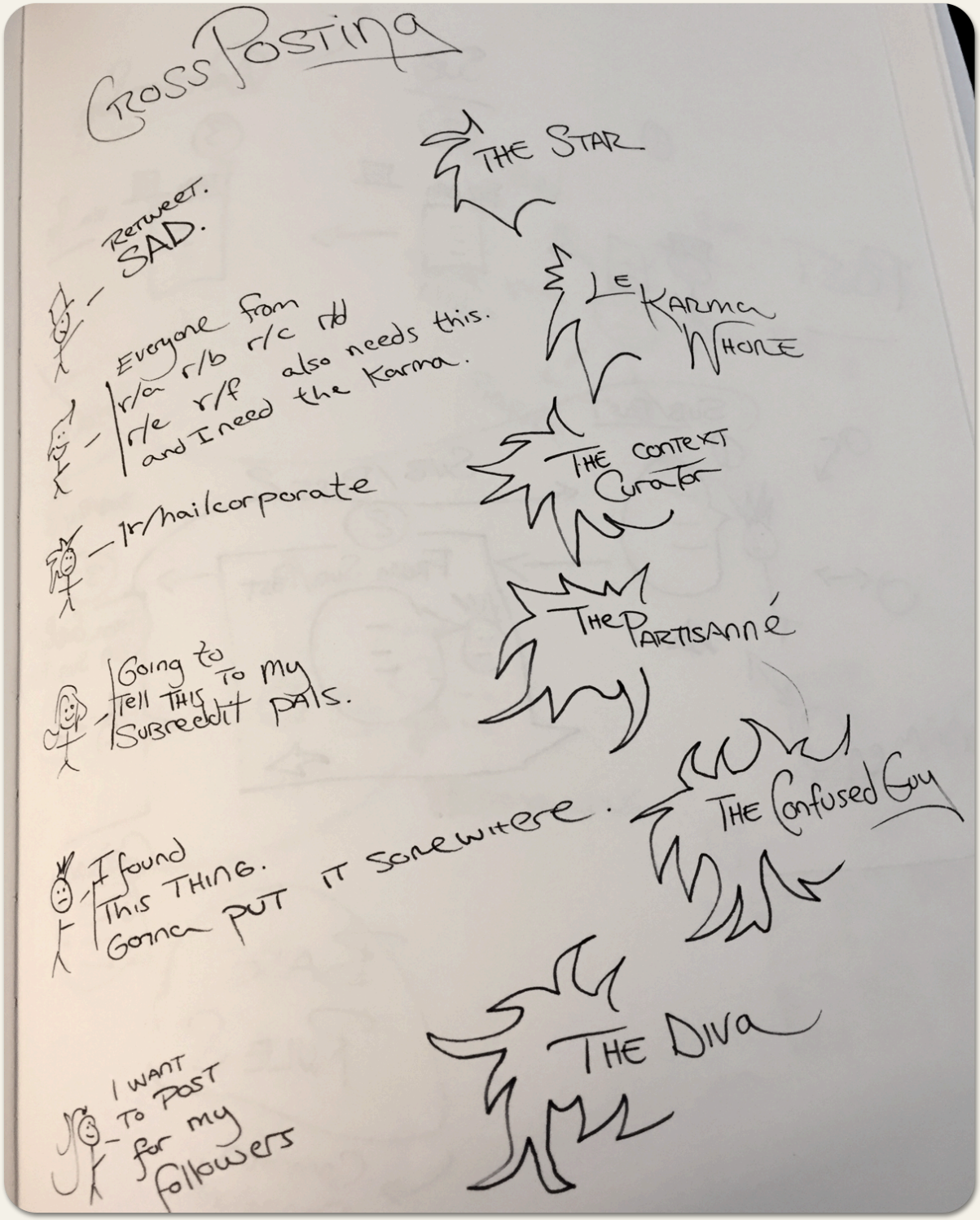
My role was to think through the problems, research user goals, and design an approach that met business and user goals.

1. Persona Exercise (with sketchnotes)

I ran the Product Manager through a quick persona exercise to determine who might use this feature, and what their goals were. Cross-posting was an organic feature that users already did unofficially. User observation sessions and researching existing behavior gave me a good pool of data to draw from.

I wrote up some of the personas who might benefit from a formal version of this feature, and made some storyboards. This served as a tool to organize our thoughts,

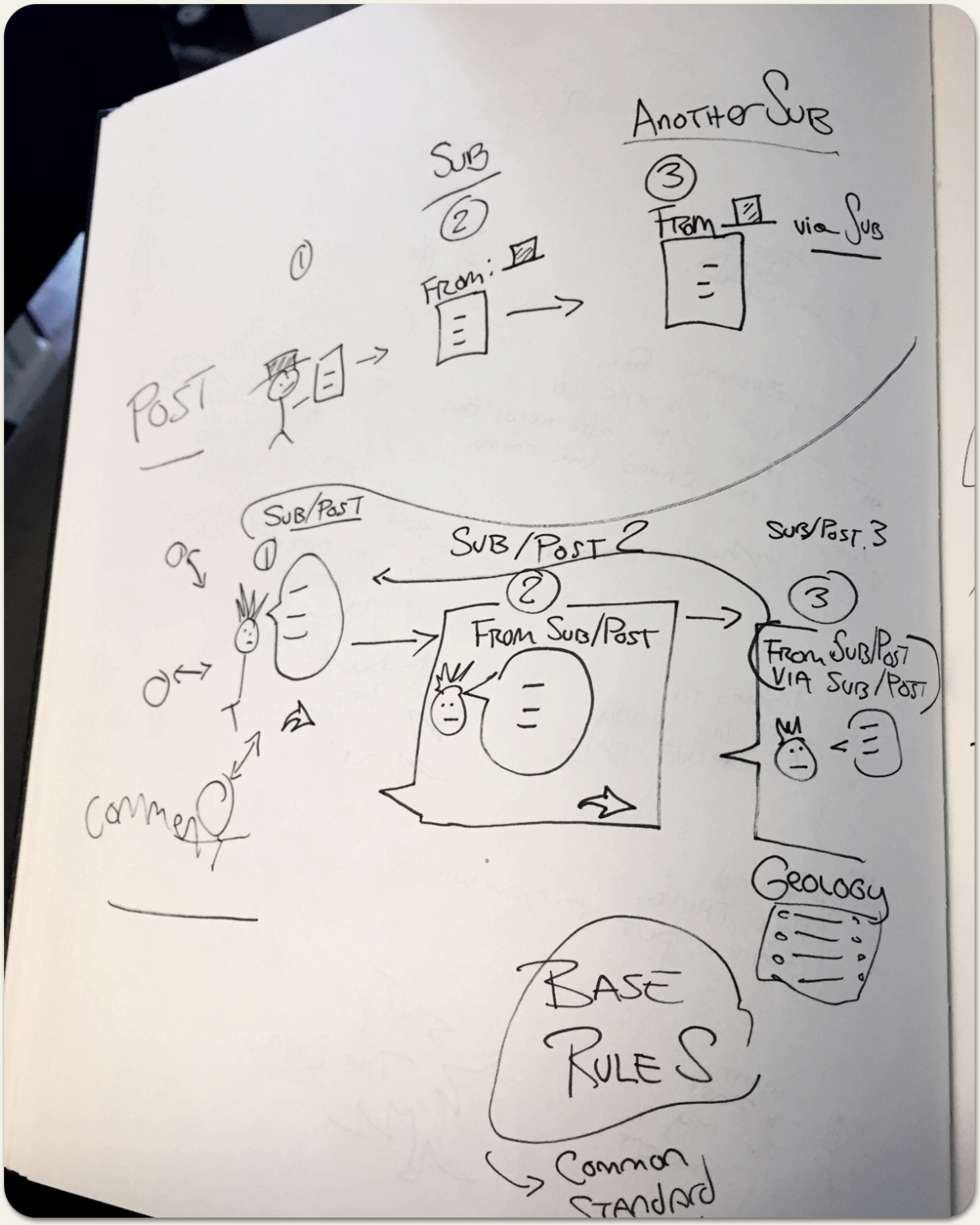
and helped the PM focus on who the feature is for, as well as what might motivate them.



2. UX. How should it work?

There were a variety of ways this feature could work. I sketched some of the probable paths a post could take (from a user's profile to another subreddit, vs. from

one subreddit to another) and used these to guide the Product Manager toward decisions they needed to make, such as “Who can crosspost, where can they crosspost, and what information will we display?”



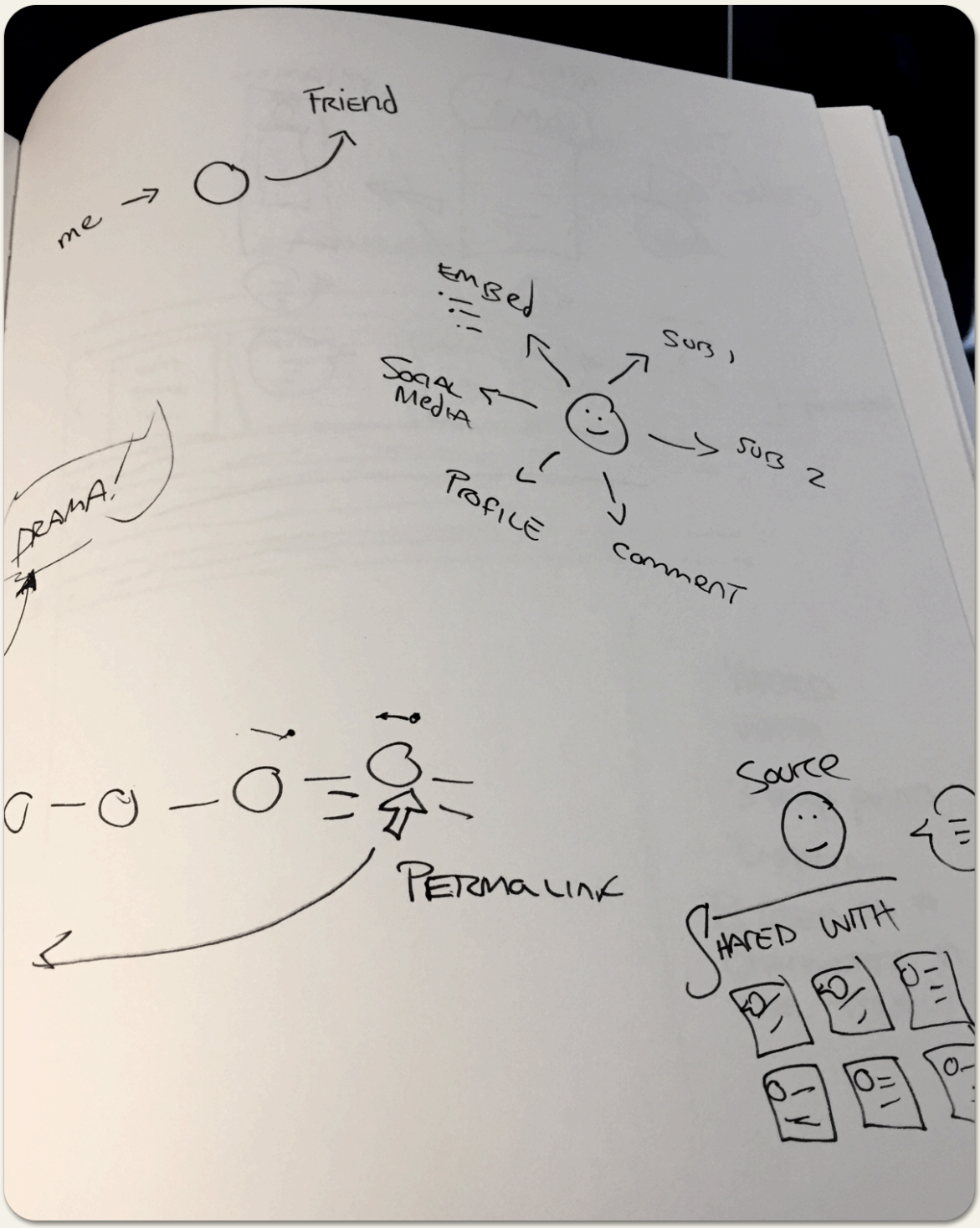
I used some shorthand here:

- The top hat indicates the user is a moderator.
- The spiked hair is someone with malicious intent.
- Geology refers to the potential for a long stack of historical post data, like the stratum of rocks.

I took these notes, iterated, and came up with wireframes using Sketch.

3. Quick Information Architecture Model

For simplicity, I advocated for a Hub-and-Spoke model for a post, rather than displaying a post's entire path through our system. A post would show its own metadata, the original source information, and no more. This avoided the problem of stacking crossposts overwhelming the user, and de-emphasizing the content itself.



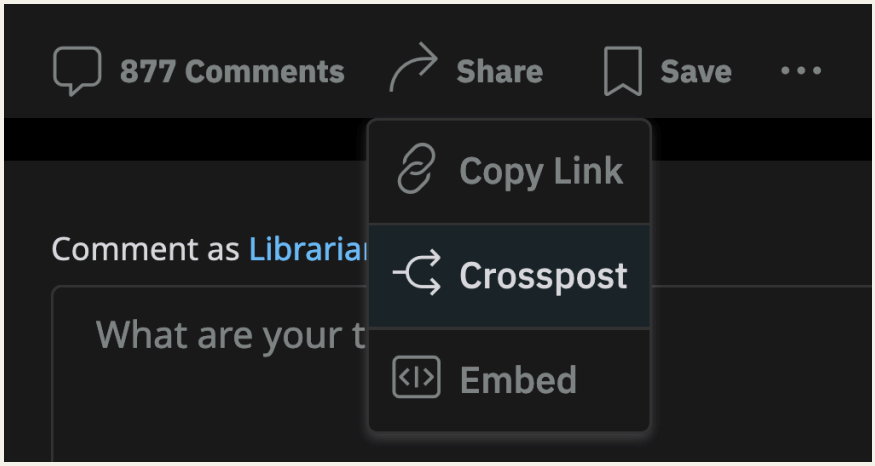
This decision gave rise to a new feature: a recommendation widget showing other places the post had been shared. This addressed a known user desire to discover related subreddits.

4. Hey Erica, where is the rest of the project?

Answer: I wasn't the designer who ended up working on this. I did discovery and architected the behavior. I wanted you to see some of the behind-the-scenes stuff

that happens in advance of a shiny finished product!

The original product request was to make crossposting a large and visible feature, but by focusing on user goals early on, I successfully argued for a less dramatic design which met user goals more effectively. Here's what it ended up looking like:



5. Why was this a win?

Sometimes the best way to support business goals is to make a feature smaller, contextual, or remove it entirely.

I was given a large top-level feature proposal, with lots of chrome and moving parts, and I was able to convincingly whittle it down to something small and useful that only appeared in an appropriate context. Based on the principle that ***"when you emphasize everything, you emphasize nothing"***, I was able to establish crossposting as an advanced feature where it could be discoverable to advanced users. This also prevented us from making something that would add to the site's cognitive weight at the cost of our larger business goal of making and retaining new users.
