



Wonder



CLAIRE KIM
THESIS 2016
Design for Social Innovation

I, Claire Kim, am bringing a **work-rest cycle** into the daily routines of working professionals so they can **achieve positive energy** throughout the day.

New York City is a city full of opportunities.
It attracts all ambitious and passionate talents
so they can achieve their dreams and careers.



Introduction

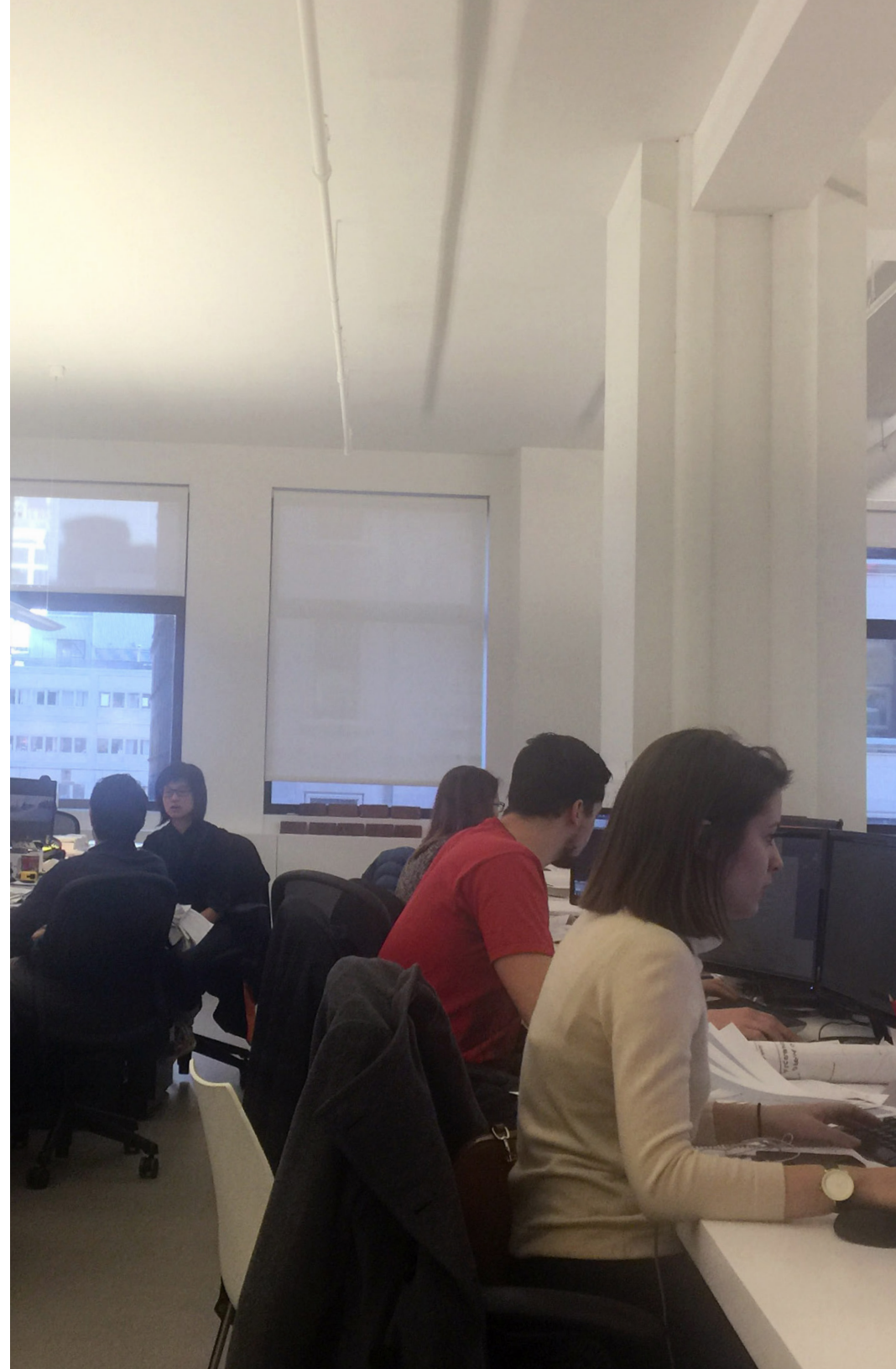
Living in the city for six years, I have heard many friends constantly complain that they are overworked and that they feel overwhelmed. They say again and again that reality is not what they had imagined it to be.

“I am just tired. I am too busy.”

They are young and talented professionals who all left home and boldly moved to the city to achieve their dreams. They are ambitious. They are hungry. They all want to succeed.

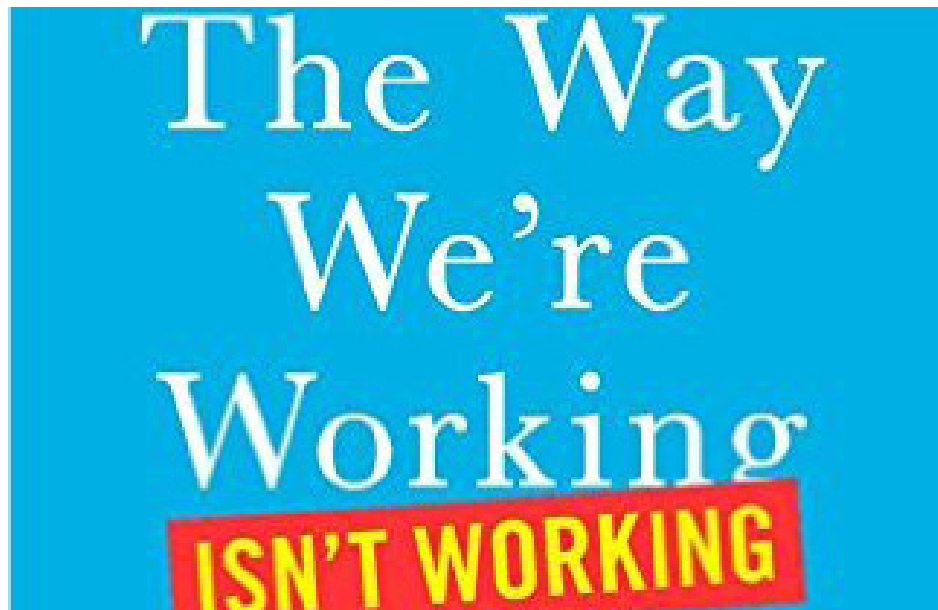
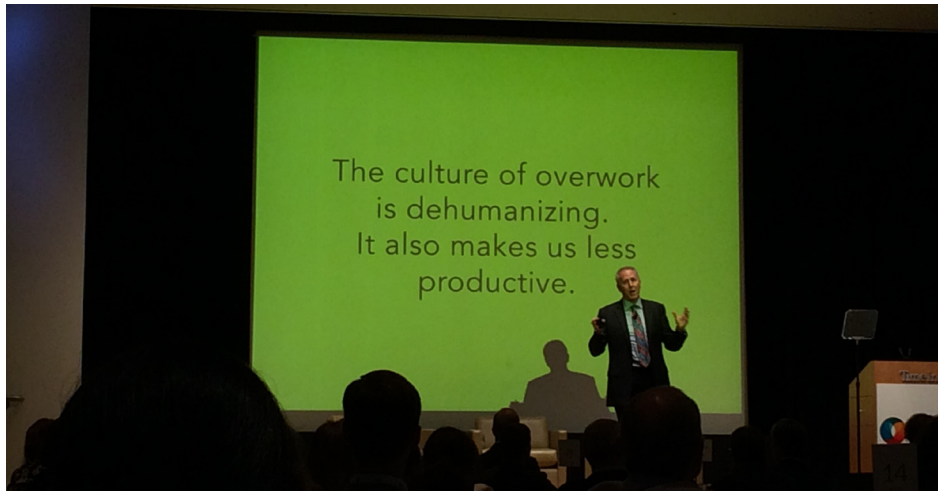
At the same time, they are eager to maximize their personal quality time, which is why the most difficult challenge in their lives is finding the optimal balance between work and life.

Hearing their stories stirred in me a desire to find a solution, in which these young working professionals can find a better way to achieve a healthy work-life balance.



Process

Research



During the summer, I was investigating the root causes in young professionals' challenge in achieving work-life balance and the reason young professionals work to exhaustion.

While I was volunteering for the Conscious Capitalism Conference in June, I had the opportunity to hear the CEO of The Energy Project, Tony Schwartz, speak on the problem of the way we are working in current work places.

He asserted that **the current culture of overworking is dehumanizing** and insisted that what we need to take account is our energy and not our time. He emphasized how often we forget to take care of our own positive energy, and stressed that the maintenance of our positive energy could eventually become the greatest competitive advantage.

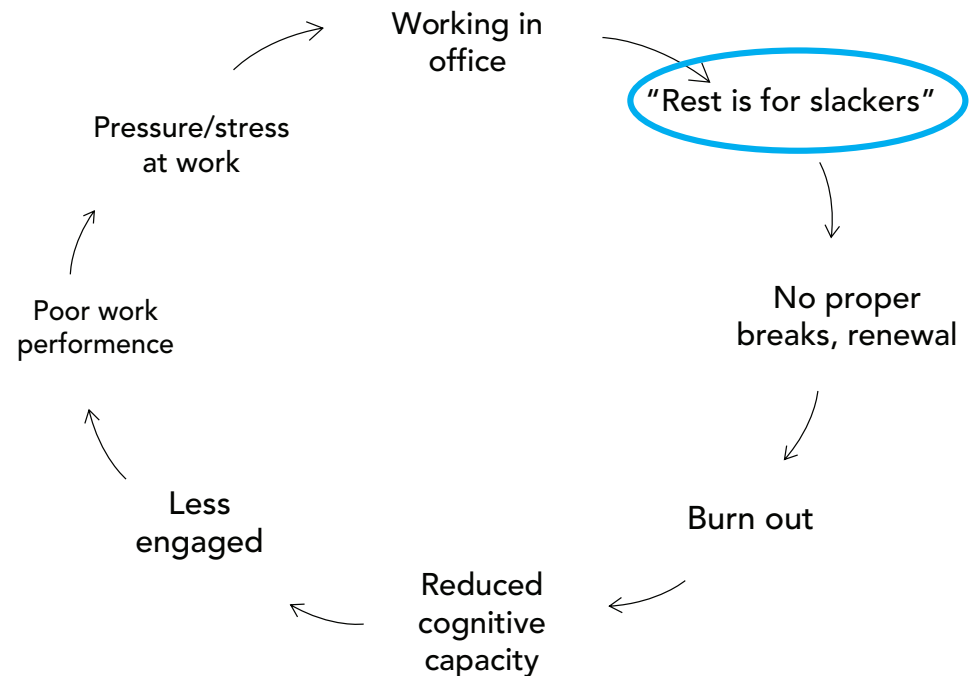
Through extensive research of relevant articles in the Harvard Business Review, and Tony Schwartz's *The Way We're Working Isn't Working*, I figured out that the demands of a fast-paced world is forcing us to catch up to the speed of technology, which is practically inhumane and impractical.

59%

of workers are physically depleted, emotionally drained, mentally distracted, and lacking in meaning & purpose.*

According to a research conducted by The Energy Project, 59% of professionals in current workplaces are physically depleted, emotionally drained, and lacking meaning and purpose in work.

According to *The Way We're Working Isn't Working*, the prevailed notion that "rest is only for slackers" was hindering working professionals from taking renewal breaks that lead them to burn out and have reduced cognitive capacity, therefore making them less engaged and effective at work.



Talking to the target



Hugh,
Web Developer



Johna,
Business Consultant

Since the beginning of this academic year, I have sent out multiple surveys and connected with young working professionals in New York City to ask about their current work-life balance and the values they sought to gain through their work and personal lives.

My target subjects with ages ranging from 25-35 all agreed that they wanted to succeed in their careers. They intentionally chose to work more than their regular hours to exceed their own expectations. Interestingly, even though they spent so many hours at work, they not only wanted to take care of their own physical health by exercising, but also wanted to spend quality time with friends and family.

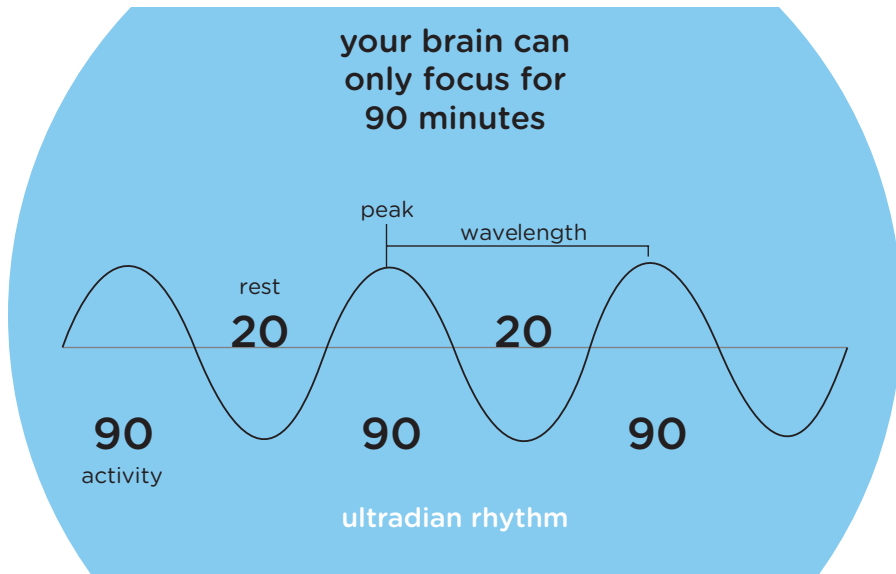
Although some admitted having symptoms of physical pain such as neck pain, back pain, and dry eyes, they continued to work late and even work during the weekends.

When I asked what hindered them from taking a break, they responded that they feared not meeting expectations and fulfilling their responsibility at work. They also said that it did not make sense to take breaks by themselves when their colleagues were working.

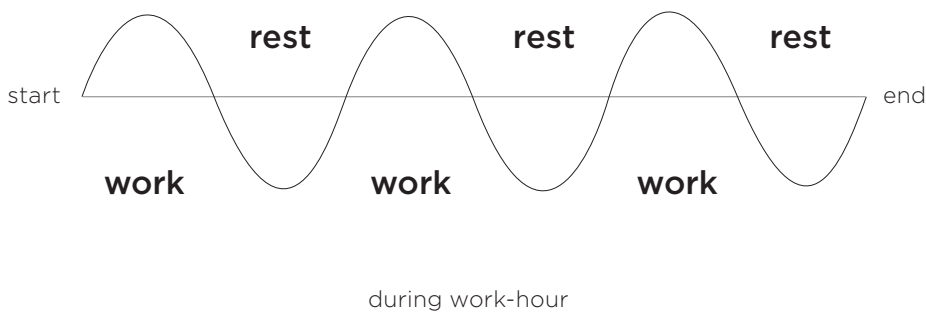
These conversations led me to the idea that the only way to make them achieve work-life balance was to disrupt their work lives by tapping into their daily routines, providing getaway activities and micro breaks.

1. **Need a disruption tapped into their daily routine**
2. **Getaway activities from the computer screen**
3. **Micro-breaks because of feeling guilty taking breaks**

Further research



Additional research from Tony Schwartz's book, *The Way We're Working Isn't Working*, showed that our brain can only focus for 90 minutes at a time based on the theory of the ultradian rhythm.

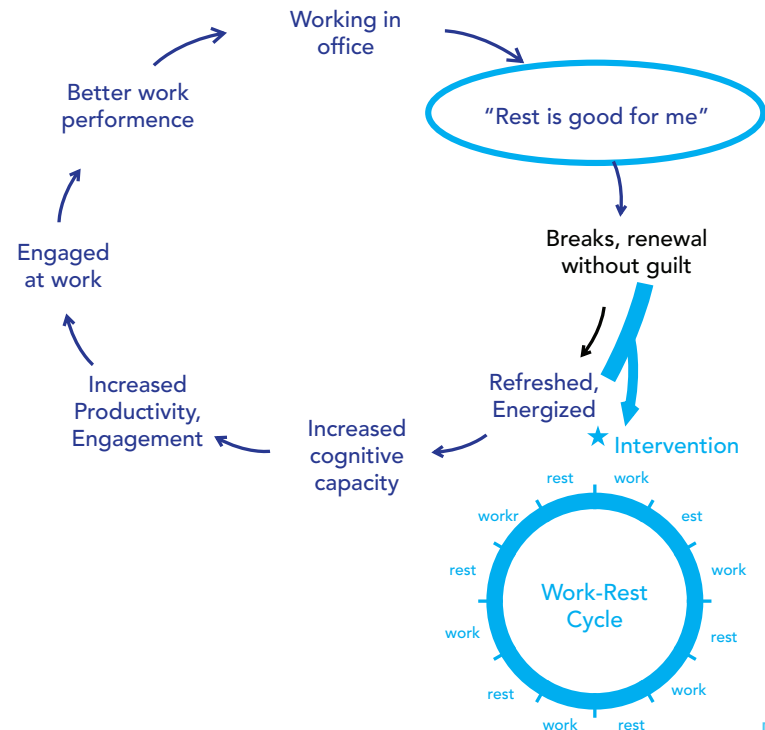


Applying that theory into the current setting, it also argued that we need implement the work-rest cycle into our working hours.

Based on research from Dr. Levine from the Mayo clinic, if we take regular breaks at work, we can achieve positive impact that can increase our productivity and decrease fatigue.

If we can prevent ourselves from burning out by taking regular breaks, we can be refreshed and energized, leading us to achieve increased engagement and better performance at work.

Ultimately, we can continue to adopt this, with **a shifted notion of having rest is good.**



Problem statement

How can I bring **work-rest cycle** into the daily routines of young working professionals to **decrease fatigue** and **increase productivity**?

Competitive analysis

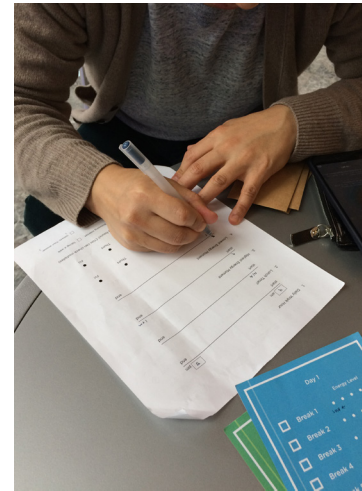
	Dejal Timeout	Pomodoro	Rescuetime	Headspace	Stand alarm	Backache App	Mine
Time tracking	★	★	★		★	★	★
Timeframe customization	★	★					★
Providing content (during break)				★		★	★
Personalization				★			★
Sense of community				★			★
Levels of contents				★		★	★
Data dashboard (impact metric)			★	★			★
Multiple solution options				★			

Before introducing this cycle to working professionals, I needed to figure out what are the current existing alternative solutions in the landscape. Based on interviews and research, the target audiences were using applications like Dejal Time Out, Pomodoro, Focus Booster, and Rescue Time to monitor their work-break times.

Through conversations with target subjects who were using these existing solutions and after adopting these for my own, I learned that they only provide simple time-reminders and task management functions. They lacked attributes that allowed personal and humane experiences. Although they provide functions to customize and choose time-frames to activate regular break reminders, they did not provide contents based on user's preferences and schedules. They were also hard to understand and visualize what are the direct benefits for the users since they did not provide any form of impact metrics. Furthermore, they did not provide any sense of a community with other users.

Prototyping: 1st prototype

Is regular disruption possible?



In order to introduce this work-rest cycle to professionals, first, I wanted to figure out if having a regular disruption during the work hour was possible.

With this first prototype, I asked targets to fill out how their current daily work day looked like. They had to fill out surveys usually at the start and end the day, and explain their high energy moments and low energy moments during the day. They also provided information on the duration of their breaks as well as the activities they engaged in during those breaks.

Lastly, I asked them to try taking regular breaks every hour for 15 seconds for 2-3 consequent days in order to test if regular disruption in their work break cycle was possible.

Learning

Investigation showed that target subjects' daily work flows varied based on their projects and their company schedules. Sometimes, they had very tight days with multiple deadlines and meetings, while other times they were quite flexible with much more spare time.

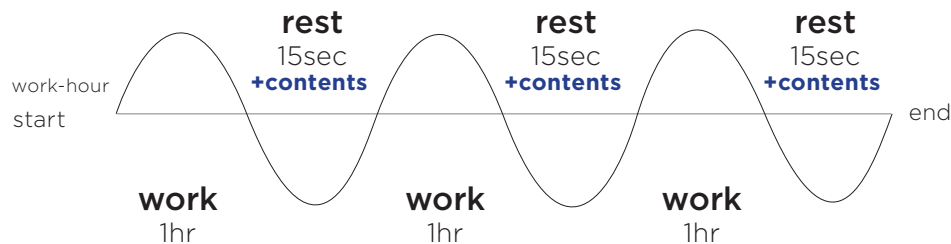
Interestingly, all seven targets I've talked to responded that their toughest time of the day, when they felt tired and drained, was in the afternoon between 2 to 5pm. Also, they said that the take average time of breaks they take were less than 30 minutes a day.

In terms of taking regular breaks, everyone was having hard times reminding themselves every hour to take breaks even though their approach to time tracking was varied--some tracked their time from a phone or desktop computer, while others checked a clock.

Prototyping: 2nd prototype

What to do during the breaks?

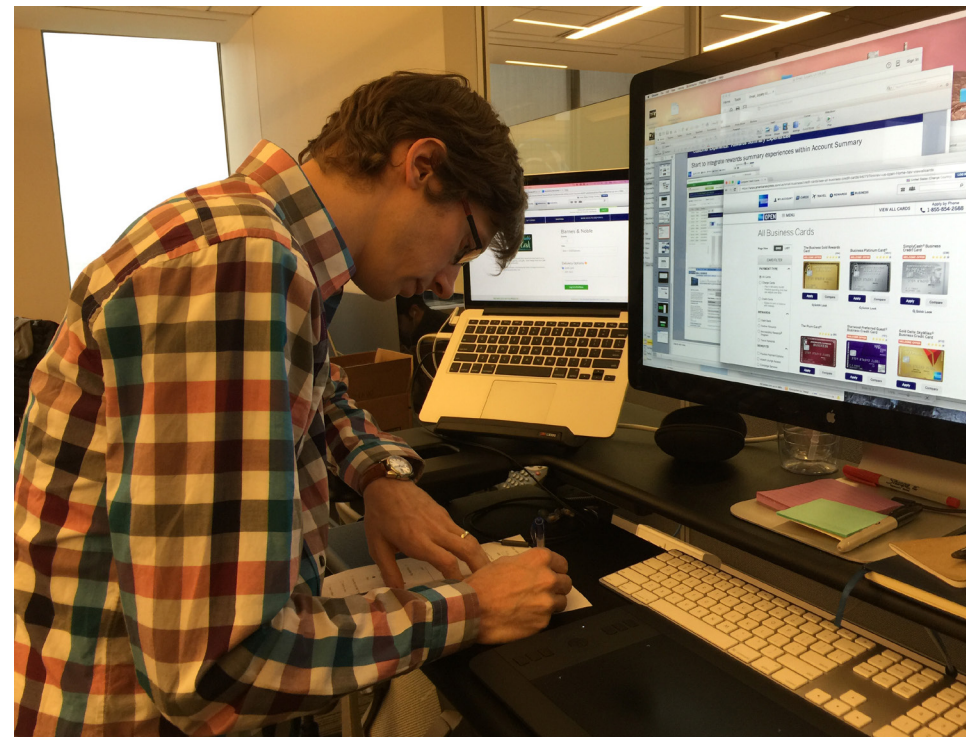
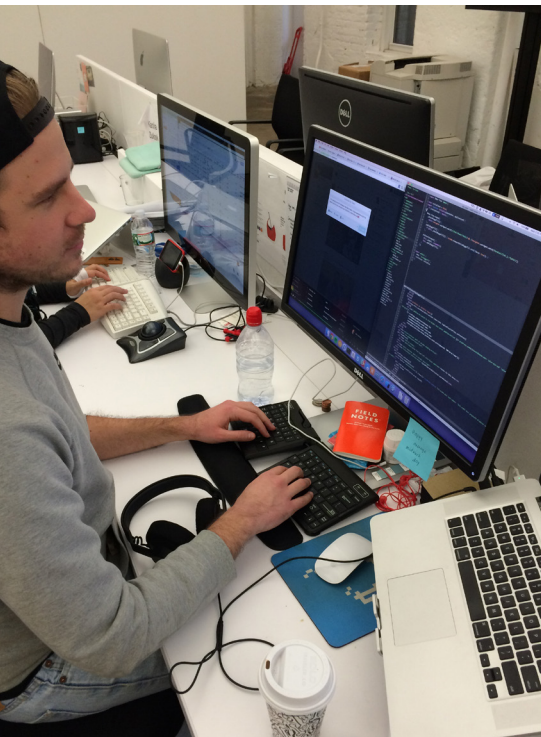
For the second prototype, I wanted to figure out what could work best for users to do during regular breaks by asking them to take hourly breaks same as the first prototype.



I created mini activity kits for testers for 4 consequent days. From Day 1 to Day 3, testers were given activity cards with mini mental getaways that allowed them to doodle, sketch, and exercise their eyes and necks at their desks. Day 4 was specifically designed to let testers actually get up and get away from their desks and computer screens so they could engage in physical movements like walking around the office.

For each day, testers had to track their times by trying different methods.

1. Track time by reminding oneself from looking at a reminder object
2. Track time from cell phone
3. Track time from desktop computer
4. Track time from one's preferred choice



Prototyping: 2nd prototype

Learning

It was not easy again to track the time for breaks regularly. Testers easily lost track in monitoring breaks, so they insisted that they need an enforcement which could stop them entirely from what they were working on and provide them with a break reminder. That was why the reminder method from the desktop computer screen worked the best for them amongst four tracking choices.

Interestingly, one tester was trying this prototype with his colleague who was sitting next to him. They said it was hard to take regular breaks, but pairing up with the colleague was really helpful as he received encouragement and reminders of breaks from the colleague who would tap on his shoulder.

Among the given activities, testers liked the physical activities they allowed them to get away from the computer screen. They said that by having physical movement, surprisingly, they were able to take a mental break and feel relieved from the pressures of work. After having breaks, they were able to come up with more creative solutions with fresh perspective for work.

Time frame wise, testers hoped to have more flexible choices on how long and how often they could take breaks.

- 1. Need disruption from the screen**
- 2. Pairing up helps**
- 3. Physical movement helps**
- 4. Taking breaks helps to come up with creative solution**

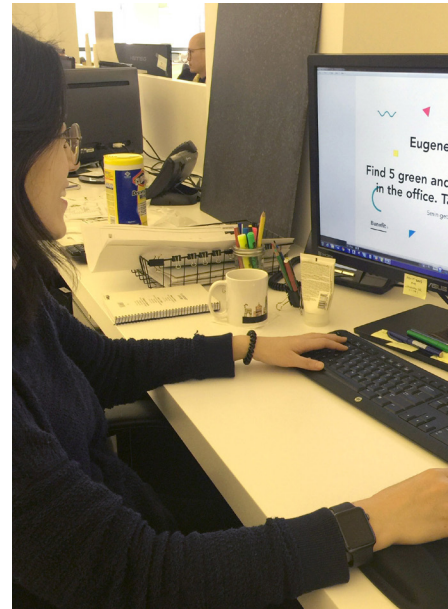
Prototyping: pilot

Disruption from the screen + getaway activities

For the next phase, based on the testers' feedback, I created contents that appear on the screen and provided activities that allowed them to get up and walk away from the screen.

In addition, I provided the choice of time frames that testers could choose among every 40, 60, 90 minutes of cycles. Also, they were given the choices, 15 seconds, 3 minutes, and 5 minutes, to indicate the duration of their breaks. Not only did I provide the customization of timeframes, but I also provided a summary of the benefits from trying the given physical activities.

Also, I allowed testers to be able to share activities with colleagues by adopting the previous feedback saying that pairing up was helpful.



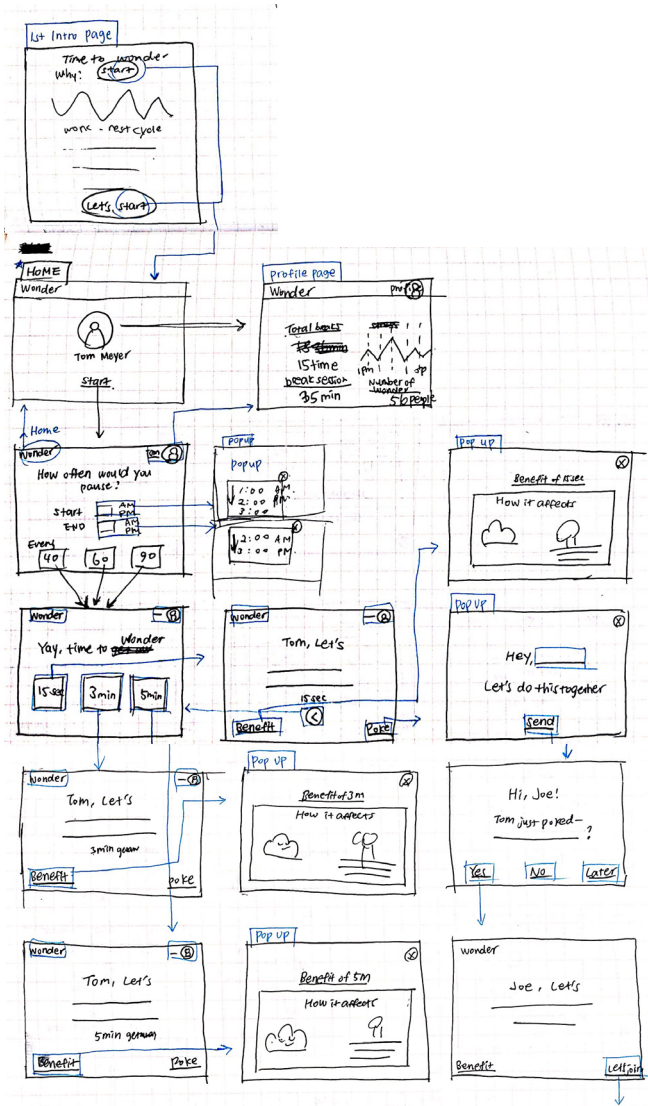
Learning

From this pilot study, I received positive feedback. Testers expressed that they really enjoyed the experience, and that they especially liked the **sharing experience** with colleagues. They felt more encouraged to take breaks **“if somebody else was doing it.”**

They also hoped they can even create group activities at the office to larger extent.

Intervention

Wonder | implementation



Based on these testings, I further evolved to create an interactive prototype.

Wonder is a web-app that fuses work-rest cycle into the daily routines of working professionals to help them wander off from the work, and have some physical and mental rest.

Intervention

Wonder | implementation



How it works

Step 1:

First, users can set up their preferred time to start and end the Wonder cycle, and set up how often they would like take breaks, among 40, 60, and 90 minutes.

Step 2:

Users could choose break slots, among 15 seconds, 3 minutes and 5 minutes.

Step 3:

When Wonder sends a notification to the user, the user can enjoy the given activities.

Step 4:

Users get to know the immediate benefit of trying this activity.

Step 5:

Users can also share their activities with colleagues by inviting them to try their activities together.

Step 6:

At the end of the day, users receive an impact metric so that they can visualize their progress and the positive impact of their daily renewal breaks.

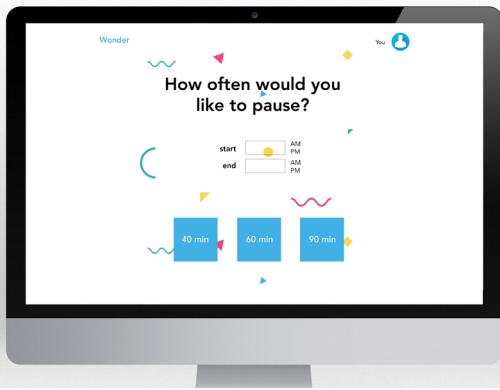
Point of difference

In order to differentiate from current existing solutions, Wonder provides a uniquely humane experience with a cloud character to create a dialogue with users throughout the experience.

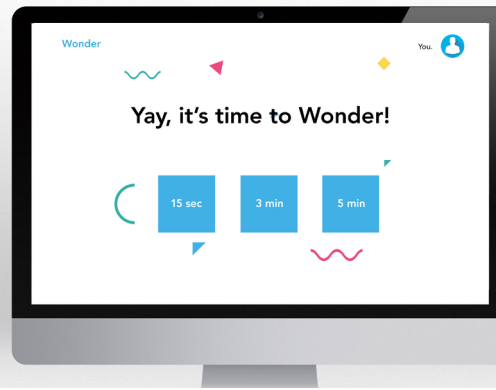
Intervention

Wonder | implementation

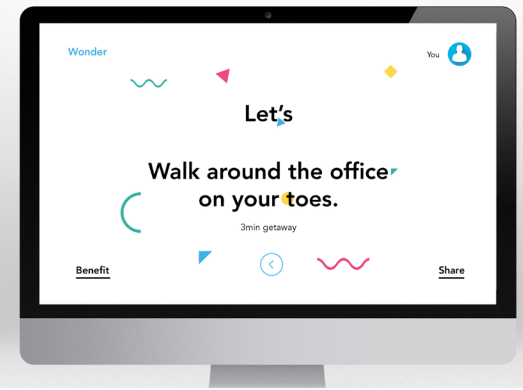
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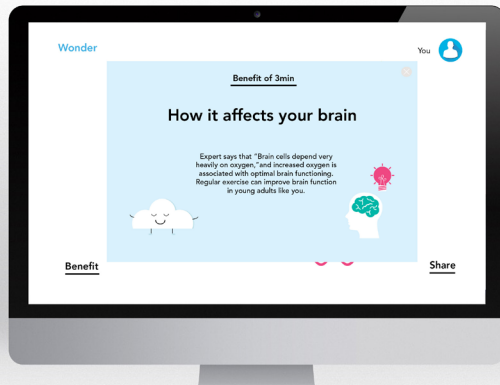
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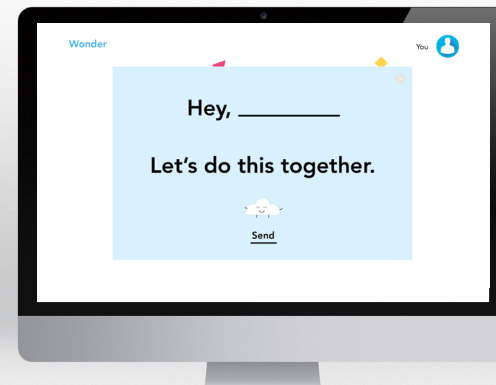
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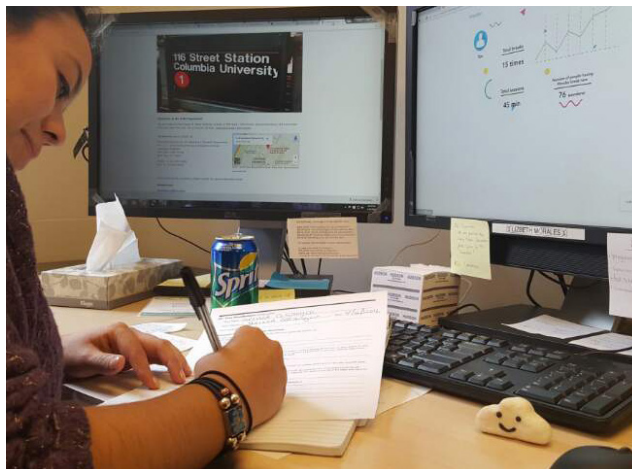
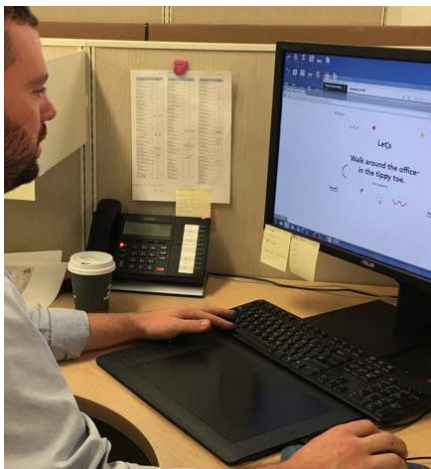
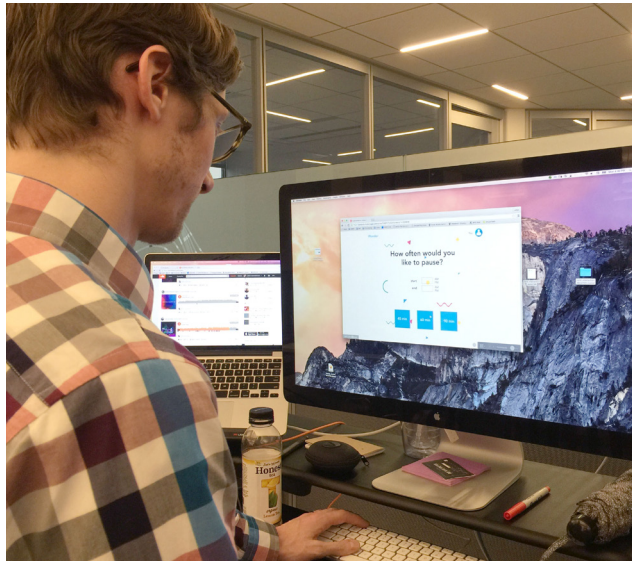
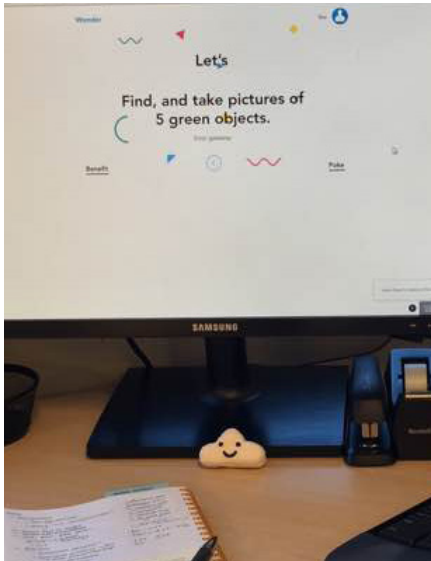


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Intervention

Wonder | implementation



Learning

I sent the link of Wonder to testers and received feedback. From the feedback, 4 points were repeated.

They all had average of 5-6 break times per day. They enjoyed the activity they could physically move or relax and they said they could have mental relief with a fresh perspective on the work after taking these breaks.

Ultimately, after experiencing a regular work-rest cycle, professionals could maintain their **positive energy throughout the day**. They were less stressed, and were able to focus more.

Looking forward

Broader impact

Starting with the implementation of Wonder, which provides a work-rest cycle for young professionals, I vision this to be adopted further by users with more frequent use. I envision Wonder gathering data, and providing impact metrics so users may be able to visualize the positive impact of breaks over the longer periods of time. Wonder can also help form groups of colleagues in a company based on the data of similar chosen time frames.

If one person can achieve a positive impact by using Wonder, and share this experience with colleagues, as a broader impact, these groups of people will create the culture of taking regular breaks together using Wonder. Furthermore, a company can adapt it to become their own company's culture by achieving positive, healthy working environment.

Achieving better culture

Then having a rest at our workplace is no longer for slackers, but inherently good for us -- something small but impactful that we would hope to create and enjoy this office culture together during work hours, which will go beyond than weekend company retreat or happy hour drinks.



What I have learned

1. Starting from their context and understanding motivation.

Having conversations with target subjects and placing myself in their shoes were key to finding solutions.

2. Small change matters

If the work-rest cycle was not eased into their current day routines, target subjects were not able to adopt the cycle easily.

3. Keep on iterating

Never stick with my own assumptions. Keep testing with users and keep on iterating based on their feedback.

4. Power of community

“If somebody else is doing it,” was what I was hearing a lot not only from the feedback but also through casual conversations with professionals when I was talking about my project. Sense of belonging, a companionship always can be the great motivation for a person to start something new.