ALIA'S DESIGN PORTFOLIO

User Experience Design, Website Design, User Interface Design, UX Research, Designing for WCAG

Every online experience should make a positive impact.

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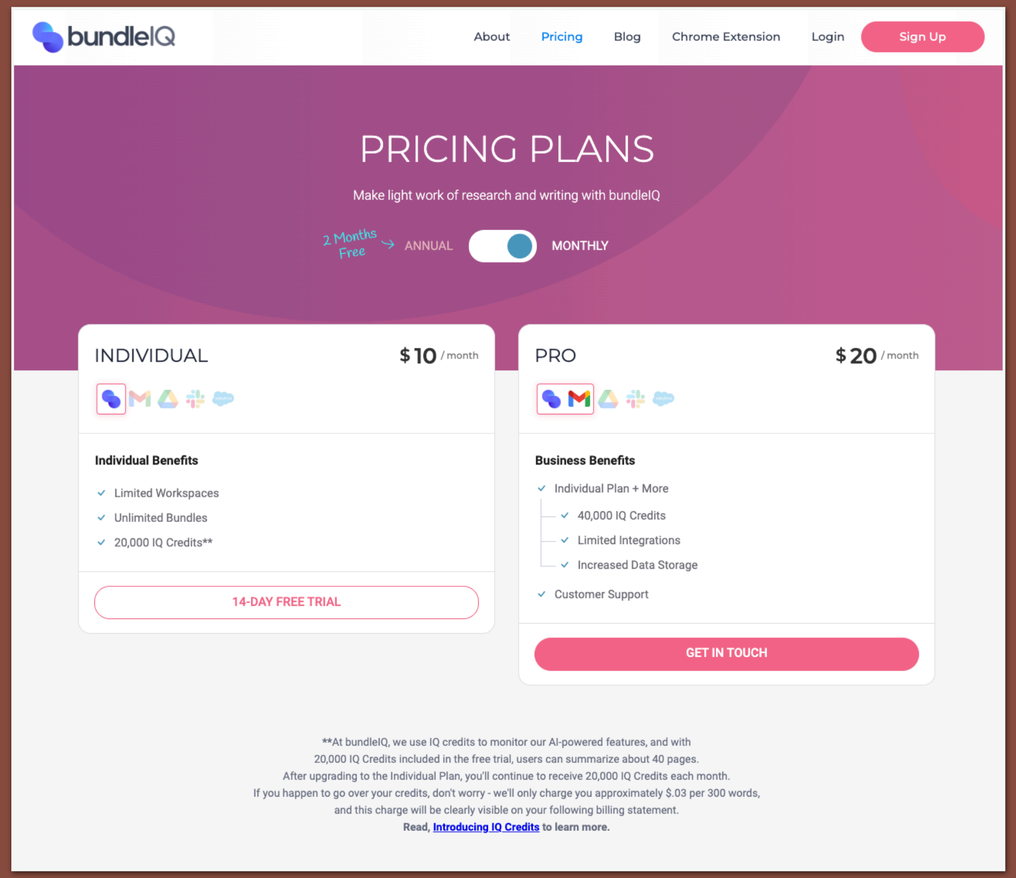


Investigating User Drop Offs, Diagnosing a Free Trial Issue, and Finding a Solution

Organization: bundleIQ

Role: UX Research

Outcome: User conversion rate after the free trial period increased from 3% to 18% within a two month period.

bundleIQ's inbox was chock-full of user complaints.

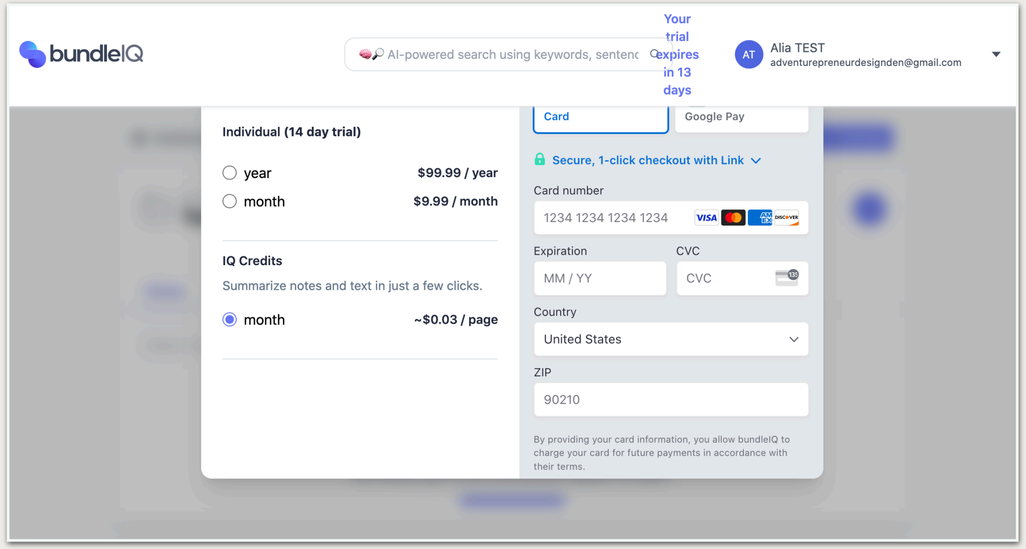
This was a small startup (team of 7), and there wasn't a dedicated user support employee on the team. Who's the next best thing? A UX Researcher, of course.

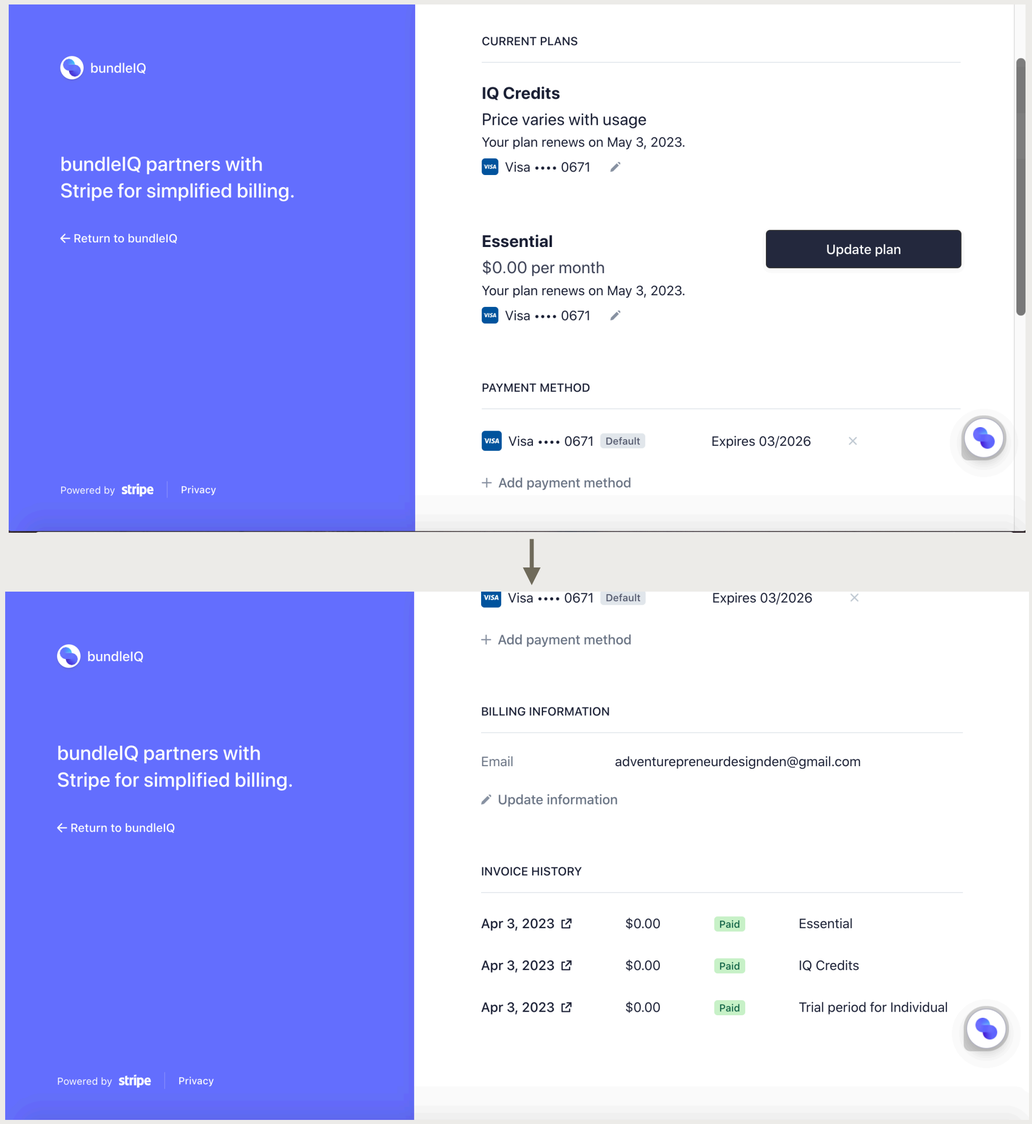
I was tasked with going through the user complaints, identifying recurring issues, reporting my findings, and suggesting solutions.

Almost every complaint tied to the onboarding process, the free trial, and cancelling a subscription.

Users expressed their frustration with having to put their card information in at the start of a 14-day free trial and then getting charged automatically with no reminder or notification.

They were especially vocal about the fact they couldn't figure out how to cancel their subscription.





I created a test bundleIQ account and went through the onboarding process to investigate further.

They were right: I was forced to put in my card info to access the free trial. Once I was in, I scoured the platform for a cancel button. Finally, in Stripe (their payment platform) I found “update plan.” But even that didn’t work.

I'm familiar with the toxic pattern of forced continuity in UX design, but I'd always been on the other side of it, with the users. This was my first time seeing it from the company side, and I didn’t think it was intentional. It was my chance to advocate for our users with evidence.

When it was time for me to present my findings, I knew I needed to be thorough.

The only way I was going to convince the team, specifically the CEO, that this process needed to change was to prove that this change would increase the revenue of the product in some way.

1. First, I went through the user complaints data, highlighting that 13/16 of the complaints focused on the free trial and cancellation process. I threw in some user quotes that hammered home the point.

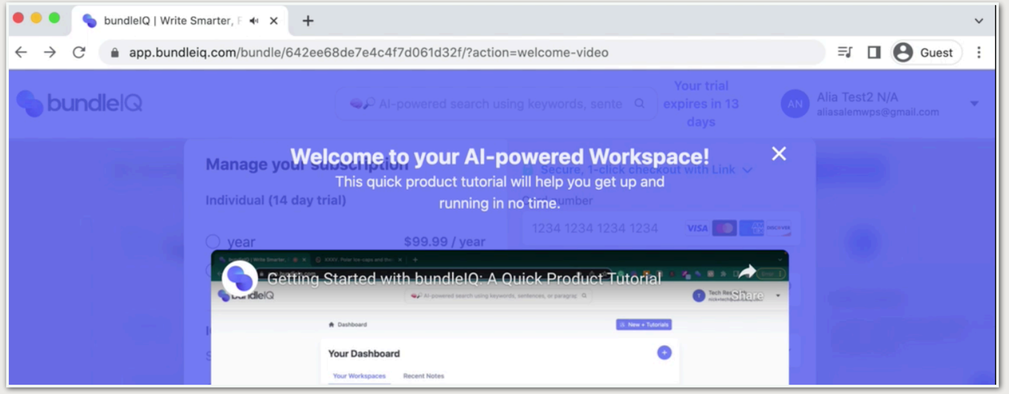
2. Second, I showed the problem in real time, screen-shotting where the cancellation button lived and noting that there were no notifications in place reminding the user of the upcoming charges.

I expected pushback, so I came prepared.

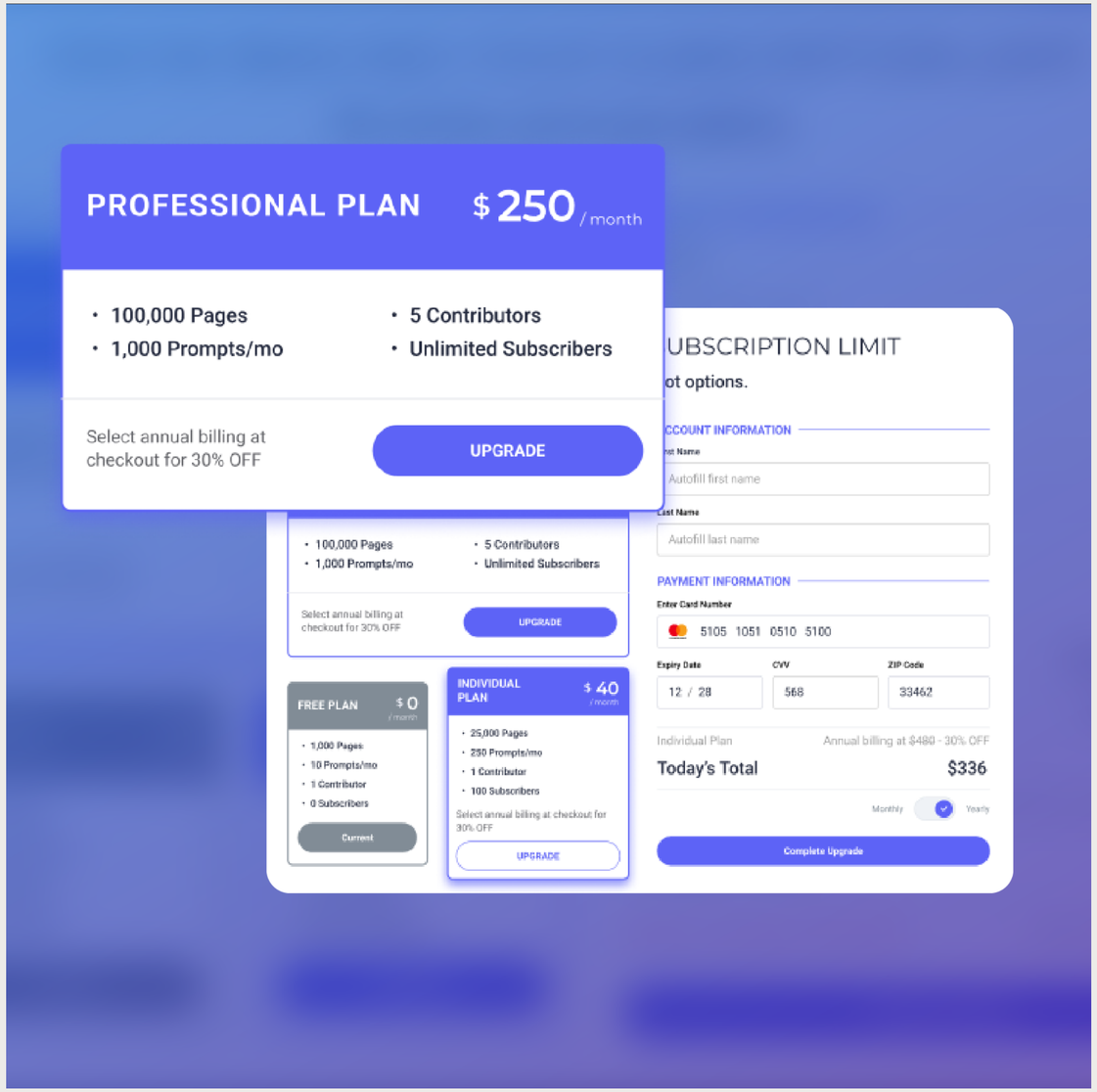
I informed the team that this kind of process is a toxic pattern in UX design and is not only hurting our users, but also hurting our company. I cited statistics that supported the idea.

Framing this as a business risk, not just a user complaint, is what got the team’s attention.

I proposed some options for adjusting the design, which included suggestions like:



- Don't make users put in their credit cards before a free trial.
- Send users multiple reminder emails about the upcoming charge, and include the cancellation button in the email.
- Make the cancellation button easily accessible by putting it in a central, familiar place (like the user's profile or settings).



The team settled on proper email notifications and a better home for the subscription cancellation button.

Within two months, the user conversion rate increased from 3% to 18%.

People were sticking around after the free trial instead of sending in a complaint about wanting to leave.

Even though this wasn't a project I got to stretch my artistic legs on, which I love doing, this is the project I am most proud of.

I believe that online interactions should make life better. This was one moment in time where I did that: I made a change through design that immediately and demonstrably made a positive difference.

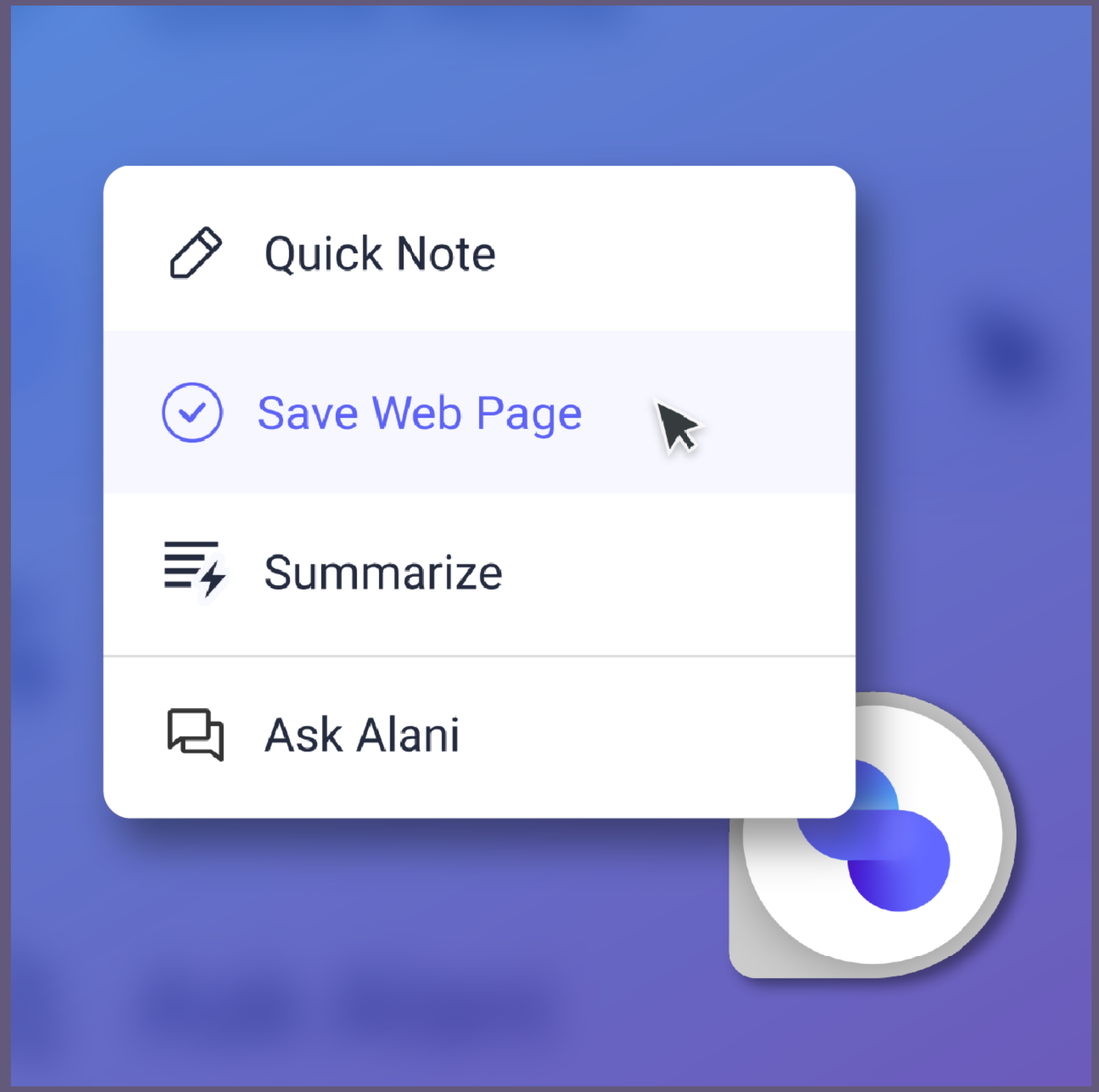
What could possibly be more rewarding?

Redesigning a Chrome Extension for a Four-in-One Workflow

Organization: bundleIQ

Role: UX Design, UI Design, Wireframing, Prototyping, Graphic Design

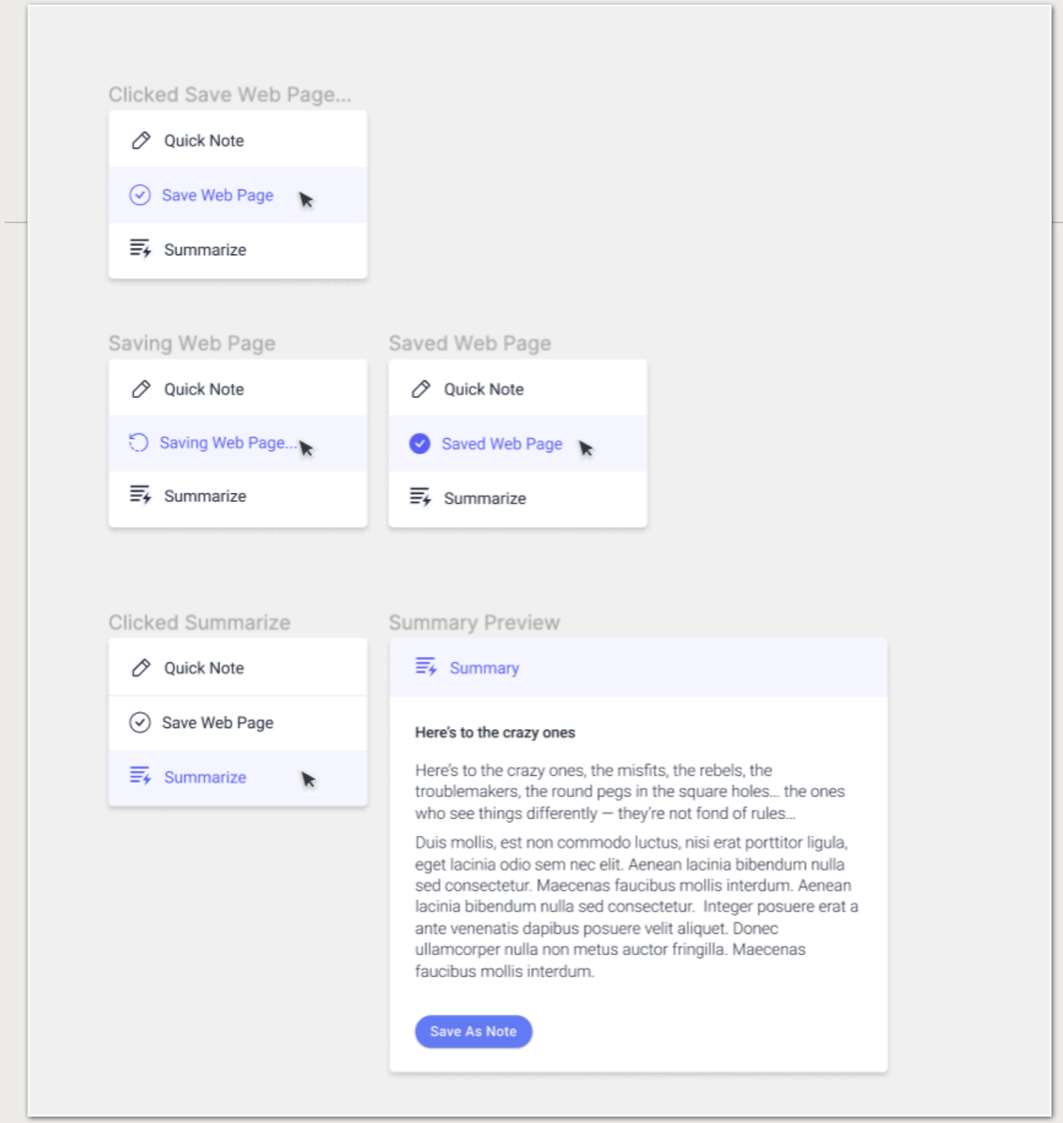
Outcome: This design was live on the Google Chrome Web Store and adopted by 1,000+ users, extending bundleIQ's AI assistant, Alani, into the browser.



bundleIQ's existing Chrome button did one thing: analyze text on whatever page you were on. That wasn't enough anymore.

BundleIQ was into AI before AI was booming, and they wanted to show it off. The new button needed to record quick notes, save the page to the bundleIQ app, summarize page text, and let users ask Alani (bundleIQ's AI) questions about what they were reading.

Therefore, this wasn't a visual refresh. It was a near-total rebuild of what the button did, on a one-month clock.



The team wanted four functions out of a button that once did only one thing. We didn't want it to feel like a cluttered menu.

I anchored the design in bundleIQ's existing brand system: the same colors, fonts, icons, and drop shadows already used in the main app. Each function read as an extension of a tool users already knew.

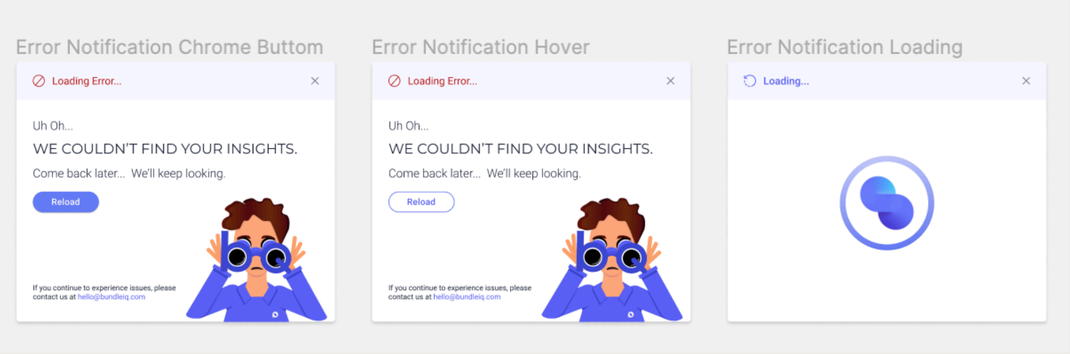
Hover effects and consistent color treatment on the nav and headers carried that same logic, so wayfinding stayed intuitive as the functionality expanded.

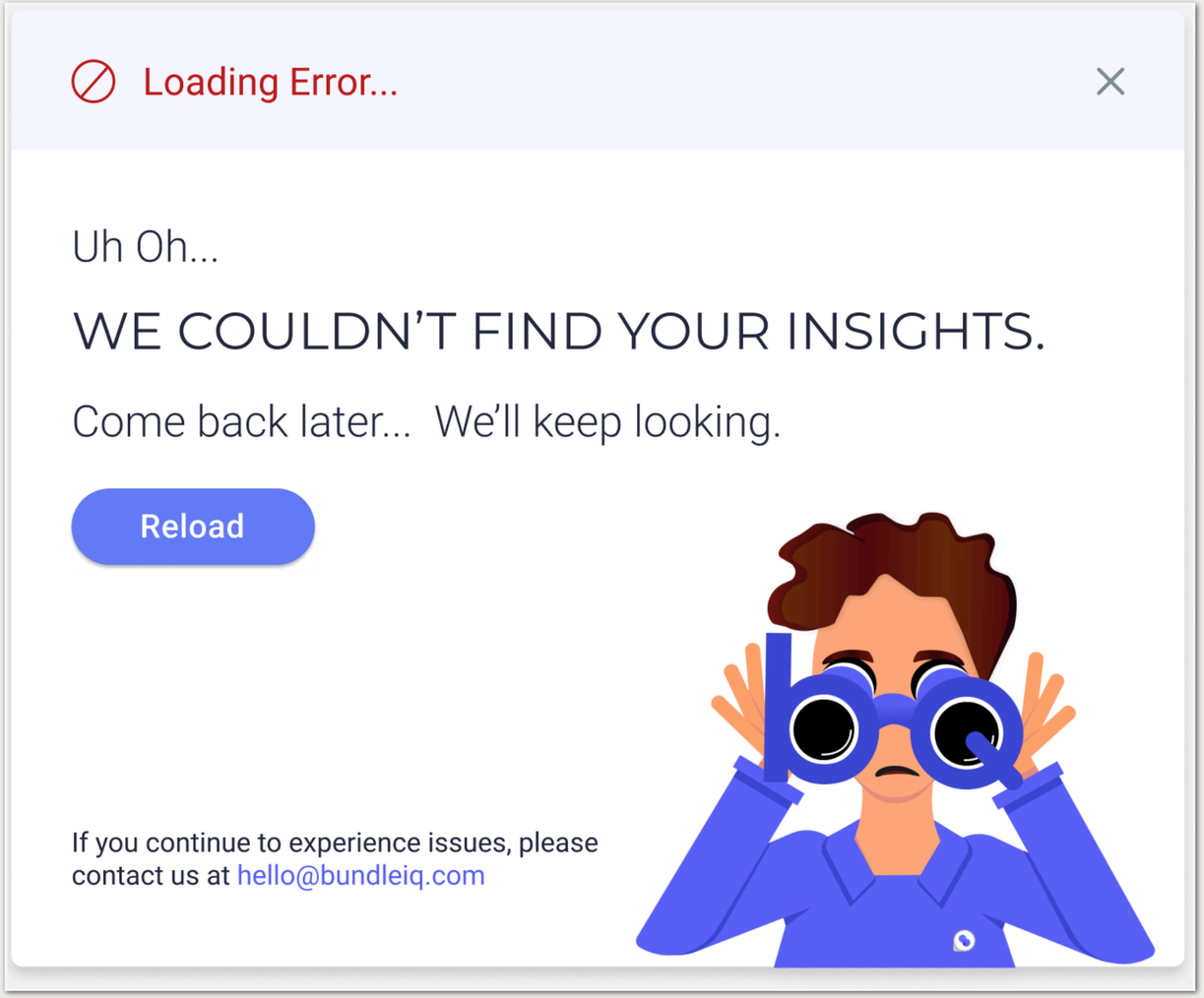
The CEO was concerned about the extension's functionality, as the new design was being pushed quickly without much testing.

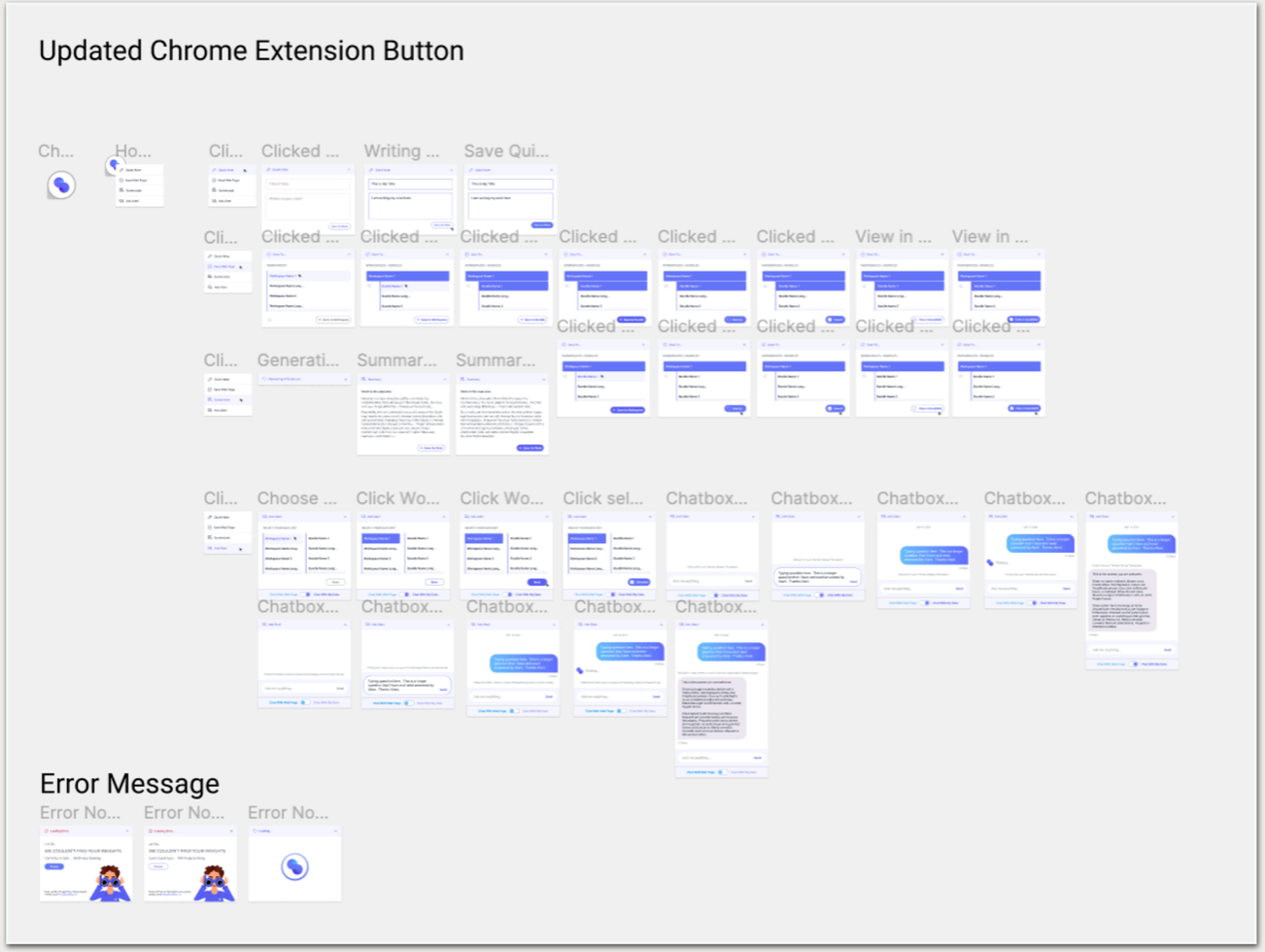
Due to the timeline of the rollout, there was no way to perfect the product before launch. (Also, when is a product ever perfect?)

So, I created a design for the moment things go wrong.

I built an error-state page for if the extension went down, and illustrated a fun graphic in Adobe Illustrator to accompany it. It featured bundleIQ's CEO holding a pair of "BQ" binoculars. (Insights out of sight... A little wordplay, if you will.)



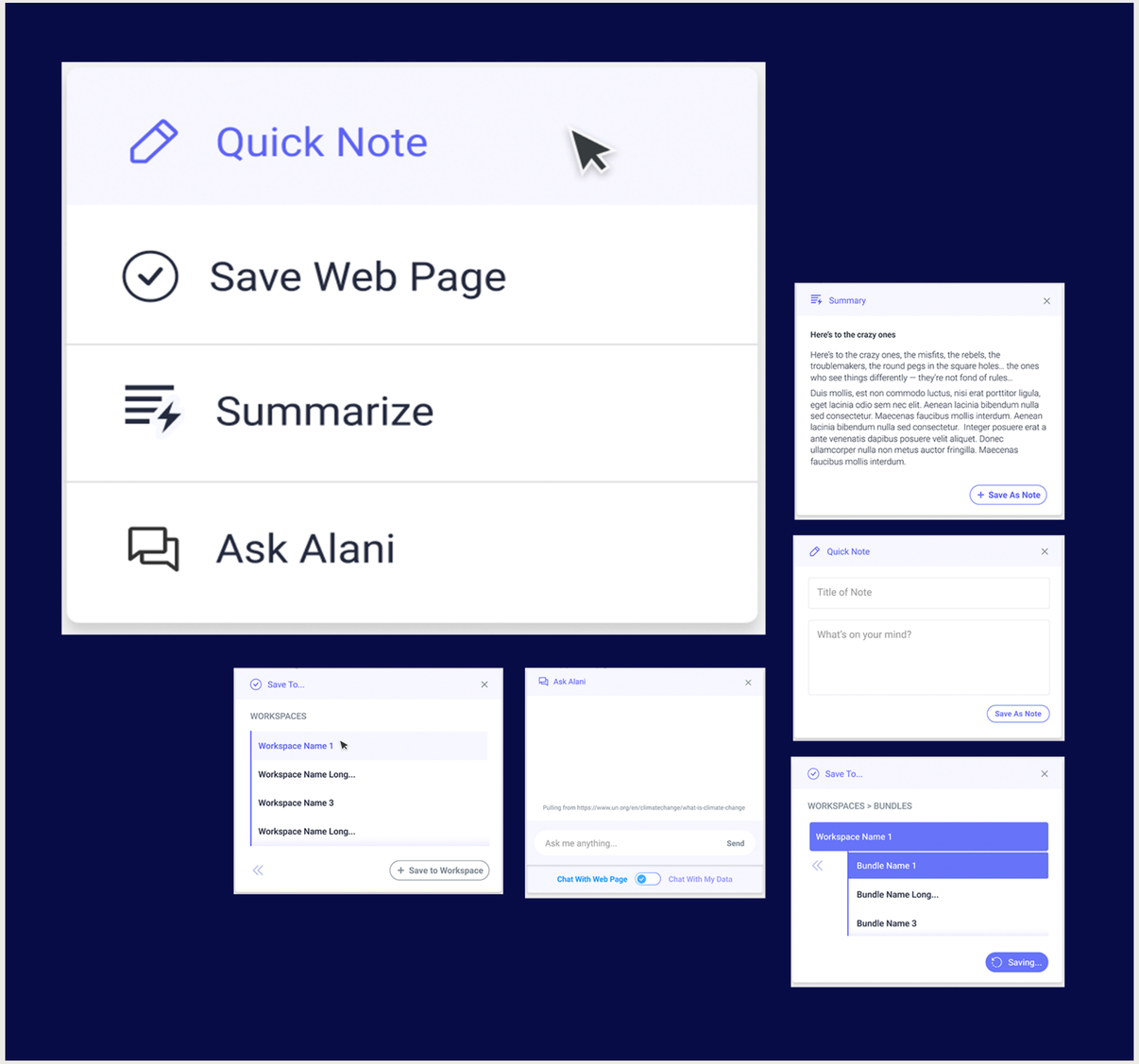




The redesigned extension put bundleIQ's full toolkit - notes, saving, summarizing, and Alani - on every page a user visited, not just inside the app itself. This encouraged engagement with Alani and bundleIQ as whole.

The extension is no longer live; bundleIQ underwent a full brand and product redesign since 2023. There are still articles and youtube videos bouncing around online that showcase the functionality of the extension.

View the high-fidelity design in Figma


Quick Note
Save Web Page
Summarize
Ask Alani
Summary
Here's to the crazy ones
Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they're not fond of rules...
Duis mollis, est non commodo luctus, nisi erat porttitor ligula, eget lacinia odio sem nec elit. Aenean lacinia bibendum nulla sed consectetur. Maecenas faucibus mollis interdum. Aenean lacinia bibendum nulla sed consectetur. Integer posuere erat a ante venenatis dapibus posuere velit aliquet. Donec ullamcorper nulla non metus auctor fringilla. Maecenas faucibus mollis interdum.
+ Save As Note
Quick Note
Title of Note
What's on your mind?
Save As Note
Save To...
WORKSPACES
Workspace Name 1
Workspace Name Long...
Workspace Name 3
Workspace Name Long...
+ Save to Workspace
Ask Alani
Pulling from https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change
Ask me anything...
Send
Chat With Web Page
Chat With My Data
Save To...
WORKSPACES > BUNDLES
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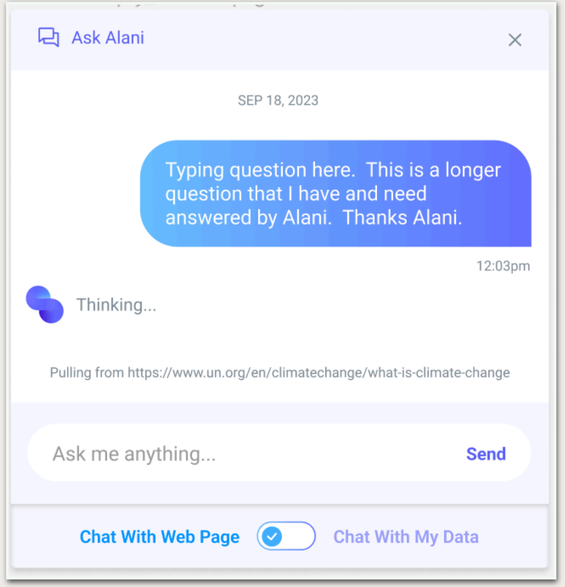
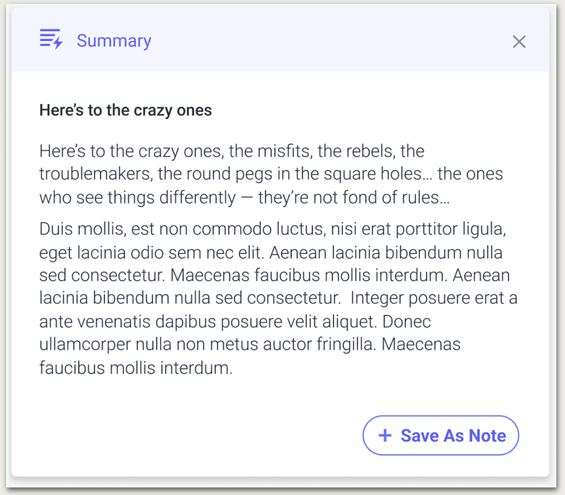
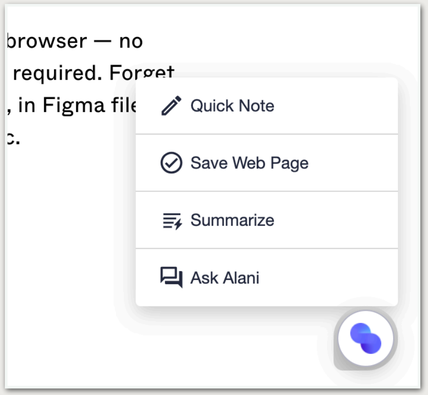
Bundle Name 1
Bundle Name Long...
Bundle Name 3
Saving...


Ask Alani
SEP 18, 2023
Typing question here. This is a longer question that I have and need answered by Alani. Thanks Alani.
12:03pm
Thinking...
Pulling from https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change
Ask me anything...
Send
Chat With Web Page
Chat With My Data


Summary
Here's to the crazy ones
Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they're not fond of rules...
Duis mollis, est non commodo luctus, nisi erat porttitor ligula, eget lacinia odio sem nec elit. Aenean lacinia bibendum nulla sed consectetur. Maecenas faucibus mollis interdum. Aenean lacinia bibendum nulla sed consectetur. Integer posuere erat a ante venenatis dapibus posuere velit aliquet. Donec ullamcorper nulla non metus auctor fringilla. Maecenas faucibus mollis interdum.
+ Save As Note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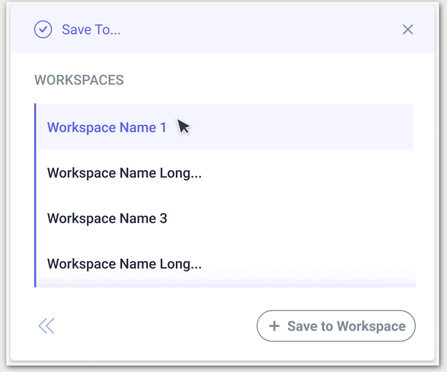
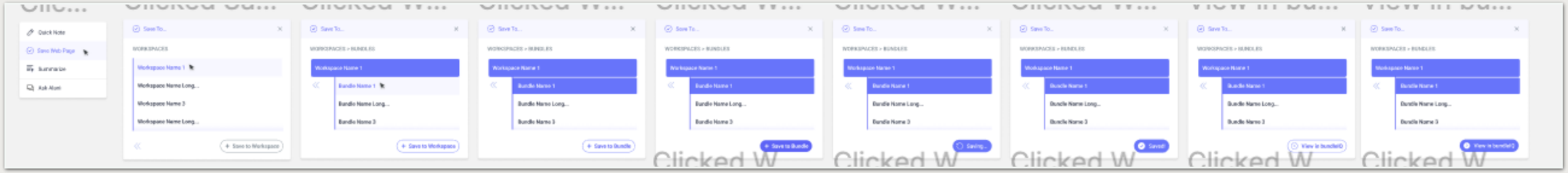
Quick Note
Save Web Page
Summarize
Ask Alani


Save To...
WORKSPACES
Workspace Name 1
Workspace Name Long...
Workspace Name 3
Workspace Name Long...
+ Save to Workspace



This project was a great opportunity to fine tune my skills on rapid prototyping, design sprints, and collaborating directly with developers.

In a lot of my past work, I was the brain behind the brand, but not here. It was refreshing and exciting to own someone else's brand decisions in a new design product. I was able to learn and grow from another designer's brand guidelines and handoff process.

Improving Accessibility and Inclusivity by Flagging Website Issues and Establishing Guidelines

Organization: Patient Choices Vermont (PCV)

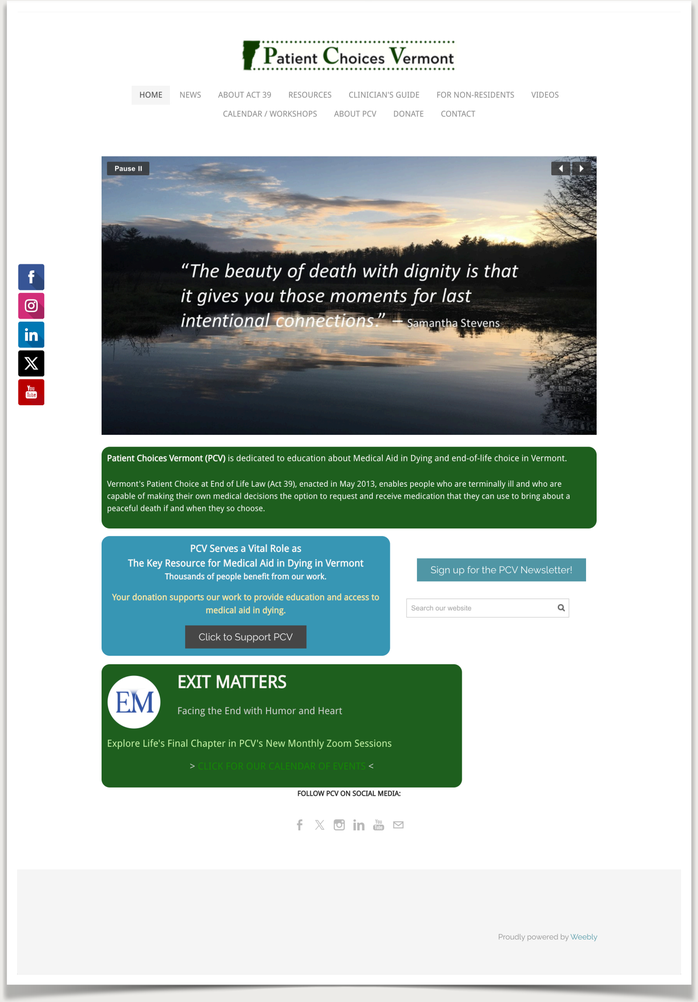
Role: UX Writing, Content Strategy

Outcome: Patient Choices Vermont gained actionable tools to improve accessibility and usability on their website, including an accessibility audit that flagged 17 issues across 4 categories (accessibility, cognitive design, inclusivity, ethical design). These assets provided began building a culture of accessibility and user-centered practices.

I was hired as a digital designer to handle newsletter designs, promotional content, event logos, and general website updates.

Only weeks into the job, I started hearing the website complaints:

- Users were submitting every contact form (there's multiple?) by accident.
- People were asking the same questions over and over even though the info is on the site.
- No one understood why donations weren't coming through the website despite all the donate buttons sprinkled throughout.



home page - before

The ED already had a volunteer UX Researcher conducting usability interviews on the website, but collecting that data was taking months. The designer inside me couldn't wait, so what could I do without stepping on the toes of the UX Researcher?

I proposed the idea of conducting an accessibility audit on the PCV website to my ED, assuring her it would work in unison with the UX Researcher's ongoing work.

This way, we could establish immediate actionable fixes to the site that would need to be made regardless of the UX Researcher's findings, like alt text, heading hierarchy, and inclusive language.

I created a 17-page slide deck that focused on accessibility, cognitive overload, inclusivity, and ethical design. This opened my ED's eyes to the issues that needed to be addressed as soon as possible and lit a fire under all of us to make the website redesign a priority. The findings:

Accessibility

- Improve Hierarchy With Headings & Subheadings
- Describe Actions, Not Behaviors, in Buttons and Language
- Avoid Directing Users With Spatial References
- Avoid Columns When Introducing Forms and Heavy Amounts of Text
- Evaluate and Edit Alt Text on Photos
- Fix Inadequate Error Indication in Forms

Cognitive Design

- Shorten Lengthy Form Instructions to Reduce Cognitive Overload
- Emphasize Desired Actions and Key Information
- Emphasize Confirmation When Submitting Forms
- Remove Unnecessary Slideshow Movement
- Standardize Grammatical Person
- Improve Visual Breaks on Text-Heavy Pages

Inclusivity

- Simplify Language to a Consistent 8th-Grade Reading Level
- Revise Cold Tone in Forms

Ethical Design

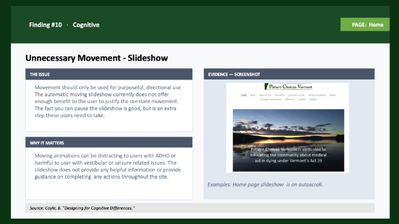
- Add a Privacy Policy to the Website
- Provide More Context Through Buttons
- Avoid Newsletter Opt-In Pressure

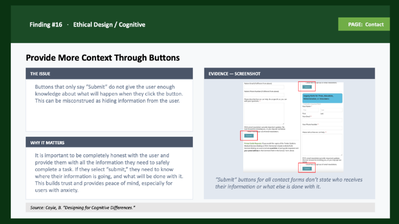
SECTION

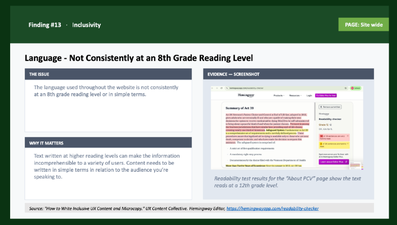
Accessibility

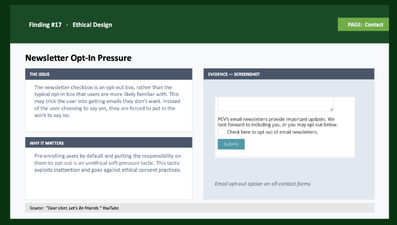
Analysing whether the PCV website words work for people using screen readers, keyboards, switch devices, or voice navigation. This barrier is mechanical: the content exists, but the user can't reach it or make sense of it through their tool.

Findings 1 - 5









FINDINGS SUMMARY

#	Category	Page	Finding Title	Source
1	Accessibility	Site wide	Heading Hierarchy	Pickering
2	Accessibility	Site wide	"Click Here"	Pickering
3	Accessibility	Site Wide	"Click button below"	Pickering
4	Accessibility	Site wide, Contact	Column Layouts Top-to-Bottom	Pickering
5	Accessibility	Site wide	Alt Text on Photos	Pickering
6	Accessibility	Contact	Inadequate Error Indication in Forms	Pickering
7	Cognitive	Contact	Instructions for Forms	Coyle
8	Cognitive	Donate, Site wide	Need Clear User Paths	Coyle
9	Cognitive	Contact	Confirmation When Submitting Forms	Coyle
10	Cognitive	Home	Unnecessary Movement - Slideshow	Coyle
11	Cognitive	FAQs	Inconsistent Grammatical Person	Coyle
12	Cognitive	Site wide	Long Paragraphs, No Text Hierarchy	Coyle
13	Inclusivity	Site wide	Reading Level Above 8th Grade	UX Content Collective
14	Inclusivity	Contact	Cold Tone	Dear User
15	Ethical / Cognitive	Contact, Site wide	Privacy Policy	Coyle
16	Ethical / Cognitive	Contact	"Submit" Buttons	Coyle
17	Ethical Design	Contact	Newsletter Opt-In Pressure	Dear User

Finding #16 · Ethical Design / Cognitive — **PAGE: Contact**

Provide More Context Through Buttons

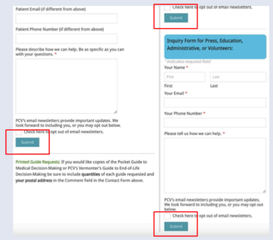
THE ISSUE

Buttons that only say "Submit" do not give the user enough knowledge about what will happen when they click the button. This can be misconstrued as hiding information from the user.

WHY IT MATTERS

It is important to be completely honest with the user and provide them with all the information they need to safely complete a task. If they select "submit," they need to know where their information is going, and what will be done with it. This builds trust and provides peace of mind, especially for users with anxiety.

EVIDENCE — SCREENSHOT



"Submit" buttons for all contact forms don't state who receives their information or what else is done with it.

Source: Coyle, B. "Designing for Cognitive Differences."

Finding #10 · Cognitive — **PAGE: Home**

Unnecessary Movement - Slideshow

THE ISSUE

Movement should only be used for purposeful, directional use. The automatic moving slideshow currently does not offer enough benefit to the user to justify the constant movement. The fact you can pause the slideshow is good, but is an extra step these users need to take.

WHY IT MATTERS

Moving animations can be distracting to users with ADHD or harmful to user with vestibular or seizure related issues. The slideshow does not provide any helpful information or provide guidance on completing any actions throughout the site.

EVIDENCE — SCREENSHOT

Examples: Home page slideshow is on autoscroll.

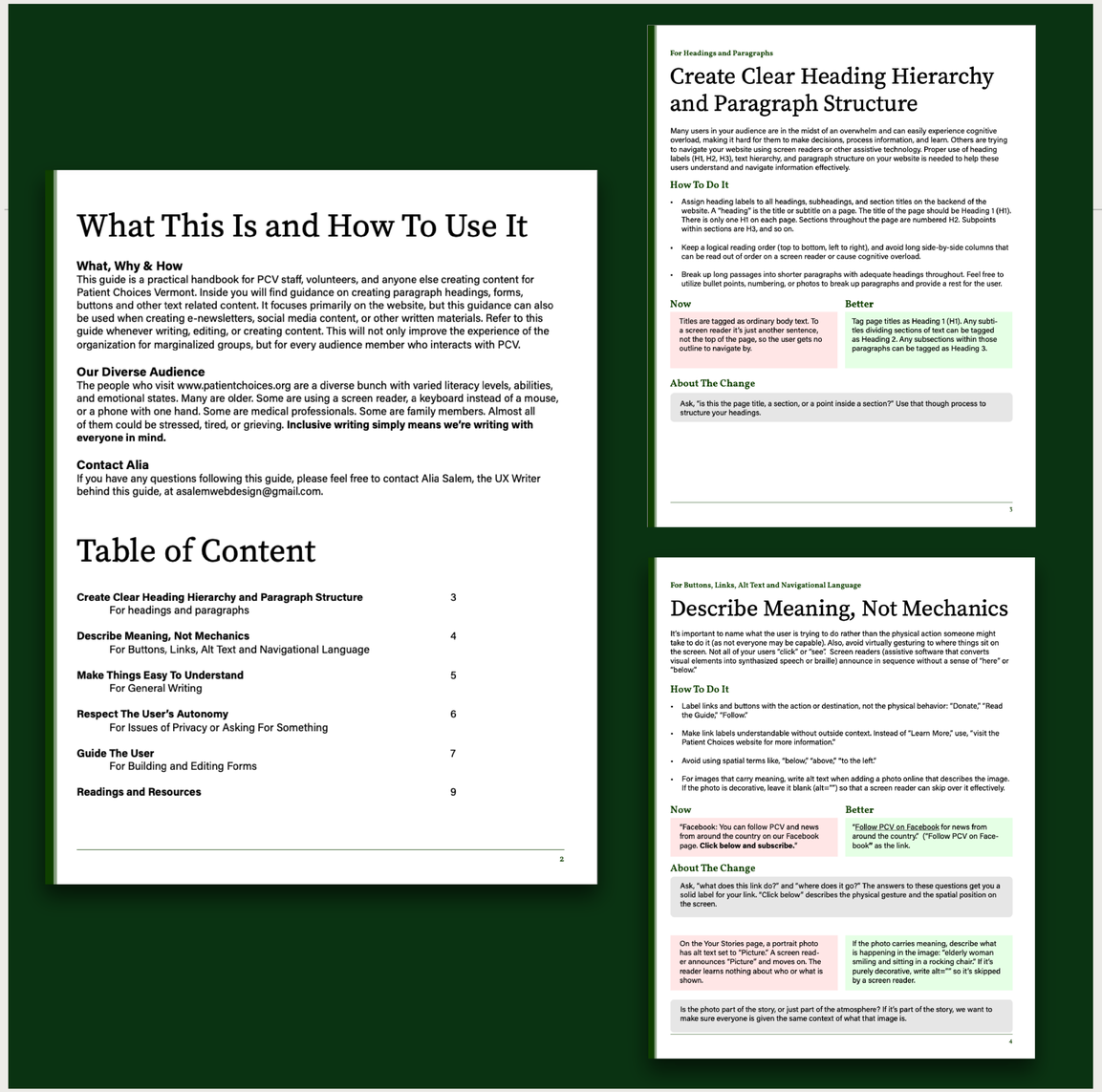
Source: Coyle, B. "Designing for Cognitive Differences."

I got the go-ahead to fix 6/17 of the flagged issues immediately. They were things like unnecessary movement, alt text, and button labels.

The other suggested fixes supported the findings of the UX Researcher, making next steps to a full website redesign project much more comprehensible, attainable, and solid.

But the ED was distressed by the sheer amount of accessibility issues flagged and worried members of the team would continue to make the same mistakes.

She now had a mountain of flagged issues and no way to operationalize them.



What This Is and How To Use It

What, Why & How
This guide is a practical handbook for PCV staff, volunteers, and anyone else creating content for Patient Choices Vermont. Inside you will find guidance on creating paragraph headings, forms, buttons and other text related content. It focuses primarily on the website, but this guidance can also be used when creating e-newsletters, social media content, or other written materials. Refer to this guide whenever writing, editing, or creating content. This will not only improve the experience of the organization for marginalized groups, but for every audience member who interacts with PCV.

Our Diverse Audience
The people who visit www.patientchoices.org are a diverse bunch with varied literacy levels, abilities, and emotional states. Many are older. Some are using a screen reader, a keyboard instead of a mouse, or a phone with one hand. Some are medical professionals. Some are family members. Almost all of them could be stressed, tired, or grieving. **Inclusive writing simply means we're writing with everyone in mind.**

Contact Alia
If you have any questions following this guide, please feel free to contact Alia Salem, the UX Writer behind this guide, at asalemwebdesign@gmail.com.

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For General Writing

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For Issues of Privacy or Asking For Something

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2

For Headings and Paragraphs

Create Clear Heading Hierarchy and Paragraph Structure

Many users in your audience are in the midst of an overwhelm and can easily experience cognitive overload, making it hard for them to make decisions, process information, and learn. Others are trying to navigate your website using screen readers or other assistive technology. Proper use of heading labels (H1, H2, H3), text hierarchy, and paragraph structure on your website is needed to help these users understand and navigate information effectively.

How To Do It

- Assign heading labels to all headings, subheadings, and section titles on the backend of the website. A "heading" is the title or subtitle on a page. The title of the page should be Heading 1 (H1). There is only one H1 on each page. Sections throughout the page are numbered H2. Subpoints within sections are H3, and so on.
- Keep a logical reading order (top to bottom, left to right), and avoid long side-by-side columns that can be read out of order on a screen reader or cause cognitive overload.
- Break up long passages into shorter paragraphs with adequate headings throughout. Feel free to utilize bullet points, numbering, or photos to break up paragraphs and provide a rest for the user.

Now	Better
Titles are tagged as ordinary body text. To a screen reader it's just another sentence, not the top of the page, so the user gets no outline to navigate by.	Tag page titles as Heading 1 (H1). Any subtitles dividing sections of text can be tagged as Heading 2. Any subsections within those paragraphs can be tagged as Heading 3.

About The Change

Ask, "is this the page title, a section, or a point inside a section?" Use that though process to structure your headings.

3

For Buttons, Links, Alt Text and Navigational Language

Describe Meaning, Not Mechanics

It's important to name what the user is trying to do rather than the physical action someone might take to do it (as not everyone may be capable). Also, avoid virtually gesturing to where things sit on the screen. Not all of your users "click" or "see". Screen readers (assistive software that converts visual elements into synthasized speech or braille) announce in sequence without a sense of "here" or "below."

How To Do It

- Label links and buttons with the action or destination, not the physical behavior: "Donate," "Read the Guide," "Follow."
- Make link labels understandable without outside context. Instead of "Learn More," use, "visit the Patient Choices website for more information."
- Avoid using spatial terms like, "below," "above," "to the left."
- For images that carry meaning, write alt text when adding a photo online that describes the image. If the photo is decorative, leave it blank (alt="") so that a screen reader can skip over it effectively.

Now	Better
"Facebook: You can follow PCV and news from around the country on our Facebook page. **Click below and subscribe.**"	"Follow PCV on Facebook for news from around the country." ("Follow PCV on Facebook" as the link.

About The Change

Ask, "what does this link do?" and "where does it go?" The answers to these questions get you a solid label for your link. "Click below" describes the physical gesture and the spatial position on the screen.

On the Your Stories page, a portrait photo has alt text set to "Picture." A screen reader announces "Picture" and moves on. The reader learns nothing about who or what is shown.	If the photo carries meaning, describe what is happening in the image: "elderly woman smiling and sitting in a rocking chair." If it's purely decorative, write alt="" so it's skipped by a screen reader.

Is the photo part of the story, or just part of the atmosphere? If it's part of the story, we want to make sure everyone is given the same context of what that image is.

4

So, I built the Inclusive Writing Guidelines so that accessibility wasn't a one-time cleanup but a repeatable practice the entire PCV team could implement. I wanted to provide a resource that was easy to understand and use in practice, so I included clear steps and "before" and "after" examples.

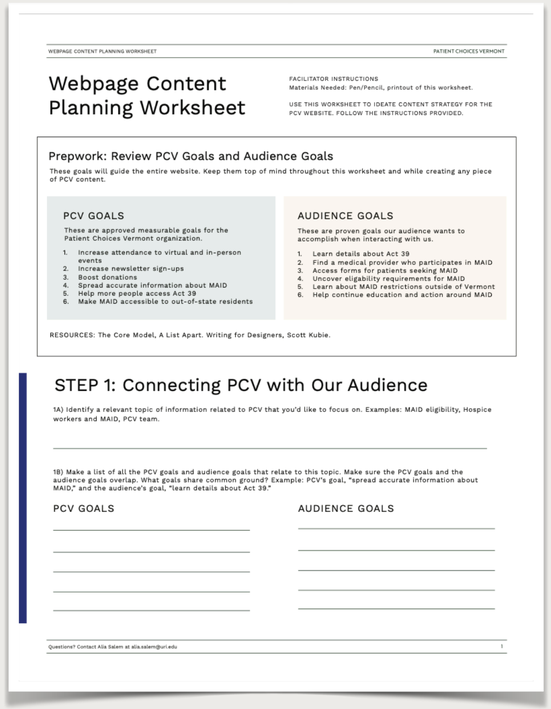
This asset gave the organization a shared foundation for more inclusive content practices. The whole team could refer to this document to produce more accessible content without feeling confused, doubtful, or overwhelmed.

My ED sang her praises over the guidelines, but I could feel some underlying apprehension coming through the video call. So, me being me, I poked.

"I'm sensing a bit of hesitation... How are you feeling about all of this?"

She confessed she was still overwhelmed by the idea of making big changes on the website.

Specifically, navigational adjustments, determining what information should be on which pages, and how to effectively display all the content. She now understood accessibility practices, but was lost when it came to a big-picture website redesign.



WEBPAGE CONTENT PLANNING WORKSHEET PATIENT CHOICES VERMONT

Webpage Content Planning Worksheet

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS
Materials Needed: Pen/Pencil, printout of this worksheet.

USE THIS WORKSHEET TO IDEATE CONTENT STRATEGY FOR THE PCV WEBSITE. FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED.

Prepwork: Review PCV Goals and Audience Goals

These goals will guide the entire website. Keep them top of mind throughout this worksheet and while creating any piece of PCV content.

PCV GOALS

These are approved measurable goals for the Patient Choices Vermont organization.

1. Increase attendance to virtual and in-person events
2. Increase newsletter sign-ups
3. Boost donations
4. Spread accurate information about MAID
5. Help more people access Act 39
6. Make MAID accessible to out-of-state residents

AUDIENCE GOALS

These are proven goals our audience wants to accomplish when interacting with us.

1. Learn details about Act 39
2. Find a medical provider who participates in MAID
3. Access forms for patients seeking MAID
4. Uncover eligability requirements for MAID
5. Learn about MAID restrictions outside of Vermont
6. Help continue education and action around MAID

RESOURCES: The Core Model, A List Apart. Writing for Designers, Scott Kubie.

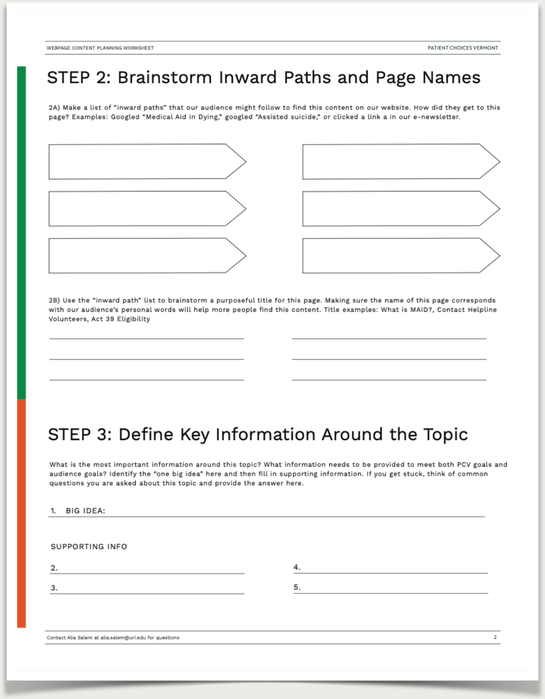
STEP 1: Connecting PCV with Our Audience

1A) Identify a relevant topic of information related to PCV that you'd like to focus on. Examples: MAID eligibility, Hospice workers and MAID, PCV team.

1B) Make a list of all the PCV goals and audience goals that relate to this topic. Make sure the PCV goals and the audience goals overlap. What goals share common ground? Example: PCV's goal, "spread accurate information about MAID," and the audience's goal, "learn details about Act 39."

PCV GOALS AUDIENCE GOALS

Questions? Contact Alia Salem at alia.salem@uri.edu 1



WEBPAGE CONTENT PLANNING WORKSHEET PATIENT CHOICES VERMONT

STEP 2: Brainstorm Inward Paths and Page Names

2A) Make a list of "inward paths" that our audience might follow to find this content on our website. How did they get to this page? Examples: Googled "Medical Aid in Dying," googled "Assisted suicide," or clicked a link a in our e-newsletter.

2B) Use the "inward path" list to brainstorm a purposeful title for this page. Making sure the name of this page corresponds with our audience's personal words will help more people find this content. Title examples: What is MAID?, Contact Helpline Volunteers, Act 39 Eligibility

STEP 3: Define Key Information Around the Topic

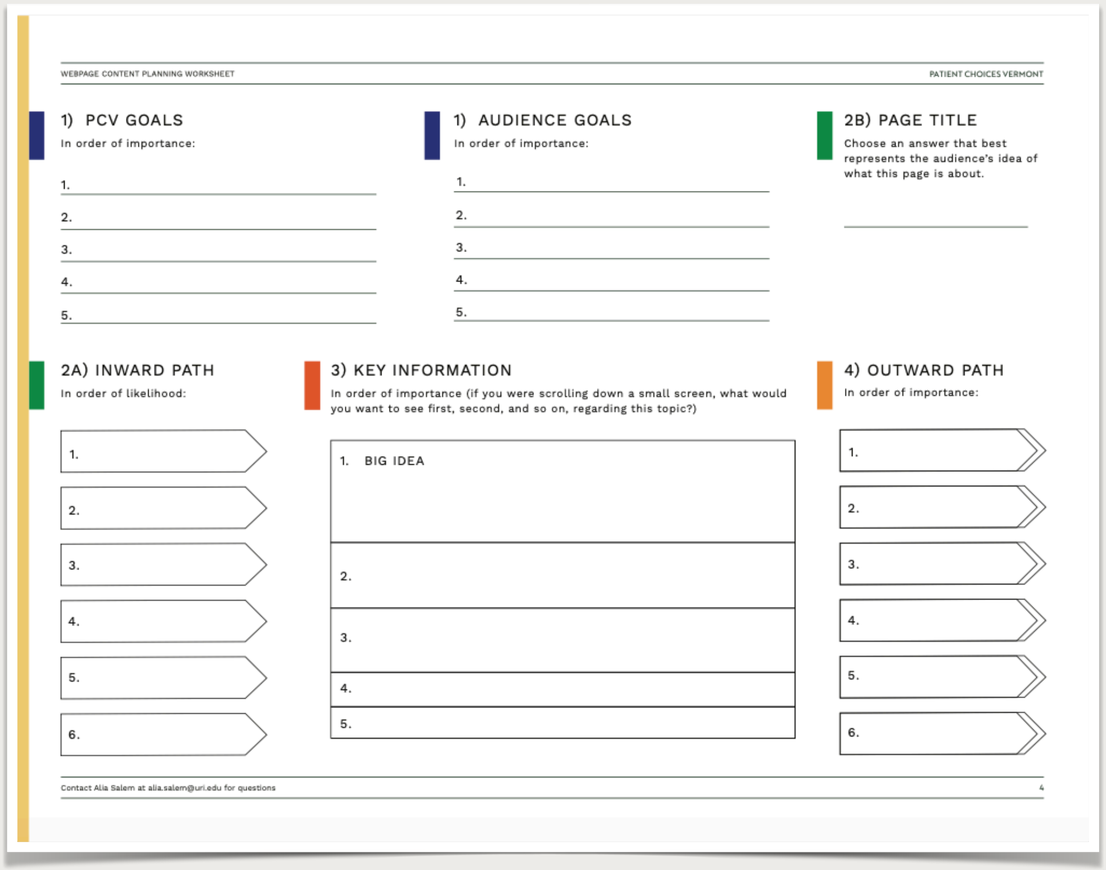
What is the most important information around this topic? What information needs to be provided to meet both PCV goals and audience goals? Identify the "one big idea" here and then fill in supporting information. If you get stuck, think of common questions you are asked about this topic and provide the answer here.

1. BIG IDEA:

SUPPORTING INFO

2. 4.
3. 5.

Contact Alia Salem at alia.salem@uri.edu for questions 2



WEBPAGE CONTENT PLANNING WORKSHEET PATIENT CHOICES VERMONT

1) PCV GOALS
In order of importance:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

1) AUDIENCE GOALS
In order of importance:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

2B) PAGE TITLE
Choose an answer that best represents the audience's idea of what this page is about.

2A) INWARD PATH
In order of likelihood:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

3) KEY INFORMATION
In order of importance (if you were scrolling down a small screen, what would you want to see first, second, and so on, regarding this topic?)

1. BIG IDEA
2.
3.
4.
5.

4) OUTWARD PATH
In order of importance:

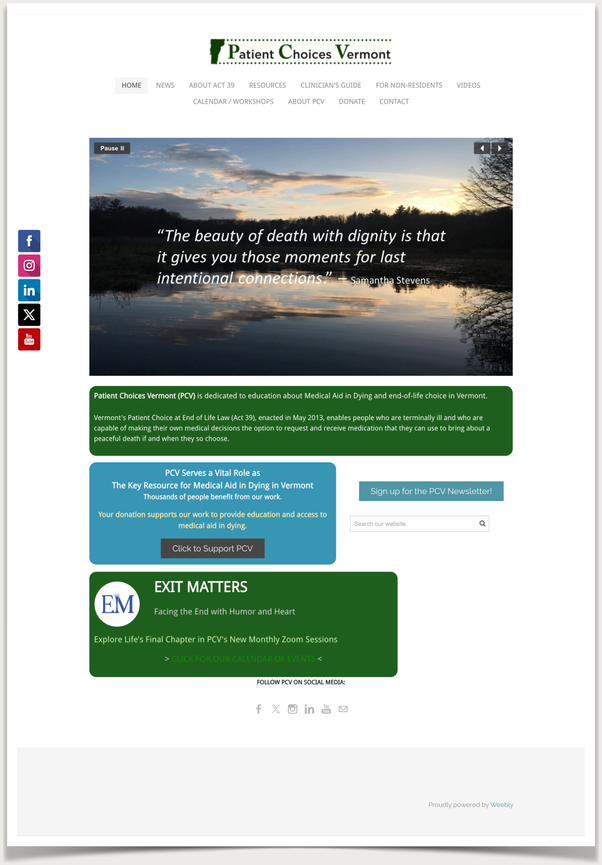
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Contact Alia Salem at alia.salem@uri.edu for questions 4

So, I created a Website Content Planning Worksheet that the ED, UX Researcher, and I could complete together in order to establish page content, navigation, and information hierarchy.

This made the process of a website redesign much less daunting for my ED.

She now had a way to make purposeful, strategic decisions about the website redesign that she fully understood and even helped shape, which is inclusive design applied to the team itself. The apprehension I felt from her earlier was gone.



home page - before

home page - after

In all honesty, the tools I created for this project are mainly used by me. I think this entire process instilled in my ED a new level of confidence in my skills and knowledge.

I've become the team's accessibility advocate, in charge of all things content strategy, website design, and inclusivity.

This responsibility has helped keep WCAG accessibility practices at the forefront of my mind in all of my design work. I am a better designer because of it and continue to see the difference it makes for my users across all projects.