Team 1: Empowering Learners with AI

Ana N., Cecilia W., Jenny L., Vivi M.

Agenda

Our Team

Jenny Li
Computer Science
Guangzhou, China

Cecilia Wu
Computer Science
Portland, Oregon
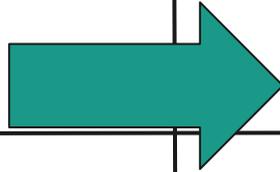

Ana Nguyen
Computer Science
Torrance, CA

Viviana Martinez
Computer Science
Laredo, TX

Domain

Self-Learning → **Career Transitions**

- Collaboration
- Engagement
- Retention

- Collaboration
- Encouragement

Needfinding Results

Interviewees

35-yo private chef

Early 50s Accomplished Woman

Mid-30s male entrepreneur

"Bale"

- Private chef working in Palo Alto

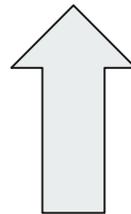"Laura"

- Aerospace executive
- Lifelong learner

"Chai"

- Currently seeking for jobs

Extreme User

Questions

- What inspired you to make the transition from previous field to current role?

- What steps did you take to prepare the transition? (e.g., courses, networking, side projects)

- Which skills from your previous career helped you the most in your new role?

- Did you have mentors or peers who supported you through the transition? How did you find them?

- What was the hardest part of the transition?

Mid-30s Entrepreneur

OUR USER
Describe your user here.

SAYS
Observations: What did this person SAY that surprised

- you are decayed to what you learn in college
- No one (recruiters) has asked the right question.
- Its a burden to explain a gap in employment.
- Programming is very 2D
- Recruiters need to be warm
- I like to help people get ahead, but it was adversarial trying to get them to help me back
- Jobs should be approached as a life changing opportunity.
- I wish they had more 5 minute Zooms for me to explain context
- When I was in a startup, I was betting my life. You need to want to win.
- I took a step back to have a responsible life

DOES
Observations: What did

- self-learned android/ios development
- pivoted to real estate to earn respect as CEO
- He is currently applying to jobs in big tech companies
- Worked in numerous startups building out their infrastructure
- Conflicted a lot with previous investors
- Stepped back to take his SAT and go back to school to build up skills again
- struggles to explain his gap in employment during interviews
- He spent a lot of time thinking, looking around and was baffled when asked about what he would do differently.
- Going out to auxiliaries in the city for extra support
- Tried to apply for mortgages, loans, and other government provided assistance

OBSERVATIONS | INFERENCES

(on what they SAY and DO, what might

- He thinks companies are hiring without questioning practices or nuances
- He thinks that the risks taken in startups and real estate don't provide stability.
- He thinks that switching careers allowed him to make a name for himself and provide a living.
- He thinks that being a founder is a double-edged sword from competitiveness
- He thinks that academic education is a strong foundation
- He thinks his "gap" in his resume is a burden
- He thinks that companies hiring do not ask for context
- Stability is more important than the chase
- It is important to have integrity in what you do
- Cities should have more auxiliaries and resources for people finding jobs

FEELS

- He feels overqualified for his job and positions hes applying to
- He feels paranoid about associative data being linked to him and preventing hiring
- Frustrated and misunderstood by recruiters who fail to ask the right questions or understand employment gaps.
- burdened by the job search process
- Insecure about stability and state of where he is at right now
- Conflicted about his choice to apply to one company and stick with it long term
- Cautious when interacting with potential investors or recruiters
- Tired of having to prove himself after years of experience
- Distrustful of the government
- Stressed out from applying to so many jobs with no response

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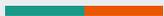
Insights & Needs

1. **Ambition vs. Stability**

2. **Struggles with Hiring Systems & Recruiters**

3. **Emotional Burden & Distrust**

4. **Desire for Human Connection and Guidance**

35-yo Private Chef

SAYS
Observations: What did this person SAY that surprised you?

- I learned more in Michelin kitchens than culinary school.
- Hands-on experience is key to managing stress in kitchens.
- Social media accelerates learning new cooking techniques.
- Routine and exercise restored my passion and creativity.
- I often tweak AI recipes to suit real tastes.
- Traveling taught me diverse cuisines and skills.
- Mentors correct me and push my growth.
- I started in film and shifted to cooking after loving it.
- I cross-reference recipes from online reviews for reliability.
- Using AI reduced my busywork by 80%.
- A platform for tested recipes would speed learning and sharing.
- I wish I could pull more precise steps from social media cooking clips

THINKS
Inferences: Based on what they SAY and DO, what might they be THINKING?

- Real skill comes from high-pressure experience, not just formal education.
- AI tools save time but can't replace human creativity and judgment.
- Career transitions require passion, persistence, and finding balance.
- A collaborative platform could transform knowledge-sharing among chefs.
- Mentorship is vital to developing culinary confidence and finesse.
- Burnout is a risk without routine and supportive networks.
- Wonders if more precise data tracking can improve menu planning.
- Considers peer review important for validating new culinary techniques.
- Technology can streamline professional processes
- Cross-cultural immersion accelerates intuition more than reading alone
- Verified community "tested" tags would raise trust in shared recipe

DOES
Observations: What did this person DO that surprised you?

- Transitioned career from acting to culinary school, then to private chef roles.
- Adjusts menus weekly using AI-generated idea lists filtered by preferences
- Practices recipes learned abroad and experiments with new techniques.
- Breaks down dishes he tastes into likely components and techniques on the spot
- Calls family for support during career stress and burnout.
- Researches recipes, ingredients, and techniques online and via cookbooks.
- Pays for trusted recipe from chef-authored sources online
- Uploads cookbook knowledge to AI threads to tailor future suggestions
- Builds digital systems to reduce food waste and streamline kitchen management with AI
- Creates balance with exercise to sustain career longevity.

FEELS
Inferences: Based on what they SAY and DO, what might they be FEELING?

- Proud of skills honed through diverse, real-world culinary experiences.
- Fulfilled teaching others and sharing culinary knowledge.
- Sometimes overwhelmed balancing career changes and ongoing learning.
- Supported and encouraged by family during career challenges.
- Hopeful about future AI tools improving chef workflows and education.
- Inspired by the potential of community platforms to connect chefs globally.
- Anxious about maintaining creativity
- Motivated to learn and grow
- Passionate about culinary arts and exploration
- Overwhelmed by high-pressure restaurant environments

OUR USER
Describe your user here.

OBSERVATIONS **INFERENCES**

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OBSERVATIONS | **INFERENCES**

Insights & Needs

1. Career transition fueled by passion and persistence

2. Learn through Experience and Community

3. Human judgement is still central despite AI integration

SAYS
Observations: What did [...]

- She started out as a premed in her undergrad due to family influences, but was ultimately unsatisfied in that field
- She changed her major to industrial engineering after being introduced to it by her friends
- her uncle influenced her interest in finance by exposing her to case studies of his company
- "I just kept getting phone calls that changed my life"
- [About moving to Seattle without a job] "I just believe that you know when your gut, when a place feels like home."
- "One day can be pivotal in your entire path"
- "I never thought I'd work at Boeing —it felt too big, old,slow,stodgy"
- "I'm not a deep tech person… never worked in robotics" [about being asked to step as CEO of robotics company]
- "You never turn down an opportunity to learn about something."
- "So I wanted to go back and explore those things" [Talking about learning more abo[ut]...]

THINKS
Inferences: Based on what they SAY and DO, what might they be THINKING?

- she thinks curiosity is key
- she thinks one should seize every opportunity
- she thinks one should lean into their fears
- she thinks that because of fast emerging technologies, it evens the playing field because everyone is learning as they go
- she thinks fear is what prevents most people from climbing the career ladder
- she thinks one's career path unfolds for each person if you let it
- she thought she was unqualified to be a permanent CEO
- she thinks that liberal arts are also important for self-learning
- she thinks the design process can also be applied to one's life
- she thinks her peers, family, and network helped build her career

Accomplished aerospace executive

OUR USER
Describe your user here.

DOES
Observations: [...]

- switched from pre-med to industrial engineering
- went back to school for an MBA in finance, and then worked at Morgan Stanley
- her experience in product management led her to airplane sales and eventually joining Boeing
- she accepted a CEO position for a robotics company despite having no experience
- regularly takes on high stakes leadership roles out of her comfort zone
- Transitioned from such distinct fields—from product management to aerospace sales to government security to CEO and serving on boards
- Is returning to school to study philosophy, art, AI, and more
- travelled all over the world and worked closely with China
- Has worked closely with many foreign ambassadors
- led a homeland security contract after 9/11

FEELS
[...]

- She is an optimist and believes that opportunities with come if you let them
- She felt obligated to take on some roles that were out of her comfort zone
- she feel energized and excited by change and new career paths
- she feels grateful for all the opportunities she received over the phone
- she has no sense of regret for how her life has played out
- she feels nostalgic about her college years
- She respects her peers and mentors throughout her life and admires their work (such as Alan Mulally)
- she's inspired by the people she worked with in Boeing
- She is still hungry for more knowledge, hence returning to school
- she feels amazed at the career turns that came up in her life

OBSERVATIONS | **INFERENCES**

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OBSERVATIONS   **IN...**

Insights & Needs

1. **Curiosity & Continuous Learning**

2. **Fearless toward Uncertainty**

3. **Belief in Cross-Disciplinary Thinking**

POVs & HMWs

POV 1: Private Chef Interview

HMW use his experience to help others who are in the same situation?

We met a 30-year-old man who studied film & acting in college and is currently a private chef in Palo Alto.

We were surprised to notice that he switched to a totally different career after college.

We wondered if this means people are redefining "career success" not as sticking to one path, but as pursuing creativity across fields.

It would be game-changing if we could celebrate and connect people with nonlinear career journeys.

HMW: Private Chef

POV 2: Entrepreneur Interview

HMW help mid-career professionals translate their past work into new contexts?

We met a mid-30s entrepreneur who transitioned from tech startups to real estate and is now returning to college.

We were surprised that despite his strong skills and experience, he feels frustrated that recruiters don't ask the right questions and wishes for more personal, five-minute conversations.

We wonder if this means he feels unseen and burdened by having to justify his employment gap rather than being valued for his experience.

It would be game-changing if he could feel recognized and confident in his background, without anxiety about how others perceive his career transitions.

HMW: Entrepreneur Interview

POV 3: Board Executive Interview

HMW encourage people to say YES to more opportunities out of their comfort zone?

We met an early 50s well-accomplished board executive and lifelong learner who has worked in PM, aerospace sales, finance, and robotics.

We were surprised to notice that many of her most meaningful career shifts began with spontaneous moments, like a single phone call, that she embraced without overanalyzing.

We wonder if this means that career growth and self-fulfillment can come from serendipitous opportunities rather than a pre-planned trajectory.

It would be game-changing if people felt seen and confident in trusting these moments of serendipity rather than uncertainty and empowered to recognize and respond to unexpected opportunities, without anxiety about deviating from a conventional career trajectory.

HMW: Executive Board Interview

Solutions

Solution #1

- **Match users with peers who also want to take more risks. They hold each other accountable for saying yes to new things and share reflections afterward. Builds social reinforcement and reduces fear of failure. Framed as challenge event with friends that draw a "dare" and have to do it all together.**

Solution #2

- **Turn past experiences into podcast episodes. People record their personal life/work experiences and post it onto a feed for other strangers to listen to, respond or relate to, so they don't feel alone in their journey. AI can turn it into easily digestible podcast episodes that people can listen to on the move.**

Solution #3

- Create a platform where people can shadow each other's days in their target field by offering in-person shadow session scheduling or virtually stepping into someone else's shoes.

Experience Prototypes

Assumption #1

Assuming that social reinforcement and peer accountability effectively motivate individuals to take more risk.

Test: Asked someone to do something that they've always wanted to do but never did it.

Assumption #1

WHY: Many people want to try new experiences but rarely act on them alone due to fear of failure or judgement. However, when risk-taking is shared, especially with friends or peers who are also stepping out of their comfort zones, the fear becomes manageable and even exciting.

Assumption #2

People are comfortable sharing their personal stories to strangers.

WHY: In conversation, we found that people often open up when they realize others have gone through similar experiences. We wanted to explore whether this willingness to share could extend to a public platform, especially if the goal was to help others feel less alone. By having two strangers share stories with each other, we wanted to observe if people agreed to share a story, how awkward it felt (resistance to start), and how much depth they gave.

Assumption #2

Test: Have two strangers tell a story to another

New Recording 219
Yesterday

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New Recording 218
Yesterday   1:57
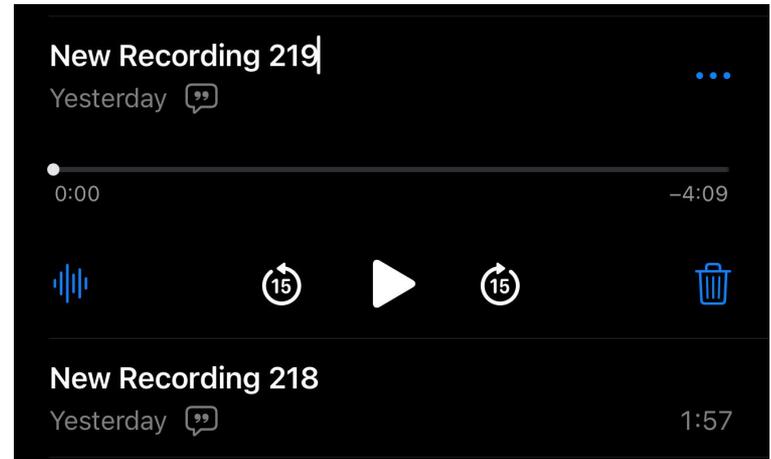
Assumption #3

Seeing someone do something in a different field/career is motivating.

WHY: We wanted to understand if observing someone's real workday could inspire people to take action toward career change or exploration. Most people read about it online or from others but don't have the chance to visually see it themselves with the opportunity to ask questions. By asking to shadow a research lab's project, we tested whether hands-on observation actually sparked motivation, curiosity, or confidence to try new fields themselves.

Assumption #3

Test: Ask to shadow a research lab's project and what they are working on currently + hands on with the project
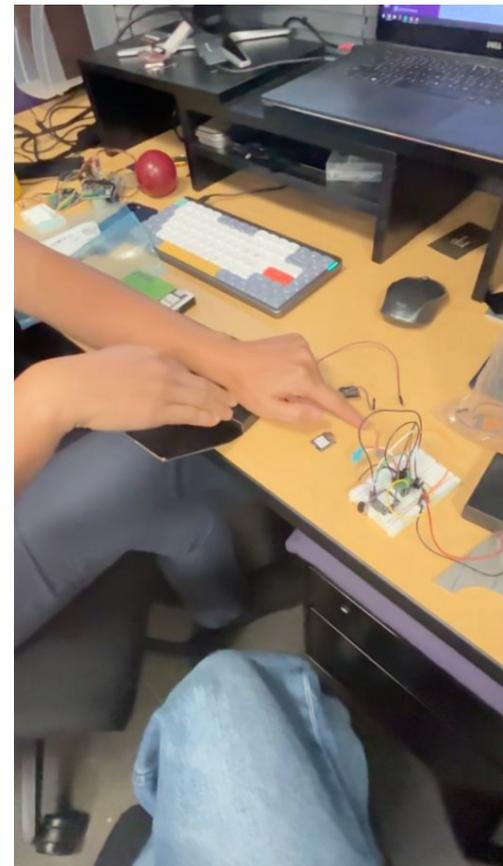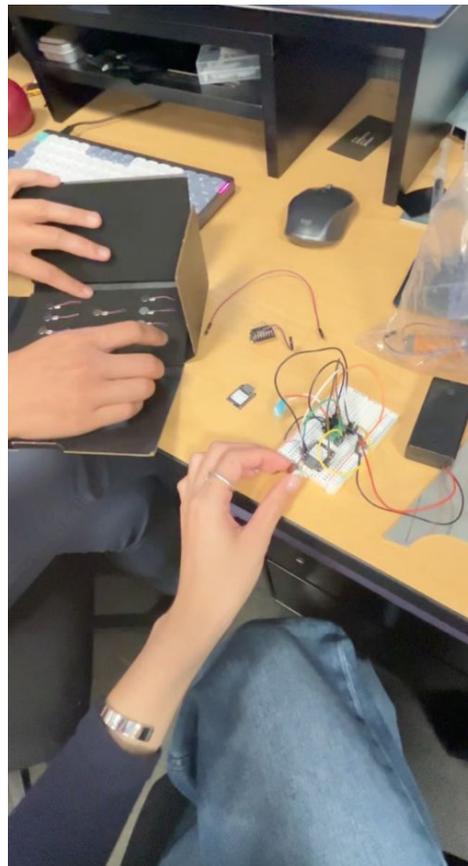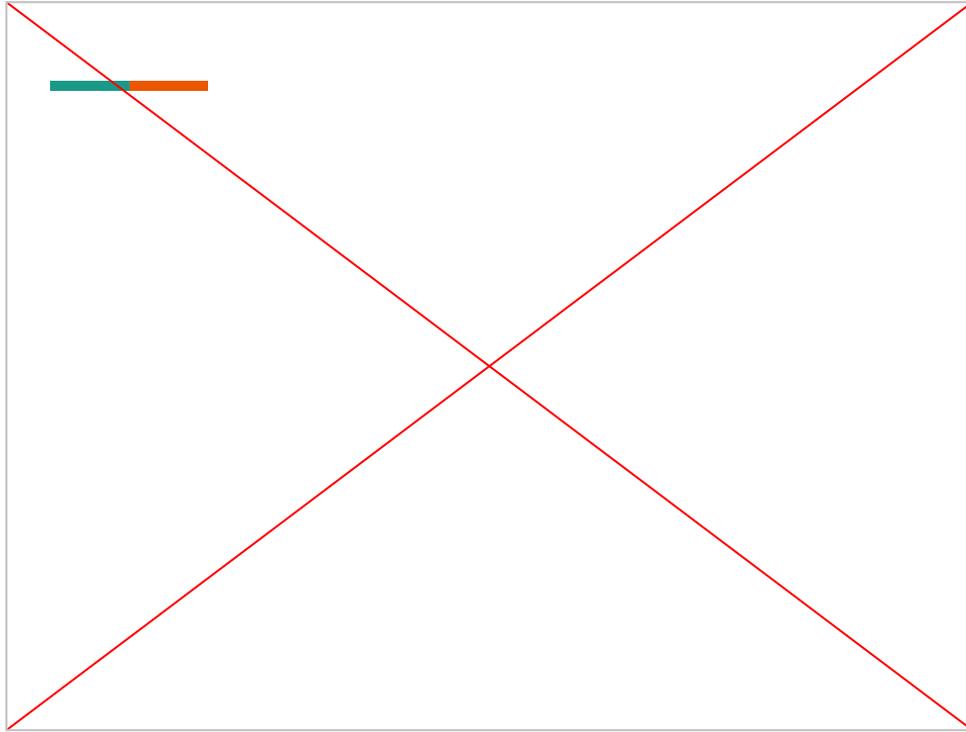
"After spending time observing her in the lab, I discovered that I'm genuinely interested in this kind of work. It's engaging, purposeful, and full of discovery."

What's next?

Solutions

We plan to move forward with a **combination of the peer challenge system and the shadowing platform**.

- The peer accountability structure helps users overcome fear and hesitation.
- The shadowing experience offers real exposure and insight into new fields or lifestyles.

Ethical Implications

- **Privacy and Consent**: Users must feel comfortable sharing their schedules, routines, or professional environments when hosting shadow sessions.
- **Equity of access**: Opportunities to shadow or participate in peer challenges must be distributed fairly, avoiding bias toward certain social groups or industries.

Who does it serve? Who might it leave out?

- **Serves:**
    - People who are transitioning from careers who are seeking for support and guidance
    - Individuals wanting accountability and motivation to pursue growth opportunities.
    - Those interested in experimental learning rather than traditional mentorship.
- **Might leave out:**
    - People in rural areas who have no access.
    - People who are not working, such as children and elderly adults.
    - Individuals in sensitive or confidential professions who cannot safely share workplace access.
    - Users who are introverted or anxious about public participation and might prefer more private or passive learning options

Thank you!

Appendix

POVs from Studio 2 (#1)

We met a 73-year-old man who makes audiobooks.

We were surprised to realize that he doesn't like & is not willing to read negative comments under his podcasts.

We wonder if it means he needs more encouragement and advice in a more friendly way.

It would be game-changing to help him accept those comments in a different way.

POVs from Studio 2 (#2)

We met Finn who is a 12-year-old middle schooler from Israel.

We were surprised to realize that he feels that him and his friends are targeted by some of his teachers.

We wonder if this means that Finn chooses to disengage from unwelcoming environments.

It would be game-changing to access Finn's engagement.

POVs from Studio 2 (#3)

We met a 33-year-old man who is working at an AI company.

We were surprised to realize that he enjoys how efficient learning can be with AI, but also don't trust.

We wonder if this means that AI learning tools need to feel not just smart, but trustworthy and transparent.

It would be game-changing to design an AI-powered learning system that builds trust through explainability.

POVs from Studio 2 (#4)

We met Jake, a 21-year-old college student.

We were surprised to realize that he spends 6+ hours learning every day but feels left in dark until he finds someone doing the same thing.

We wonder if this means that he learns best from sharing knowledge or receiving feedback from peers.

It would be game-changing to help him feel supportive when learning.

Solutions Brainstorming #1

HMW #1: HMW help mid-career professionals translate their past work into new contexts?

1. Generate a career plan based on other users with the same career switch and/or using AI.
2. Connect professionals to career consultants that specialize in career switching.
3. Give feedback at users' interview responses, resumes, and cover letters to reframe their past career experience as an advantage in recruiting.
4. Tool that turns work history into stories/narratives with context tailored to the job. Suggests analogies or specific phrasing
5. Curates personalized learning playlists with videos, readings, exercises based on your previous career skills and new goals.
6. Interactive skill web where previous skills are mapped to adjacent ones and you can see weak links
7. Create an app that would teach them skills for the new job but phase it in the context of their old experience.
8. Create an immersive simulation or game-like platform where users can role-play scenarios in their target career using their existing skill set.
9. Make an AI-powered tool that reads a user's resume or LinkedIn profile and automatically reframes each bullet point in the language of their target industry.
10. **Create a platform where people can shadow each other's days in their target field.**

Solutions Brainstorming #2

HMW #2: HMW encourage people to say YES to more opportunities?

1. Incentivize users by guaranteeing them a job in a different department after giving one position a try.
2. Have all job offers be done over the phone.
3. Counseling users through their doubts of a position.
4. Sandbox where you can try different professions. AI shows potential paths, needed skills, scenarios
5. An AI that scans your calendar, emails, or career feeds (LinkedIn, course platforms) and highlights relevant "growth opportunities" you might normally overlook.
6. Create a self-assessment tool that visualizes your comfort zones across areas (career, social, creative, etc.) and nudges you to accept one opportunity outside of your highest comfort zone each week.
7. **Match users with peers who also want to take more risks. They hold each other accountable for saying yes to new things and share reflections afterward. Builds social reinforcement and reduces fear of failure.**
8. An interactive tool that lets users simulate what might happen if they say yes, including simulating possible skills needed, networking, and emotional outcomes based on data from others who took similar opportunities.
9. **Framed as challenge event with friends that drew a "dare" and have to do it all together**
10. Create an AI-powered "Future Self" simulation that shows individuals vivid, personalized projections of their lives having said yes to various opportunities, inspiring action through a glimpse of potential futures.

Solutions Brainstorming #3

HMW#3: HMW use his experience to help others who are in the same situation?

1. Mentorship pairings based on experience, emotional difficulty??
2. Upload professional experience and AI turns it into teaching materials for others'
3. **Turn past experience into podcast episodes LOL**
4. Connecting users who wants to learn from each other + learning / teaching each other skills
5. An interactive tool that visualizes someone's past experiences as milestones and helps them re-map them into transferable lessons for mentoring others.
6. Every user who successfully makes a career transition mentors one new person, where each link is visible on a collective map that visualizes how one person's courage empowers the next.
7. Launch a "Experience Exchange" virtual reality platform where users can immerse themselves in interactive simulations based on real-life experiences shared by others, fostering deep empathy and understanding.
8. Create a "Wisdom Map" which is a crowdsourced, visual journey that charts challenges, milestones, and solutions experienced by individuals, allowing others to navigate their own paths with guidance from those who have been there.
9. Build a gamified platform where users contribute experience-based insights as "power-ups" and "skills," enabling others to "level up" in managing similar challenges through community-validated knowledge.
10. Host immersive, role-reversal workshops where people reenact each other's experiences through theater and improvisation, enhancing empathy and collective problem-solving.

Assumption 2 Full Audio:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oqHj-hJVCzbSnNkH6PKNcZ7GGwgzJX3R/view?usp=sharing

This file includes our POV, HMW, Solutions, Results, and Ethical Implications:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_cNkb2QEjOrBQ_cgSI1bd3bWN58rdVBaaIGy
**y5HTC4Y/edit?tab=t.14bsce8q7n63**

Prototype Experience 1

1. **Match users with peers who also want to take more risks. They hold each other accountable for saying yes to new things and share reflections afterward. Builds social reinforcement and reduces fear of failure. Framed as challenge event with friends that draw a "dare" and have to do it all together**

   a. **ASSUMPTION**: Social reinforcement and peer accountability effectively motivate individuals to take more risk.

   b. **WHY**: Many people want to try new experiences but rarely act on them alone due to fear of failure or judgement. However, when risk-taking is shared, especially with friends or peers who are also stepping out of their comfort zones, the fear becomes manageable and even exciting. We wanted to test whether structured, gamified accountability (like a "dare draw" challenge) could help people turn intention into action and make risk-taking feel socially rewarding rather than intimidating.

   c. **EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPE**: Asked someone to do something that they've always wanted to do but never did it.

   d. **Artifacts**: Challenge cards with prompts (e.g., "go through the tunnel by the fountain at the roundabout next to gates to memorial church")

   e. **Roles**: *Person A (initiator):* Tells a challenge that she has always wanted to do. *Person B (peer partner):* Joins the initiator in completing the challenge.

   f. **Environment**: The challenge took place at school, in a casual and comfortable setting.

   g. **HOW IT WAS RUN**: Person A shared something she had always wanted to do but never had the courage to try alone. Person B listened, offered encouragement, and joined her in completing the challenge together.

Prototype Experience 2

2. **Turn past experiences into podcast episodes. People record their personal life/work experiences and post it onto a feed for other strangers to listen to, respond or relate to, so they don't feel alone in their journey. AI can turn it into easily digestible podcast episodes that people can listen to on the move. (Fizz?)**
   a. **ASSUMPTION**: People are comfortable sharing their personal stories to strangers.
   b. **WHY**: In conversation, we found that people often open up when they realize others have gone through similar experiences. We wanted to explore whether this willingness to share could extend to a public platform, especially if the goal was to help others feel less alone. By having two strangers share stories with each other, we wanted to observe if people agreed to share a story, how awkward it felt (resistance to start), and how much depth they gave.

   c. **EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPE**: Have two strangers tell a story to another.
   d. **Artifacts**: Voice memos to record and play back the stories, Headphones for listening to the other person's story
   e. **Roles**: Person A - us. We record a story and share it to a stranger anonymously and ask them to record a story after hearing ours. Person B - stranger that listens and then records story if opts in.
   f. **Environment**: Semi-private area so people can't hear what we are saying and they feel anonymous enough
   g. **HOW IT WAS RUN**: I recorded a personal story about me almost getting fired at work. I found a random person and played it for them and said it was a stranger and asked if they wanted to record a story about anything for another stranger to listen to. If they agreed, I recorded w/ voice memos and thanked them for their time.

Prototype Experience 2
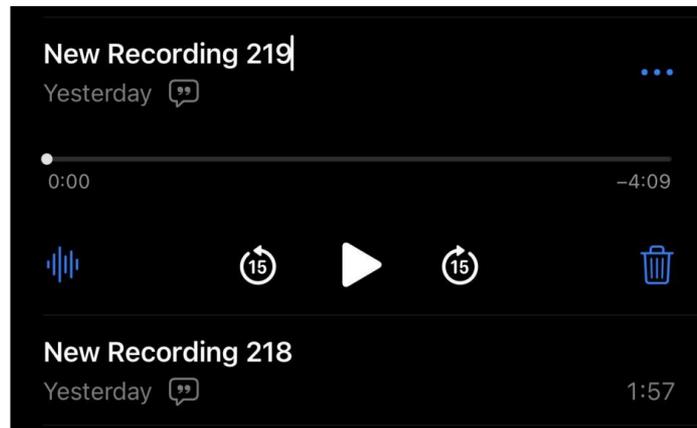
The recording on the top is the 4:09 minute story. The recording on the bottom is them asking clarifying questions and being a little hesitant to start because there was no direction.

It was conducted in a dorm room (private area) since I just grabbed my friend's roommate.

Prototype Experience 3

3. **Create a platform where people can shadow each other's days in their target field by offering in-person shadow session scheduling or virtually stepping into someone else's shoes.**

   a. **ASSUMPTION**: Seeing someone do something in a different field/career is motivating.

   b. **WHY**: We wanted to understand if observing someone's real workday could inspire people to take action toward career change or exploration. Most people read about it online or from others but don't have the chance to visually see it themselves with the opportunity to ask questions. By asking to shadow a research lab's project, we tested whether hands-on observation actually sparked motivation, curiosity, or confidence to try new fields themselves.

   c. **EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPE**: For the prototype, we arranged a shadowing session within a research lab to allow a participant to directly observe a professional in their work setting and engage in an authentic exchange. The goal was to test whether hands-on exposure and informal mentorship could nurture motivation, curiosity, and confidence in exploring new fields.

   d. **Artifacts**: a recorded video capturing the moment Person A was assigned the task. This video documented the exchange between mentor and observer, showing the process of being introduced to a real research challenge. It served as evidence of the participant's engagement and reaction to taking part in an authentic, hands-on element of the shadowing experience.

   e. **Roles**:
      - Person A (Observer): An individual eager to learn more about a specific role or field.
      - Person B (Host/Mentor): A professional in that field who agreed to be shadowed and share insights about their daily work.

Prototype Experience 3

shadowed and share insights about their daily work.

f. **Environment**: The prototype took place inside the Mechanical Engineering (ME) building, specifically within an active research lab and adjoining office spaces. The environment provided a realistic backdrop for professional observation, complete with tools, equipment, and ongoing project work.

g. **HOW IT WAS RUN**: Person A requested to shadow a researcher to gain a better understanding of what research work looks like in practice. The session began with an informal introduction and lab tour, where Person B shared the basics of their role and day-to-day responsibilities. This was followed by a casual conversation about their career path, how they first became interested in research, the educational and experiential steps they took, and what their current projects involve. Person A then received a guided overview of the lab's ongoing project, including the problem it aims to solve, the tools and processes used, and the underlying research goals. To reinforce learning through practice, Person B introduced a small hands-on activity related to the project, something Person A could continue exploring independently at home to better grasp the core concept behind the research.

- **Worked**: It was amazing to see how much of a difference a little support made. The participant, who had been hesitating for a long time, finally took the leap and ended up feeling proud, relieved, and energized. Doing it together turned the whole thing from something intimidating into something exciting — more like an adventure than a challenge. She also said that having someone there to cheer her on made the experience feel less about fear and more about possibility.

- **Didn't work**: The problem was that the effect didn't last. Once the moment passed, it was hard to keep that momentum going, and there wasn't much structure to help her turn that one bold action into a pattern of behavior. Because the activity was so personal, it was also tricky to design something that would work the same way for other people.

Results + Ethical Implication 1

- **What we learned**: The real power of this experience came from the *emotional support*, not the action itself. The participant wasn't just motivated by finally doing the thing. She was motivated by knowing someone believed in her and had her back. That shared experience was what gave her the push she needed.

- **Validity of the Assumption**: Our assumption was only partly right. Encouragement and companionship absolutely help people overcome fear, but doing one scary thing doesn't automatically lead to lasting change. Without more chances to reflect or keep practicing, the impact stays pretty short-term.

- **Next steps for design**: Next, we could test a version where participants tackle a few challenges over time, rather than just one. We could try pairing people up with accountability buddies or small groups to build a sense of community, and maybe add simple reflection exercises so they process what they learned. That might help them keep the momentum going beyond the initial moment.

- **Ethical Implications/Community:** Because this involves asking people to push themselves, we have to be careful about consent, safety, and emotional boundaries. Participants should always have a clear understanding of what they're doing, feel free to stop at any time, and have support if things feel overwhelming.

Results + Ethical Implication 1

Intended Communities: This could really benefit people in transition like those trying to make a life change, build confidence, or just shake things up. It could also help professionals who want to stretch beyond their comfort zones and grow in new ways.

Left out: We didn't design for people who might not be able to join in easily for example, those with physical limitations or anxiety that makes risk-taking harder. In future iterations, we should explore lower-pressure or virtual alternatives so the experience is more inclusive and accessible.

Results + Ethical Implication 2

- After a successful attempt at having two strangers tell a story to one another, we learned that although some may speak hesitantly at first, once a story starts unfolding, the speaker speaks comfortably and even shares details as impactful as concerning a car accident. In fact, we learned that our participants felt refreshed and lively after retelling a story. Further, as a team listening to our participant audios, we learned that it is convenient and productivity-sustaining to hear a story in the background of doing work.

- There are an extensive amount of privacy concerns that can arise from having a platform for users to share about their careers. It is important that public users can not and should not be able to find personal details about the original poster, coworkers, company, trade secrets, etc. At the same time, if users feel that they can not talk about particular details concerning their work, motivating listeners to engage in a new career might not be very effective due to the lack of transparency.

- **Worked**: The shadowing experience successfully conveyed what a researcher's day-to-day work entails. The participant who had no prior background in that area was able to grasp the foundational tasks and mental models of the role through guided observation and a small assigned project. Although her full reflection wasn't recorded, she expressed genuine curiosity and excitement about trying something beyond her comfort zone. The presence of a mentor made the learning process more approachable; guidance in real time allowed her to progress with confidence rather than feeling lost in self-directed exploration. This hands-on facilitation transformed what could have been an intimidating academic environment into one that felt accessible and personal.

- **Didn't work**: The prototype was limited in duration, which meant the participant's exposure only skimmed the surface of what the role entailed. While the observation sparked curiosity, it didn't yet produce sustained motivation or deeper understanding of long-term research challenges. The experience still felt curated rather than fully immersive, which limited its authenticity as a full snapshot of professional life.

Results + Ethical Implication 3

- **What we learned**: We were surprised to learn that the motivation the participant gained did not come from the work's technical content itself, but from observing the researcher's approach to problem solving and admiring to become someone with that extensive knowledge on that object. This seems to suggest that the authentic behavior and attitude of the host / mentor seems to matter a lot, influencing how the participant would later view that subject. Even a small, low-stakes responsibility shifted her mindset from curiosity to investment.

- **Validity of the Assumption**: Our assumption was proved to be partially valid. While observation alone does foster curiosity, without structured engagement or mentor interaction, the effect remains surface level.

- **Next steps for design**: Next, we could extend the shadowing period to make the experience more immersive, give participants small ownership tasks to increase engagement, and include guided reflection moments to deepen learning. We could also encourage mentors to share both successes and challenges for a more authentic view, prototype remote or hybrid options to improve accessibility, and follow up later to understand the longer-term impact on participants' interests and choices.

- **Ethical Implications/Community:** Since it's a short session, it's important to ensure participants are not misled by overly idealized portrayals of the profession. Mentors should be transparent about challenges, uncertainties, and failures as part of authentic career representation. Shadowing should also respect privacy, maintain informed consent, and avoid disrupting real workflows.

Results + Ethical Implication 3

- **Intended Communities:** This platform is designed for career changers, students exploring future paths, and professionals from unrelated fields seeking cross-disciplinary insight. It also benefits mentors looking to inspire and recruit new talent into their disciplines.

- **Left out**: Individuals with disabilities that make in-person participation difficult or lack of professional connections or resources were not represented in this initial prototype. Future designs should include accessibility features for remote participation, translated materials for non-native speakers, and formats tailored to diverse learning preferences.