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Abstract

Career management is not a singular event but a continuing process that includes establishing self-awareness, building skills and finally implementing plans to achieve career goals. Though today the activity of career management is supported by various technologies and services, the information gap between job seekers and companies still situates job seekers in a grey box: job seekers' needs of learning about industries, learning about companies and getting specific career suggestions are yet to be supported by the current information system.

The intention of this thesis is to examine different types of job seekers as well as their concerns, study how well the current tools or services are helping them in different ways, and finally create a design solution that can fulfill job seekers' hidden needs, empowering job seekers' career management activities in a long run. I dived into the multiple levels of challenges that job seekers face. My research included literature reviews, interviews, surveys, competitive analysis and speed dating. Corresponding to the problems I identified, my solution is a platform that enables job seekers to get insights of industry and company, and that supports job seekers with personally tailored career advice from senior employees by means of career mentorship.

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Introduction

“Career” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a person’s course or progress through life.” In this definition career is understood to relate to a range of aspects of an individual’s life, learning and work. Career choice is not based on an accurate algorithm, being matched with a couple of positions, but is established by the ability to actively explore a path and consciously manage the career direction in today’s flexible and dynamic labour markets. Career management is not a singular event but a continuing process includes establishing self-awareness, building skills, and finally implementing plans to achieve career goals.

Though today the activity of career management is supported by various technologies and services, There is still a gap between job seekers and companies or senior employers: While senior people have a lot of experience and insights on how to manage a career, job seekers who have intention to improve themselves but are in need of specific, personalized career-related instructions are less helped. Job seekers in need of data support when changing industries or switching companies cannot access the resources. In short, the major problems that job seekers are facing are *where should I go? What is it like?* and *How can I get there?*

Therefore, the goal of this thesis project is to identify the problems job seekers are facing, then create a design solution that can empower job seekers in their career management journey. In the design, it’s important to create a solution to bridge the information gap between job seekers and people who are in the senior position. This will empower job seekers in their career management process by providing constructive suggestions from senior people. It’s also very important to incorporate multilateral users such as senior employers, government and companies into this system.

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Solution overview

Corresponding to the problems and needs I identified, my solution is *build*, an online service which enables people to get insights about industries and companies, and enables job seekers to get access to senior employees as their career mentors.

There are three key features of this service, which are organized into three sections: *Career Trends* (Figure 2.1.1), *Company Insights* (Figure 2.1.2) and *Mentorship* (Figure 2.1.3). In the *Career Trends* section, people are able to search for trending career landscapes, and information when seeking to switch industries. Also, people are able to read personal stories about career switches. In the *Company Insights* section, people are able to compare two companies' statistics in a certain industry. For instance, people can compare the work-life balance graph, salaries, company switch flows and team formation of any two companies. In the *Mentorship* section, people can sign up as mentors or mentees. The system will match mentors and mentees, and provide a conversation platform for them.

The platform is intended to increase job seekers' ability of self-learning and discovering, as well as connect job seekers with the "right" senior, experienced people who can be their prop in their career seeking journey.

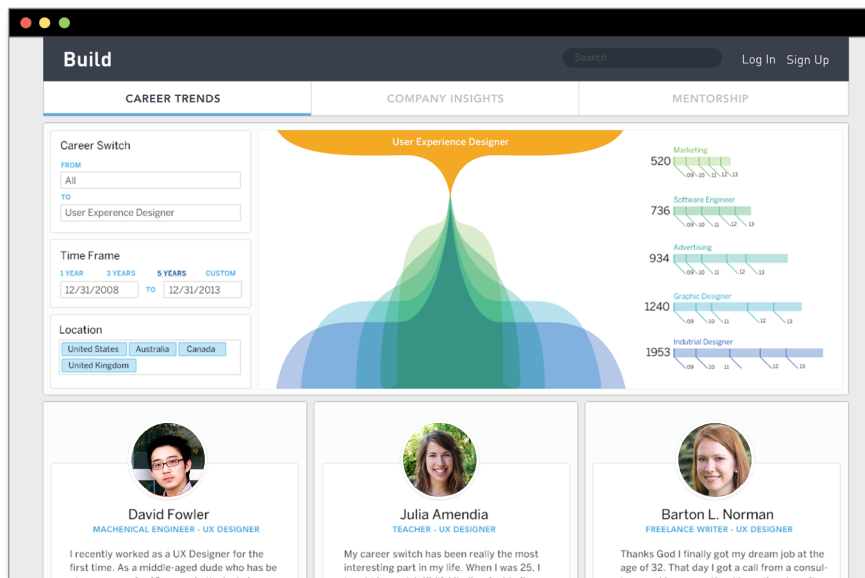


Figure 2.1.1 | Career Trends

Career Trends

In the Career Trends section, job seekers can search for trending career landscapes by filling in some basic filters. Also, job seekers are able to read personal stories about similar career switches and contribute to the story portfolio.

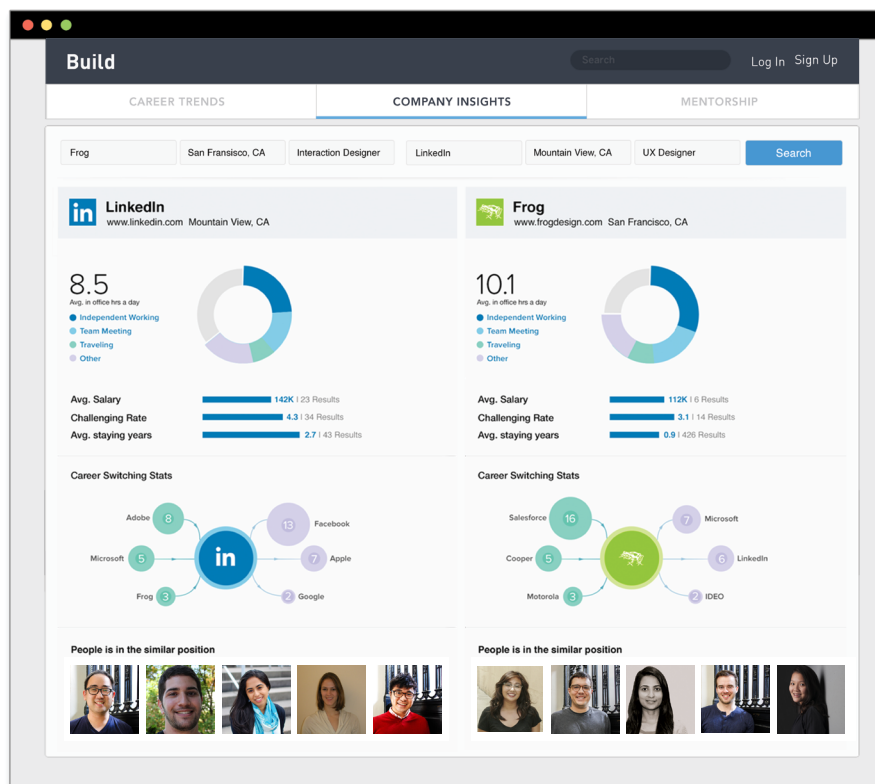


Figure 2.1.2 | Company Insights

Company Insights

In the Company Insights section, job seekers can search and compare two companies' statistics in a certain industry. After typing in the company's name, position and location, job seekers are able to see the work-life balance graph, salaries, company employee retention rates, company switch flows and team formation.

Mentorship

In the mentorship section, people can sign up as mentors or mentees. As they type in their basic information and expectations, the system will match mentors and mentees automatically. As the mentorship starts, the pair will have a chat platform for free one-on-one conversations. Also, both mentors and mentees are able to create tasks to facilitate the learning process, which is handy for both mentors and mentees.

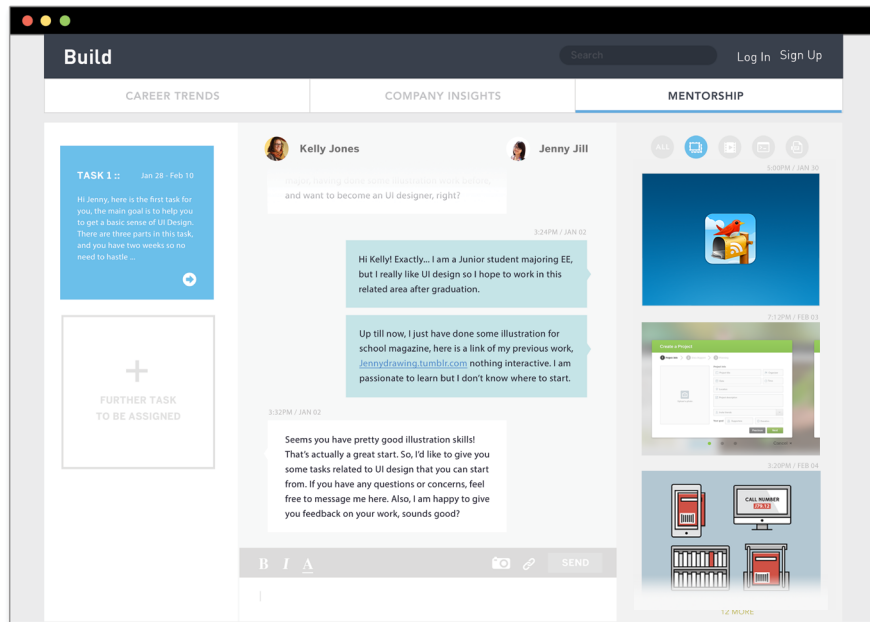


Figure 2.1.3 | Mentorship

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Relevant work

In this project, I have reviewed a broad range of literature on career management. Main career management activities include career counseling organizations, career assessments, professional social network websites, theories developed around career related studies. Each of them is creating interventions on different aspects of career support to meet different levels of needs.

3.1 Theory and literature

Efforts on career related studies in areas such as sociology, psychology and HCI spans many years. For example, the career blueprint framework attempts to pre-suggest multiple levels of learning outcomes that can be focused on different periods of one's life, and that can tame the developmental process through which these outcomes can be achieved. From the psychological perspective, scholars have studied the effect of psychological contracts between organizations and individuals as a framework for understanding career management. From a sociology and behavioral science perspective, studies have examined activity of career management and how it can benefit from the strong and weak ties of social networking. The literature is really helpful in that it gave the thesis projects a broad perspective where the current problems are, the advantages and downsides of different approaches, the challenges that the current career management programs are facing, as well as how theories and methods should be applied to both counseling and education.

3.2 Career Counseling Organization

Career counseling organizations spans widely in the communities. They include career counselors, executive coaches, educational institutions, career development centers, and outplacement companies.

The focus of career counseling has two sides: From the employers' side, career counseling organizations sometimes provide recruiting services and acquisition advice, the goal of which is to help companies with their recruiting process and help them to target qualified candidates in order to fill their open positions. From the job seekers' side, career counseling organizations generally focus on issues such as individual career exploration, objective definition, career change, personal career strategy development to help individuals to focus their search for careers that closely match their unique personal profile.

While professional career counselors can analyze a person's background, expectations, strengths and weakness in an objective perspective and take into consideration their personal needs, constraints, hobbies, career counseling is hardly accessible due to location, price, and schedule issues. This implies a design direction that the solution might incorporate the merits of personalized counseling while making it more accessible at the same time.

3.3 Career Assessments

Career assessments are usually quizzes or tests that rely on both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Career assessments are strong tools to help individuals to better identify and articulate their interests, personality, values, and skills to determine how these indicators might point to a certain career. There are multiple online resources available for job seekers to assess themselves in terms of interest, personality and career intention. One example is *assessment.com*. After joining, people will answer multiple most/least preference questions in terms of hobby, working style. Then it will match the job seekers with jobs that involved these activities.

While career assessments are technically accessible to majority of people, and it's helpful for people who are not sure about their career interest, it lacks depth. For people who already have a career goal but are in need of career advice, and for people who want to learn more about companies, career assessment may not be very helpful. Hence, in the thesis project, I am taking a further step to develop platforms that are both accessible for the majority of people, and helpful for all types of job seekers.

3.4 Professional Social Networking Sites

There are multiples social networking services that focus on facilitating people's professional connections and that allow for shared information. Examples include *LinkedIn* (Figure 3.4.1), *Glassdoor* (Figure 3.4.2) and *Monster.com* (Figure 3.4.3).

LinkedIn is a social networking website for people to develop connections in professional occupations. The website allows users to upload their resume and customize their profiles to build their virtual identity on a professional level. Also, one purpose of the site is to encourage users to build a connection network with people with whom they have some levels of relationship. Some of the core features includes “people you may know”, “who viewed your profile”, “Skill endorsement”, “find alumni”, “Groups you may be interested in” etc. It focuses on pervasive connection rather than personal conversation.

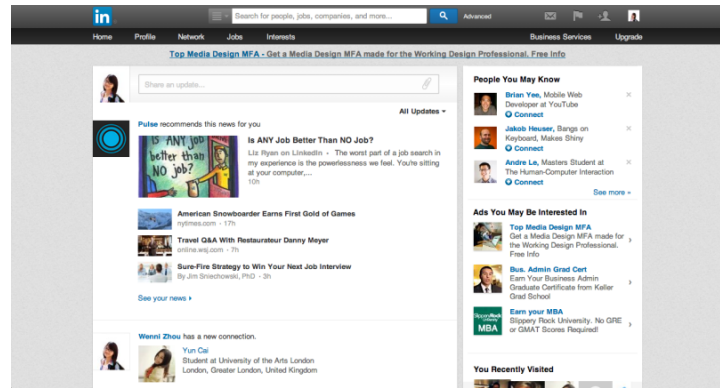


Figure 3.4.1 | *LinkedIn*

Monster.com is a large worldwide employment website. It has huge database — it has over one a million job postings and 63 million job seekers per month. Monster is primarily focusing on matching, helping job seekers to find job openings through user preferred filters. It recently has some innovative features such as career mapping and benchmarking.

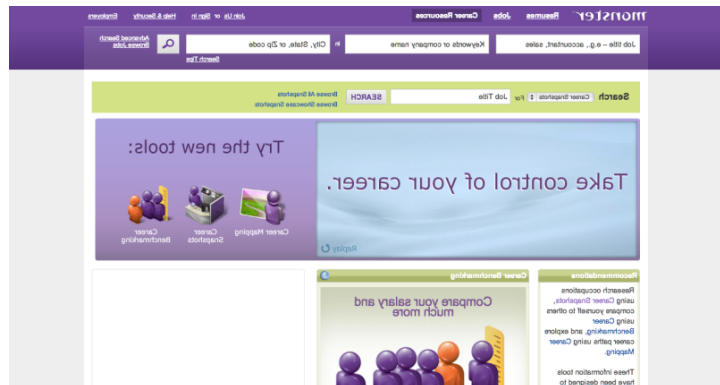


Figure 3.4.2 | *Monster.com*

Glassdoor is also provides a platform that allows for online community, and that offers job seekers an inside look at jobs and companies. It provides information such as anonymous salaries, company reviews, interviewing questions crowd-sourced by employees to support job seekers to search for and evaluate an occupation.

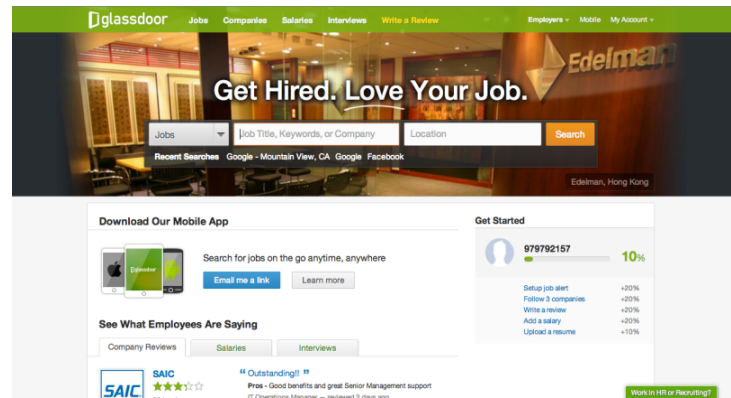


Figure 3.4.3 | *Glassdoor*

These websites are very resourceful and widely accessible to their audiences. Job seekers can build their own career profile and make professional connections on LinkedIn. Job seekers can access worldwide job openings on Monster.com, and job seekers can gain an objective perspective about a company on Glassdoor. While these websites are very resourceful, when job seekers deal with the question “how to get there,” they still don’t get a integrated experience. They usually skim through the information piece after piece, but are still left alone with the question “what should I do next.” In the thesis project, the design solution integrates the “how to get there” process for job seekers, creating a smooth career management experience for them.

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Exploratory research

The goal of the exploratory research is to identify different types of job seekers, learn holistically about the problems job seekers are facing and clearly frame the problem territory of this thesis. In this phase, I interviewed job seekers, senior employers as well as recruiters. I did online survey, and researched into the current existing competitors (IRB Approval of HS13-464).

4.1 Interviews

The interviews with eight job seekers (both active and passive job seekers) helped to gain a sense of the challenges, concerns, and needs of job seekers at different life stages. The interviews with two employers from different companies revealed the needs and considerations from the recruiting side, helping to narrow down the design space. The interview with one career consultant gave me a clearer scope about where the job seekers biggest problems lie and generally the most effective approaches to solving career related problems. (Figure 4.1.1)



Figure 4.1.1 | Interview

Interview Takeaways

There are eight key takeaways from the interviews. I synthesized them into short sentences and accompanied each with a sample quote.

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- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Building a long term goal by following someone's career path is no longer a preferred career management strategy because of the rapidly changing career landscapes and unpredictable job markets. | <i>"...I cannot be her, you know, ..."</i> |
|--|--|
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- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. An effective career guide should be specific, correspond to the situation job seekers are facing, be given at the right time, and address the emotional aspect of job seekers when they are looking for their careers. From this facet, talking to people and gaining specific career suggestions are way more effective than general information searched online. | <i>"I talked to a lot of people. Surprisingly, they were really happy to help me even if I didn't know them. The conversation with these people has shaped me a lot — way more helpful than Google search."</i> |
|---|---|
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| 3. Knowing where to start is the most challenging part for people who want to switch careers. | <i>"It was a big leap, but I wasn't sure where to start?"</i> |
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|--|---|
| 4. For Job seekers, support and reassurance from people they trust is crucial in their career seeking journey. | <i>"I feel uncertain about this choice. Whether it's right for me... I truly thank to Jackson(alias) then, to make me feel safe to go."</i> |
|--|---|
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| 5. Facing multiple career choices, job seekers would like to know how other people would make the choice in a similar situation. | <i>"I always wonder what other people would make that choice if they were me."</i> |
|--|--|
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6. When job seekers are planning to not only switch companies but also switch industries, it's especially a hard decision for them. They want to see similar successful examples, be reassured.

"When I decide to become a designer, I thought about it for a long time: Really? My almost 8 years of mechanical engineer knowledge and experience might become useless, and I need to start from zero. Is it the right thing to do? "

7. When job seekers choose a company not only based on location and salary, but even more importantly, soft factors such as what everyday life would be like, how challenging would the job be, their next career opportunities, and who are they going to work with matter a lot.

"I have my specific values when looking at companies - to me perks don't matter that much...I have no idea what's the major difference between consultancies and tech companies in terms of their working style."

8. Not only do people who are currently looking for a job need support, people who have a job would also like to be informed by the trends and opportunities. Job or industry switches happen much more frequently today, for reasons other than monetary incentive.

"I have a kid now. I really need to work somewhere that is more family friendly."

4.2 Survey

I conducted an online survey to study the opinions from job seekers as well as employers. There are 77 respondents in total. The survey provided quantitative data implications for the design directions, unveiling important issues both job seekers and employers are constantly struggling with. For instance, job seekers hope to be more informed of how their application goes as they apply, and hope to get feedback from companies. But, companies are very reluctant to give job seekers feedback even though they are really willing to help candidates to grow. It's very helpful for me to abandon some of my initial assumptions and steer the thesis project into a more valid direction so that the design solution is desirable to both job seekers and employers. I summarized my insights from the survey as below:

Survey Takeaways

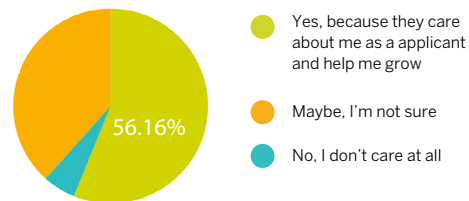
There are five key findings from the survey. I summarized them into short sentences and accompanied each with sample quotes or data graphs from the survey to support the findings.

1. Job seekers would like to gain feedback from companies during their career seeking process. Especially when job seekers applied to a company but were rejected, constructive feedback from the company would be invaluable for job seekers.

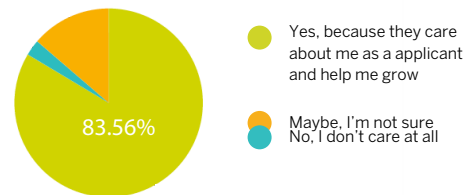
"If I am not offered a job, it is frustrating not knowing where in the job application process I failed to move on. I would like to know things like whether they see me as not a fit for the company culture, if I don't seem to have the skills they are looking for, or if it was a close call and the other candidate beat me out by some small margin. Feedback like this helps to know whether this is a company I should try to apply to in the future if I am still interested, plus whether there is a better way that I could present myself as a candidate for other future positions."

2. Job seekers usually feel appreciative for the companies who give them support during their career seeking process, and most of them are willing to reciprocate.

If there are two companies that to the SAME degree appeal to you. Are you more leaning towards a company gives your feedbacks?



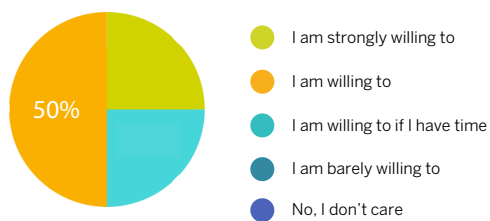
Will you respect the company more if it gives you feedbacks after you apply?



“There were hundreds of resumes per application. We even would have to narrow down the pool sometimes in a random way.”

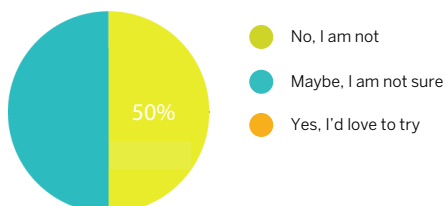
3. From the recruiting side, companies hope to reach high-value candidates directly instead of narrowing down from the huge candidate pool step by step.

If possible, How will as a company do you want to help applicants grow?



4. Companies have a strong will to help applicants to grow if time permits, and the most effective way is point out them where to improve on an one-on-one base.

If there is a tool to help you sort resume and generate feedbacks to applicants automatically, are you willing to use that?



-
5. Companies are very reluctant to give job seekers feedback, and they don't want to use any tools to do that even if the tool can make this process easier.

"We have thousands of candidates. Some candidates might send resumes randomly without even knowing what the job is. It's not a good use of time or resources for us to give all candidates feedback individually. Also, we don't hope our candidates to take their feedback personally."

4.3 Competitive Analysis

To identify how current product and services have fulfilled job seekers needs then further define where the gaps are, I did an assessment of the existing career management related products. I compared their features perspectively and summarized as the following table.

	LinkedIn	Monster	Glass Door	Twitter	Quora	Career Assessment	Career Consulting	Meet up Event	Related Books
Is it people oriented? Focus on connection Focus on conversation									
Guidance Does it provide direction and guide you through?									
Matching Does it matches you and your potential career?									
Personalization Is it tailored for your personal situation?									
Update Is it updated over the time?									
Accessibility Is it accessible be majority of people who need it?									
Trigger Action Does it trigger users' action?									
Long Term Does it support people in a long term ?									
Ojectivity Does it provide objective, multiple views?									

Competitive Analysis Takeaways

The table suggests that internet-based products provides objective information, are quickly updated, and have great accessibility, but are not very personalized. Interpersonal connections such as career consulting and meet-up events are effective at providing personalized career suggestions, but are less accessible and more subjective. The key takeaway from the competitive analysis implicates an oppourtuny for providing a service that is both accessible to a wide range of audiences and that gives job seekers personal career giudance.

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Synthesis

5.1 Types of job seekers

As I did the interviews and surveys and asked people describe their career management journey, I realized people's perspectives and pain points vary significantly depending on their experience and whether they are clear or not about their career interest. Based on the findings from the interviews and the surveys, I identified four types of job seekers according to whether they have a career direction and whether they are actively seeking a job. They are *Bees*, *Climbers*, *Floater*s, and *Sitters*. (Figure 5.1.1)



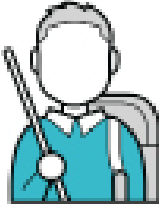
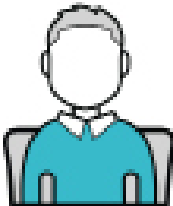
Have no career goal	BEE S 	FLOATER 
	CLIMBER 	SITTER 
	Active seeking	Passively receiving

Figure 5.1.1 | Types of job seekers



Bee: “I work really hard to find what I should do”

Bees are willing to endeavor to the best of their abilities for their careers. However, they don’t have a clear career interest, nor do they know where to start.



Climber: I build my skills and networks consciously

Climbers know what they want. They are trying to build skills and connect to people for a clear career goal. In this process, their biggest question is “How can I optimize my path?” or “How can I do better?”



Floater: I just moved here. Whatever job to me is fine

Floaters don’t know what they want, and don’t have passion or time to devote to any self-improvement to change their situation. Usually, they have little skills that are specialized enough to define their roles.



Sitter: Keep me updated, though I’ll stay where I am now

Sitters have no problem with their career direction, and usually have a job. They are not looking to switch, unless something breaks their current stability.

5.2 Job Seeking Journey and Needs

In general, a job seeker's career journey has six basic steps: *Learn what I want*, *Learn what it is like*, *Set up goals*, *Build skills*, *Make a decision*, and *Next Career* (Figure 5.2.1). Different types of job seekers may just experience only a few steps out of the six. For instance, *learn what I want* may not be that big of a struggle for Climbers and Sitters; *Next Career* may not be a huge consideration for Floaters, who are less clear about what they are interested in and care less about industry. I summarized the six steps as follows, which further informed the thesis project of which the more effective design intervention should happen.

In the whole job seeking journey, there are three major needs that I identified: *Where should I go?*, *What it is like?* and *Who can help me?*. *Where should I go* is a need when job seekers are willing to switch industries. They need to be supported by large amount of data that can indicate the career switching possibilities. *Learn what it is like* is a need when job seekers start off searching for a new job or switching companies. They need a very objective inside look of what their future companies look like as they are making decisions. *Who can help me* is a need when job seekers try to build their skills while needing specific guidance from people whom they trust (Figure 5.2.1).

Learn what I want

Job seekers at this stage need to learn about themselves. They are trying to identify what are their career interests, what career routes are possible for them, and whether this direction is the right way to go. If they are going to switch careers, they want to be reassured that this is a valid route for them.

Learn what it is like

Job seekers at this stage want to learn what it is like to work in a company and even on a specific team. They need to know what they can learn, how challenging is the job, how current and past employees feel about the job. Also they hope to learn more about the culture and people in the teams.

Set up Goals

Job seekers need to set up career goals and manageable plans before they begin working on building skills and making connections. This step is extremely important since different goals will lead to different efforts resulting in different directions. Job seekers want to make sure their goals are rewarding as well as manageable.

Build skills

Job seekers struggle to build skills and connections to reach their career goals. In this process, job seekers need reliable guidance, especially tips and feedback from senior or more experienced people that they trust.

Make a Decision

Job seekers may get several offers after applying. In this phase they need objective opinions and data to support their decisions.

Next Career

After having a job, job seekers normally still want to be updated on industry trends. Years after, the external career landscape and internal values may change. Job seekers might well experience another career managing iteration and start a new journey.

5.3 Design Requirements

Based on the research insights, audience typology and people's general job seeking journey, there are six specific design requirements that will be integrated into my design solution.

1. The system should be established on job seekers and companies mutual benefits.
2. For job seekers, interpersonal conversation and relationship are a preferred way to build a career.
3. The quantitative data that reveals other people's career choices could give job seekers an objective reference for their own career choice.
4. An effective design intervention should lean towards a human solution instead of a technology solution.
5. For job seekers who are seeking a new career path, the system should lower the obstacles to starting.
6. The system should support job seekers with ongoing, flexible support during their career management process, instead of just producing a static result.

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Low-fi design prototypes

In this step I developed two concepts with specific personas and scenarios. I did speed dating with potential users, which verified as well as disproved my early-stage assumptions. Also, the speed dating informed some details that I would need to consider in the high-fidelity, full-featured prototypes:

6.1 Concept 1

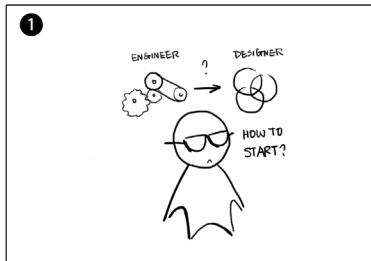
6.1.1 Scenario

DaPath is an e-mentor system that connects a job seeker with a senior employee as a career mentor and facilitates their one-on-one online communication.

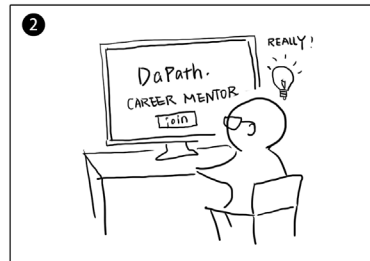
Key Feature #1: The Mentee (job seeker) and mentor are matched automatically according to their goals, experiences and expertises.

Key Feature #2: The Mentee (job seeker) and mentor can work together to set up goals, plans and tasks to guide this process.

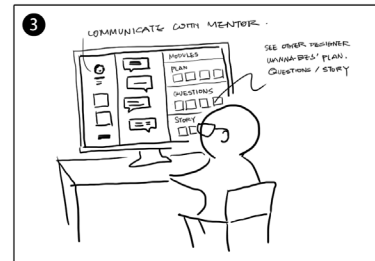
Key Feature #3: The Mentorship has flexible session length which can be later negotiated based on both mentor and mentee's need.



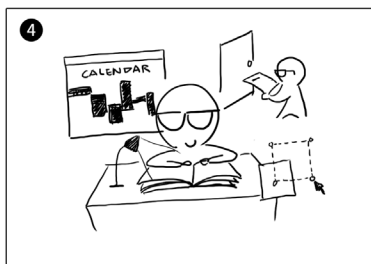
Tony is an Engineer who really wants to work as a designer, however, he doesn't know how to start.



One day, Tony finds DaPath, which is an online career mentor platform where Tony can have a senior person as his career mentor, and the default period is 4 months. Tony decides to try.



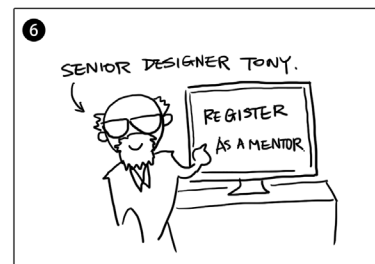
After putting in his information, Tony meets his mentor online, who is a senior designer who also has an engineer background. After communicating with his mentor, Tony makes a solid plan for himself and his mentor gives him lots of valuable feedback and suggestions.



Tony actively implements his plan, and checks in with his mentor of his process. He never feels helpless in this career change process.



After 4 months, the mentor session is finished. Tony already gets a basic idea of where to start and what to do, which is the hardest part. Now he is able to make progress by himself. He sends his mentor a thank-you note in this system.



8 years later, Tony is already a senior experienced designer. He really appreciates how DaPath had helped him, and he decides to register as a mentor to help more people.

6.1.2 Evaluation

Speed dating interviews resulted in valuable feedback that job seekers liked the idea of having a senior person(mentor) who had more experience to talk to when having career related haze, and they felt the personal stories and from the senior person (mentor) would be invaluable for them. However, there are some considerations in this model.

First, the motivation of mentors needs to be validated, since the mentorship is built upon volunteerism.

Second, the mentor-mentee relationship needs to be processed in the way that is more humanized. Just terminating the mentor session with a thank-you note is not very humane for both mentors and mentees.

Third, people would like to have a relatively short duration for each individual online mentor session. They would like mentor relationships to last about three months. These are the questions I will take into consideration in the next steps.

6.2 Concpet 2

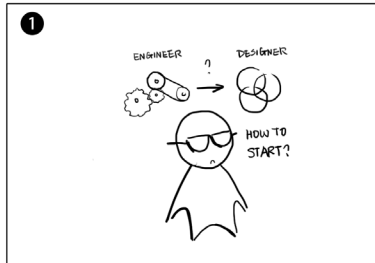
6.2.1 Scenario

Peep is a crowdsourced platform that can collect people's career preferences, then visualize a large amount of career switch and career choice data.

Key Feature #1: The user is able to see between which two occupations the most switches occur.

Key Feature #2: The user is able to search for how many people have chosen company A over company B when getting both offers (This data comes from user submissions).

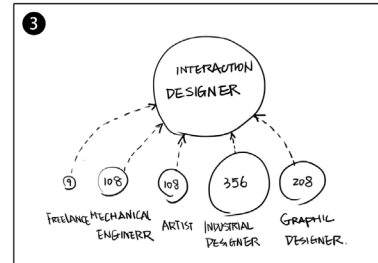
Key Feature #3: The user is able to search for how many people have switched from company A to company B.



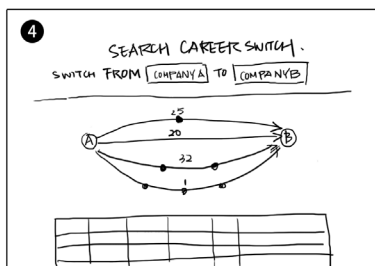
Tony is an Enigneer who really wants to work as a desginer, but he is not sure about his career choice. He wants to know more about other people's career journey in the area of design



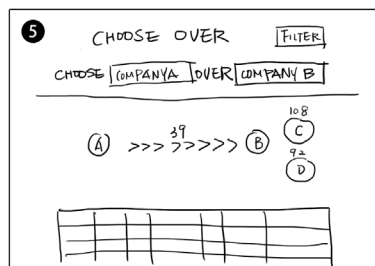
One day, Tony find Peep, which is a powerful searching tool where Tony can search for how many people choose company A rather than compa-ny B when getting both offer. Also he can search for people's career switch information, which is very helpful for his own dicision.



First, Tony wants to know whether from Engineer to Interaction designer is a common case. So he does a quick search and find that there are 108 people have successfully made this switch. Tony then feels more confident about this choice.



Tony is able to search how many people switched from company A to company B in a certain occupation field. These people's career decision point are clearly visualized. (This data can be puuled from LinkedIn or Facebook)



Besides, Tony is able to search how many people have chosen company A over company B when getting offer from both. The tool also shows what companies that company A "win over" for most times. (This data is crowd-sourced via individual submission)



A year later, Tony got three offers from three design consultancies. He comes back to the system to submit what offers he got, and which company he would choose and why. One more piece of data comes into the system to inform more people!

6.2.2 Evaluation

Speed dating revealed that job seekers would feel more confident about their career choice if they have a lot of data crowdsourced from other people to support their decisions. Job seekers would love to hear more about personal successful stories concerning their career change. One thing that needed to be clarified is the two components of the service: company comparison and career trajectory. People suggested to separate these into two different features of an overarching service platform. Since the concepts were validated by job seekers with just some details to reconsider, I decided to take these concepts into the next step to develop them into a high-fidelity product.

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High-fi Mock-ups & Evaluation

The low-fidelity prototype and speed dating validated that there is a strong need for building a tool that supports job seekers with insightful company data and provides junior job seekers with the opportunity to connect with the senior employers. In this iteration, I further developed the low fidelity prototype into a concrete, systematic service, *Build*.

Build is an online service that enables people to get insights about industries and companies, and enables job seekers to get access to senior employees as their career mentors. *Build* has three key features: *Career trends*, *Company insights*, and *Mentorship*. Each feature focuses on addressing one major need, *Where should I go?*, *What is it like?* and *Who can help me?*, which I identified in previous sections.

7.1 High Fidelity Mock-ups

Need 1: Where should I go?

One might change career paths a couple of times in his/her life, not only between companies but also industries. For job seekers, changing industry is especially hard for them. They need to be supported by information that can indicate the career switching possibilities, and individual success stories.

Corresponding Feature 1: A data visualization of career switching trends and individual stories.

In the Career Trends section, job seekers are able to search for trending career landscapes, and industry switch information. Also, job seekers are able to read career switch related individual stories. With this information, job seekers' career switch decisions are greatly supported by possible and trending career pathways of a large number of people (Figure 7.1.1).

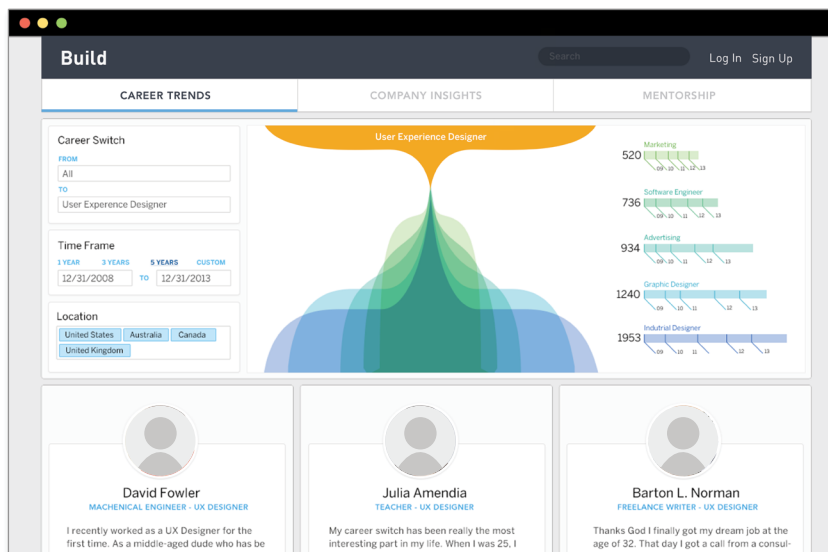


Figure 7.1.1 | Career Trends

Need 2: What is it like?

This is a main need when job seekers are about to start a new career or switch companies: Within one industry, one may switch among a couple of companies over the course of their career. When switching companies, it is important for the job seekers that they can compare between a couple of companies. However, the current lack of transparency of company information puts job seekers in a dark box.

Corresponding Feature 2: A searching and comparing platform that enables job seekers to gain insights about companies.

In the Company Insights section, job seekers are able to compare two companies' statistics in a certain industry. For instance, they can compare the work-life-balance graph, salaries, average company employee retentions, company switch flows and team formation. The comparison is triggered by a user's search action, and the data is pulled from Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Facebook, or crowdsourced by users (Figure 7.1.2).

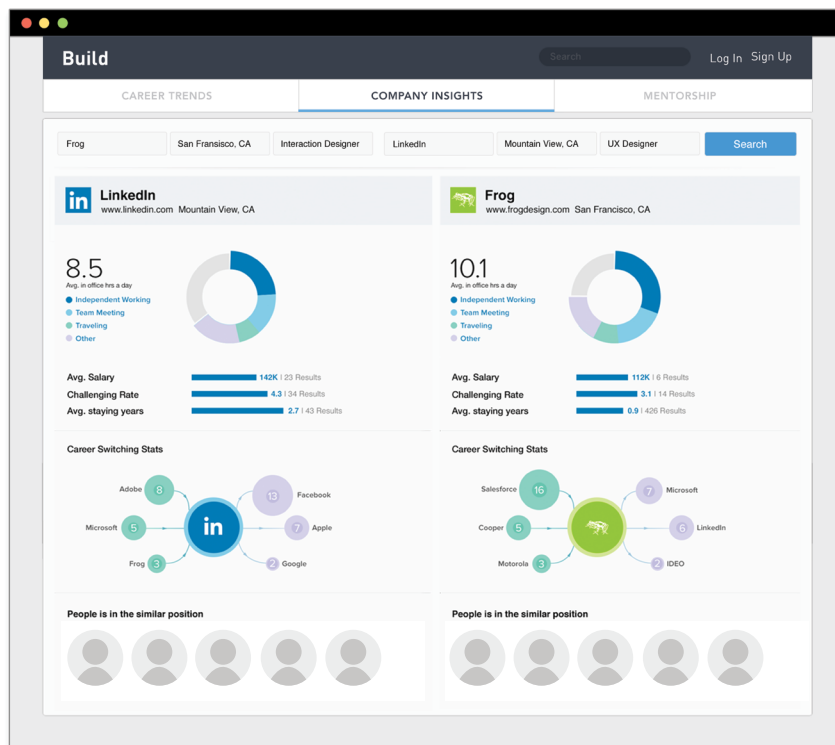


Figure 7.1.2 | Company insights

Need 3: Who can help me?

Whether switching companies or switching industries, for job seekers, there is a need for the bridge that can lead job seekers from where they are to where they want to be. Although there are a lot of “how-to” or “step-by-step” guides online that job seekers can refer to, everyone has their own situations or concerns. The online one-size-fits-all information might be too general to be constructive. Therefore, job seekers in this case need more specific guidance.

Corresponding Feature 3: A mentorship platform that enables one-on-one conversation between mentors (Senior employees) and mentees (job seekers).

In the mentorship section, people can sign up as mentors or mentees then type in their basic information and expectations. The system will match mentors and mentees and provide a conversation platform for them. Within the conversation platform, both mentors and mentees are able to create or edit tasks to facilitate the learning process. Every task can be broken down into smaller tasks and every task is supported by calendars, text/photo upload fields. It's a handy tool for both mentor's instructing and mentee's learning (Figure 7.1.3).

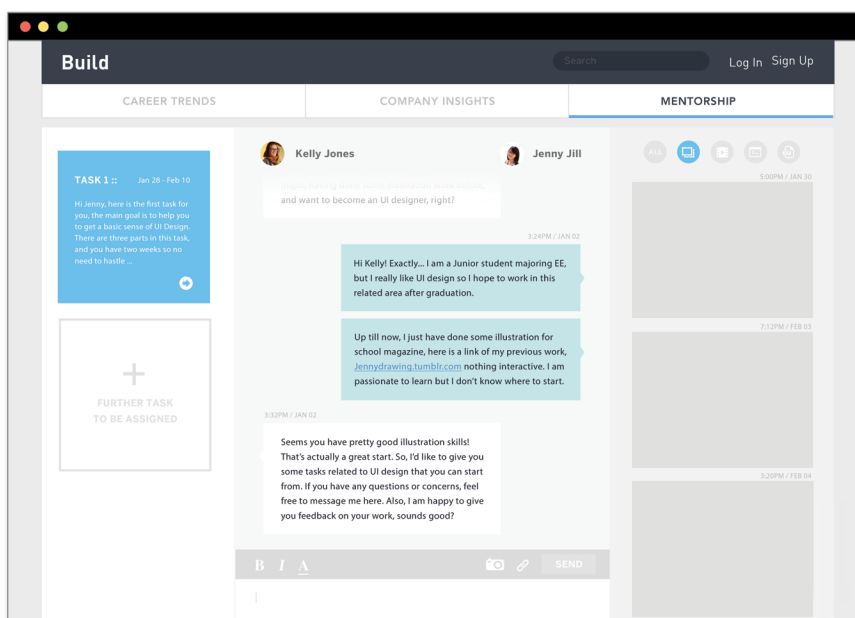


Figure 7.1.3 | Mentorship

7.2 Feedback and improving directions

The feedbacks from job seekers for the high-fidelity design concept was generally very positive except for a few details that I need to take into consideration when finalizing the design solution.

First, from the visual design perspective, in the first scenario, the career switching trends could be better visualized to give job seekers more informative insights.

Second, from the story telling perspective, the system would benefit from visualizing how all types of users could use the system, providing a context for these use cases.

Third, to give people a better sense of how the product would work within an ecosystem, the three scenarios would benefit from being located within a big system with multiple stakeholders involved, and the design solution would be more compelling if I make this system explicit.

Fourth, such details as the incentive for mentoring and the time investment of the mentoring should be taken into consideration.

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Final design

8.1 System

My final design, *Build*, is an online service that enables people to get insights of industries and companies, and enables job seekers to access senior employees as their career mentors. This online service allows multiple stakeholders to participate to achieve a mutual benefit. The stakeholders include not only individuals, but also governments, organizations and companies. (Figure 8.1.1)

In this model, the data concerning how many people have switched from one specific industry to another, and concerning people's company switching pathway would be an insightful information for organizations to change their strategies. The information of how many people have switched from one specific industry to another would be a reliable reflection on the current employment landscape for governments, based on which they would be able to enact relevant policies. Both of the industry switch data and the company switch data would be an invaluable resources for companies' self-reflection and self-improvement. Also, companies can participate into the mentorship program as either companies or individuals. In this process, the mentors would also benefit from goodwill, reputation, self-promotion and high-quality future candidate relationships.

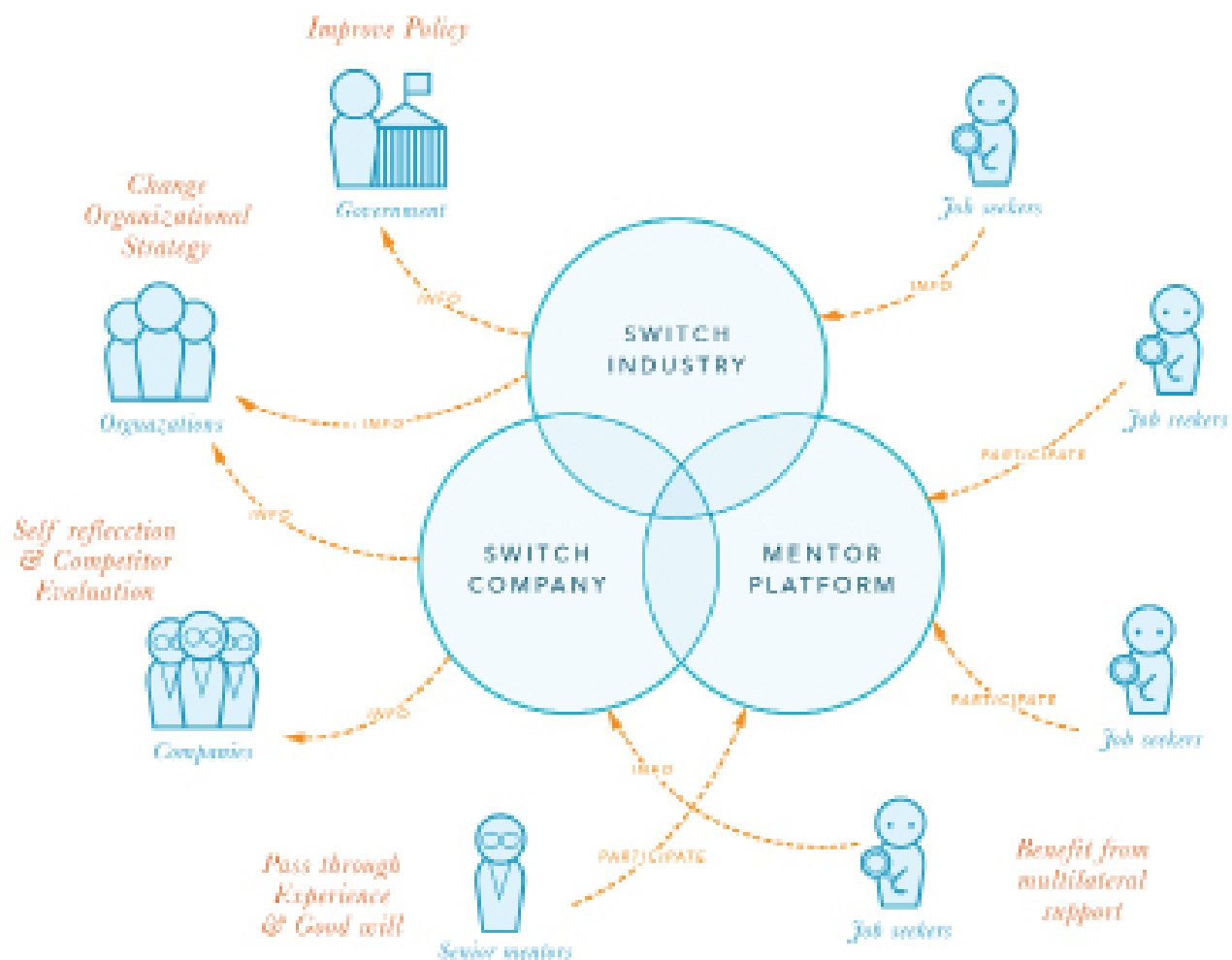


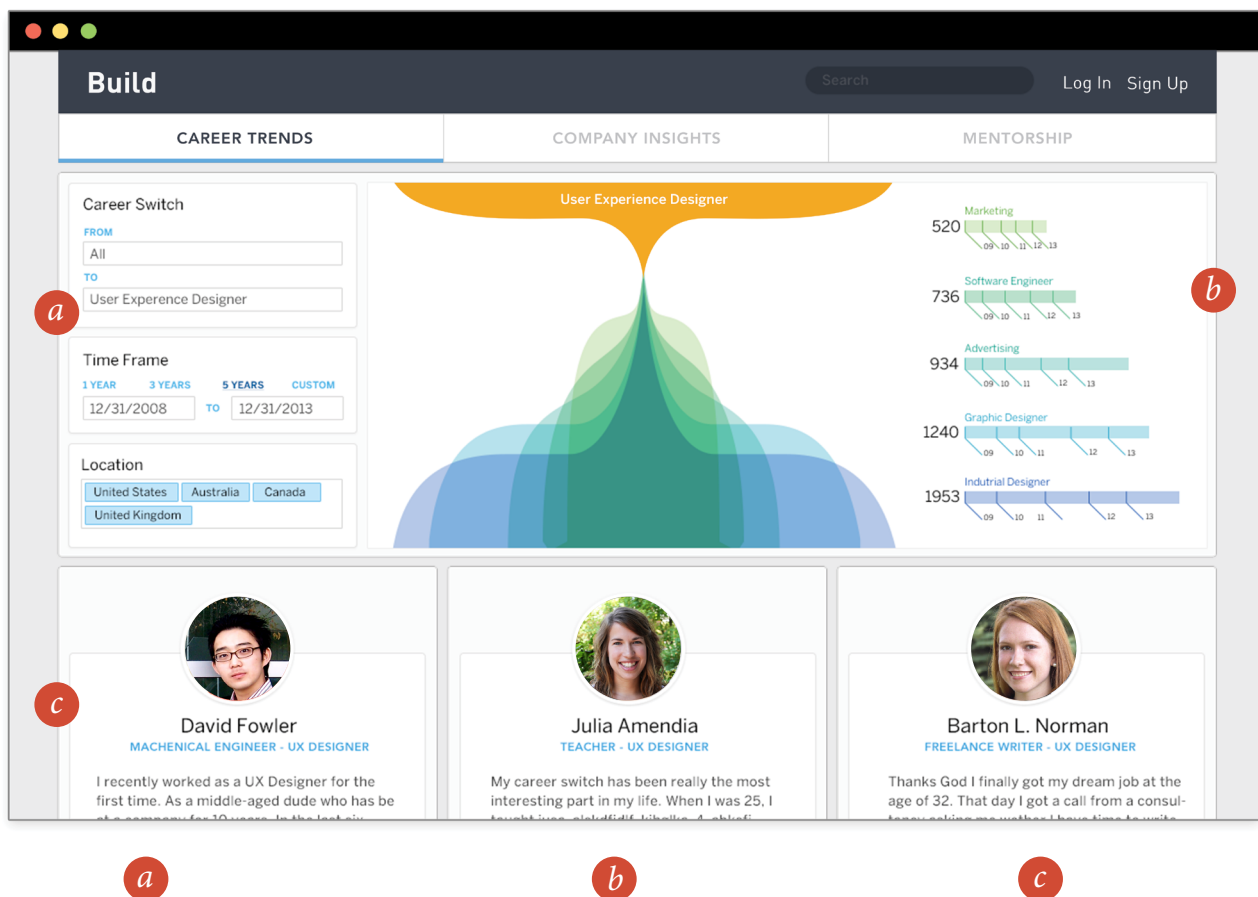
Figure 8.1.1 | System Map

8.2 Detailed Design

This online service, *Build*, has three key features that can help stakeholders, especially job seekers in this system achieve their goals: *Career Trends*, *Company Insights* and *Mentorship*. The three features are divided into three main sections in the design.

Career Trends

In the Career Trends section, job seekers can search for trending career landscapes by typing in some basic filters. Also, job seekers are able to read career switch individual stories and contribute to the story portfolio. Displaying possible and trending career pathways of a large number of people will enhanced job seekers' abilities to decide whether or not to make a career switch.



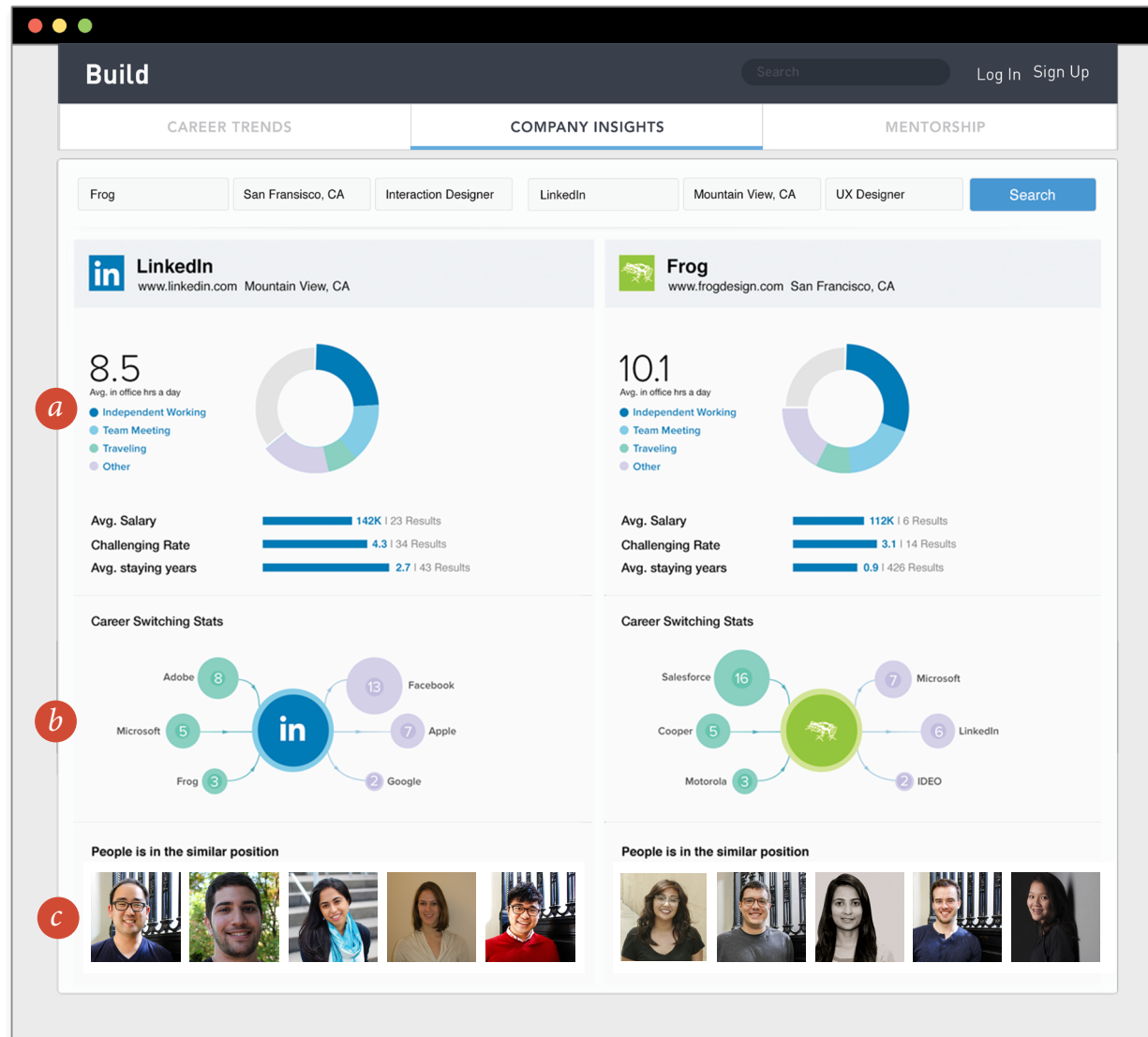
Search query input section. Users can search for industry switches based on their filters such as time and location.

Search query output section. Users can view the trends of the industries between which people most frequently switch. The data will be separated by years.

Individual story section. Users are able to submit or view individual stories of career switch paths.

Company Insights

In the Company Insights section, job seekers can search and compare two companies' statistics in a certain industry. After typing in the companies name, position and location, job seekers are able to see the work-life-balance graph, salaries, average employees' staying years, company switch flows and team formation, which are either crowdsourced from a large amount of users, or are pulled from Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Facebook's APIs.



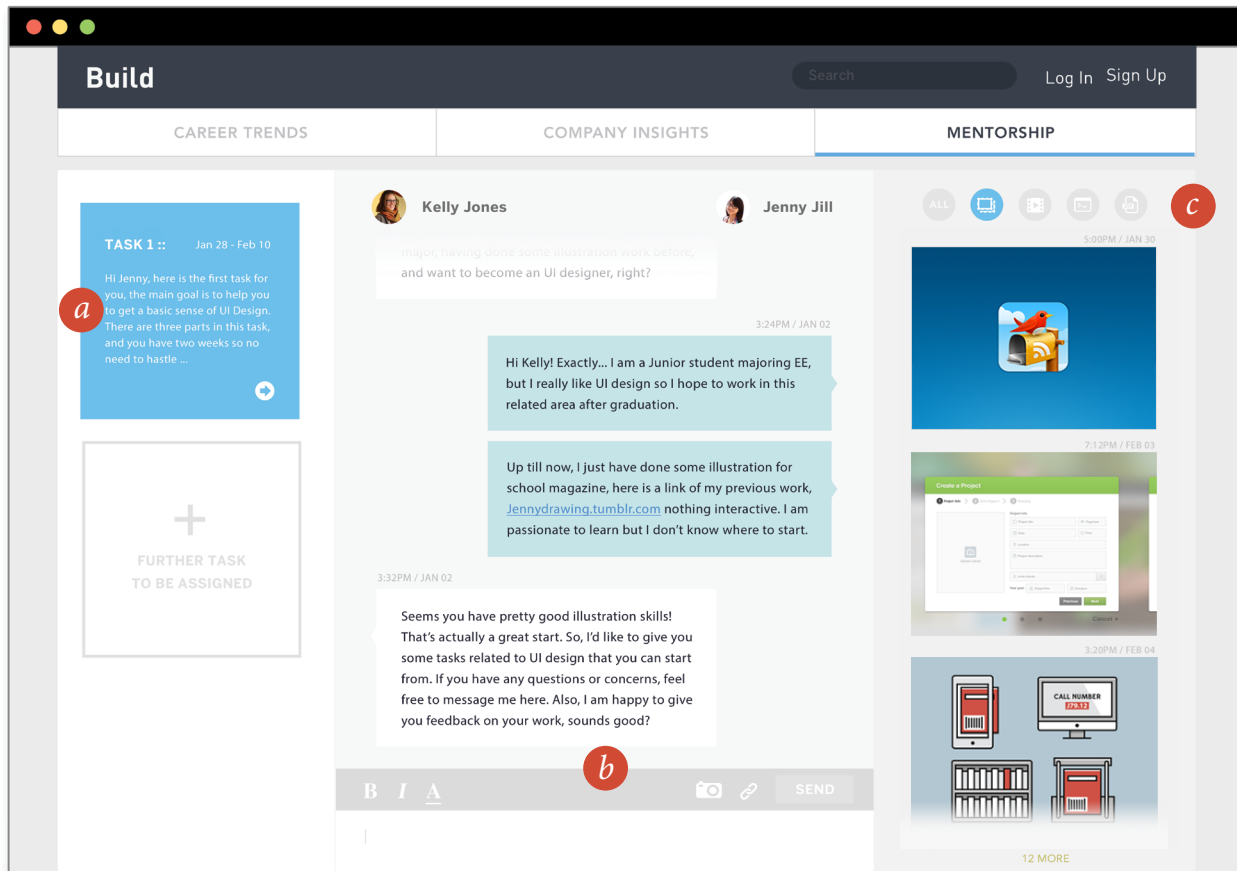
A stats comparison of two companies' work-life balance, salary, job challenge rates and employees' average retention.

A data visualization of company switch paths. The data will be pulled from LinkedIn.

People who are working in the similar positions in this company.

Mentorship

In the mentorship section, people can sign up as mentors or mentees. As they type in their basic information and expectations, the system will match mentors and mentees automatically. As the mentorship starts, the pair will have a chat platform for free one-on-one conversations. Also, both mentors and mentees are able to create tasks to facilitate the learning process, which is a handy tool for both mentors and mentees.



A task section. Here both the mentor and the mentee can create and edit tasks. The tasks function as mentee's little homework, which facilitates the mentee's learning process.

A chat thread section. Here is the main communication platform for the mentor and the mentee.

A quick search section. Both the mentor and the mentee can quickly search for photos, links and attachments that were in the chat thread.

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Reflection

Reflecting back, this thesis projects has gone through a very iterative journey. I was continuously re-framing the scope and refining the concepts as the research was going. In all, the thesis project is a success as being an online service that intends to incorporate a win-win strategy to benefit job seekers, employers, governments, organizations and companies as a whole. The feedback from job seekers as well as employers was very positive. They agreed that the problems I identified are the real ones they are facing or have encountered before. Job seekers would really like to see the company insights and career switch information as a good resource indicating career trends and possible career patterns. Also, job seekers would love to be connected to senior people who are experienced enough to provide them with career suggestions. According to the feedback I gathered from user testing, the users(mainly job seekers) saw the design solution as an “aha” moment for them — “I need this!”, “I would definitely use it if it’s launched.” Hence, I believe the the design solution I created would be very helpful in solving the problems in the career management territory.

During the process, the research I did was very crucial in leading my design towards an valid direction. Through talking to people, the biggest challenge I found was creating a solution that can benefit all parties of users including not only job seekers but also senior employers, organizations and companies. For example, although job seekers really need feedback from companies to which they are applying, the process of creating feedback from the companies’ point of view is very time-consuming. So, it was very important to conduct such research as interviews, surveys and speed dating to learn how these different parties would be comfortable to engage into the system, then create a design solution that is desireable to these multilateral users.

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Conclusion

My thesis looks at how information could empower job seekers' career management activity. Through an integrated research process including interviews, surveys, competitive analysis and speed dating, I synthesized my key insights, audience types and design principles that I took into the design phase.

My final design deliverable is *Build*, an on-line service that enables job seekers to get insights of industry and company information, and support job seekers with personally tailored career advice from senior employees by means of on-line mentorship. The data in this platform would be pulled from existing APIs such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, or crowd-sourced by other job seekers. The mentors are keen individual from companies or organizations that are experienced enough to give constructive suggestions.

Besides job seekers and senior employees(mentors) who are the main users of the system, organizations, companies and governments can also be benefit from investigating the data in the system. The employment switching flow would be an good resource for organizations to plan their strategies, and would provide invaluable insights on the current employment landscape for government to enact policies. It would also be a reliable reflection for companies to improve their recruiting and employee management strategies.

In the coming decades, the employment landscape is very likely to change at an increasingly faster rate, as the technology updates the world tremendously. Career management will be a very interesting topic and be given more importance in the rapidly changing job market. The ability to use big data to inform directions, tap into human knowledge and create connections will play a big role in the employment territory.

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