Lightweight Negative Feedback

An ad signals project for Instagram

The problem

Context

Instagram ads are served to users on the basis of what ads they've liked before.

Improving ad signals helps IG give users and ad partners the best possible experience.

Challenges

Recent policy changes re: privacy have made it more difficult for IG to collect passive data on ad experiences.

One other way to get data is for users to actively provide it via surveys, but surveys tend to have low completion rates.

Problem statement

We on the LNF team needed to motivate users to give ad feedback, while making the feedback process as frictionless as possible.
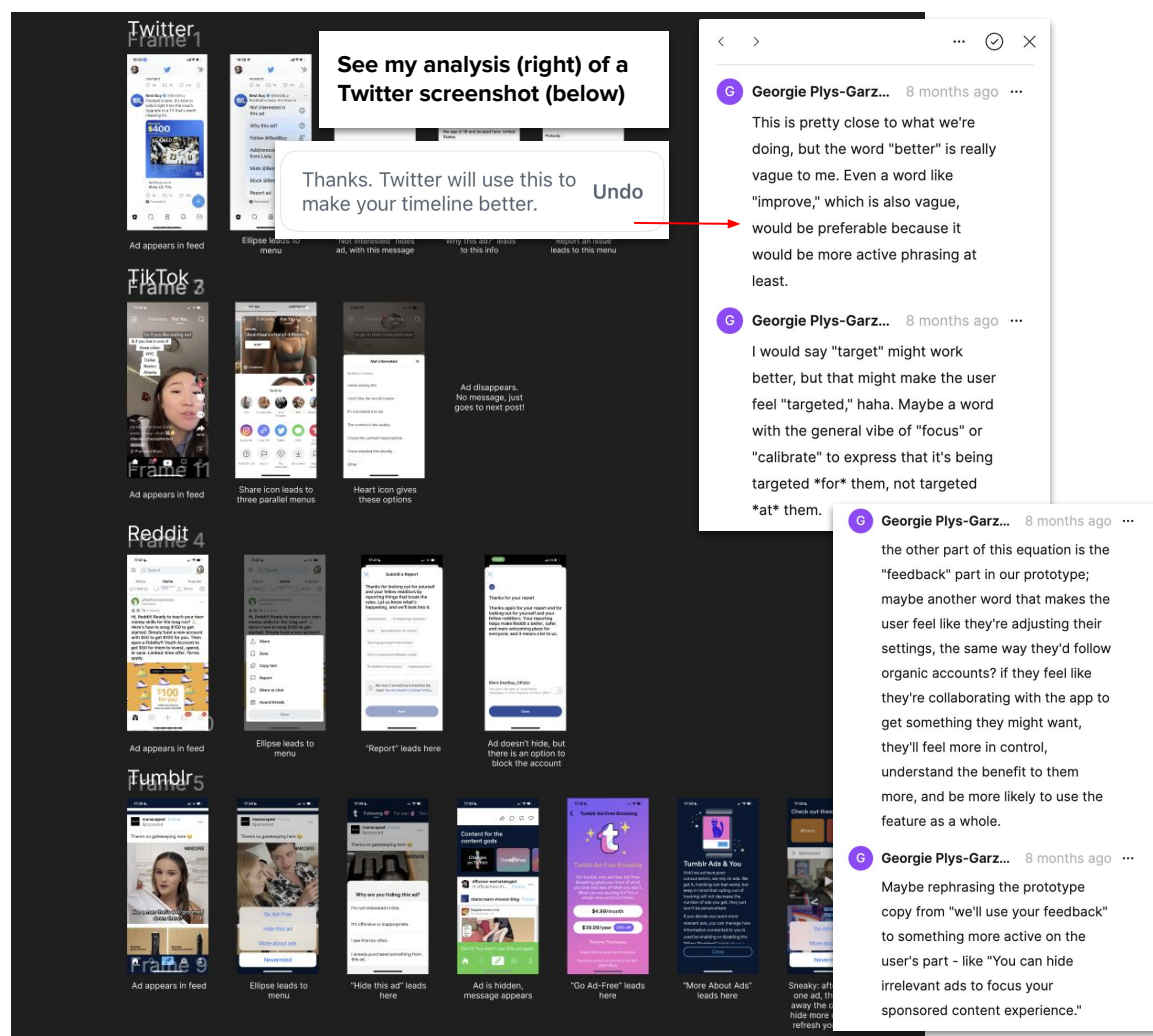
Research and Ideation

User Research

- In interviews, users say they want ads to be relevant to their interests, and are turned off by ads they find irrelevant.

- Usability tests revealed the flow was too long. People were dropping out of the feedback survey because it was too much effort.
  - One user even specifically said they dropped out because they didn't know how many more steps the survey would take.

- People weren't always sure what the flow actually did! We were asked what the outcome would be of hiding an ad and giving feedback.

Competitive Analysis

I looked at the "hide ad" flow for every major social media network.

On all networks, there's an opportunity to make the user feel more empowered through clarified language.

See screenshots of my thought process to the right!

See my analysis (right) of a Twitter screenshot (below)

Thanks. Twitter will use this to make your timeline better.   Undo

G Georgie Plys-Garz...   8 months ago   ...

This is pretty close to what we're doing, but the word "better" is really vague to me. Even a word like "improve," which is also vague, would be preferable because it would be more active phrasing at least.

G Georgie Plys-Garz...   8 months ago   ...

I would say "target" might work better, but that might make the user feel "targeted," haha. Maybe a word with the general vibe of "focus" or "calibrate" to express that it's being targeted *for* them, not targeted *at* them.

G Georgie Plys-Garz...   8 months ago   ...

the other part of this equation is the "feedback" part in our prototype; maybe another word that makes the user feel like they're adjusting their settings, the same way they'd follow organic accounts? if they feel like they're collaborating with the app to get something they might want, they'll feel more in control, understand the benefit to them more, and be more likely to use the feature as a whole.

G Georgie Plys-Garz...   8 months ago   ...

Maybe rephrasing the prototype copy from "we'll use your feedback" to something more active on the user's part - like "You can hide irrelevant ads to focus your sponsored content experience."

Goals for Content Improvement

| Motivation | Easy Participation | Noticeable Improvement |

Communicate Incentives

After a user has hidden an ad, I added copy to tell them why it would improve their feed to give more info on why they hid it.

Streamline Flow

I knew making the feedback process as quick as possible would increase completion rate.

Clear Confirmation

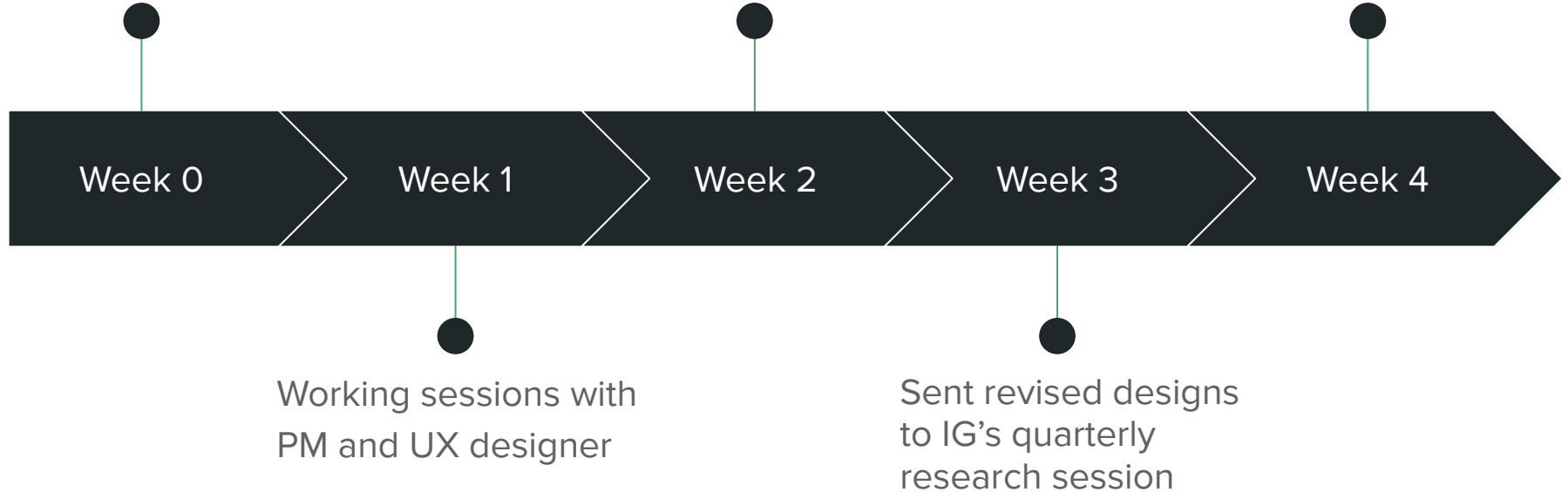Users want to know their actions will have an effect on their experience.

I also had a hunch that ending the flow on an upbeat note would increase repeat participation!

Implementation

Kickoff meeting with
PM, UX designer, and
team lead

Brought the design
to an internal crit
session

Revised based on
research, and
shipped the project!

Week 0 〉 Week 1 〉 Week 2 〉 Week 3 〉 Week 4

Working sessions with
PM and UX designer

Sent revised designs
to IG's quarterly
research session

Before: too many screens, repetitive copy
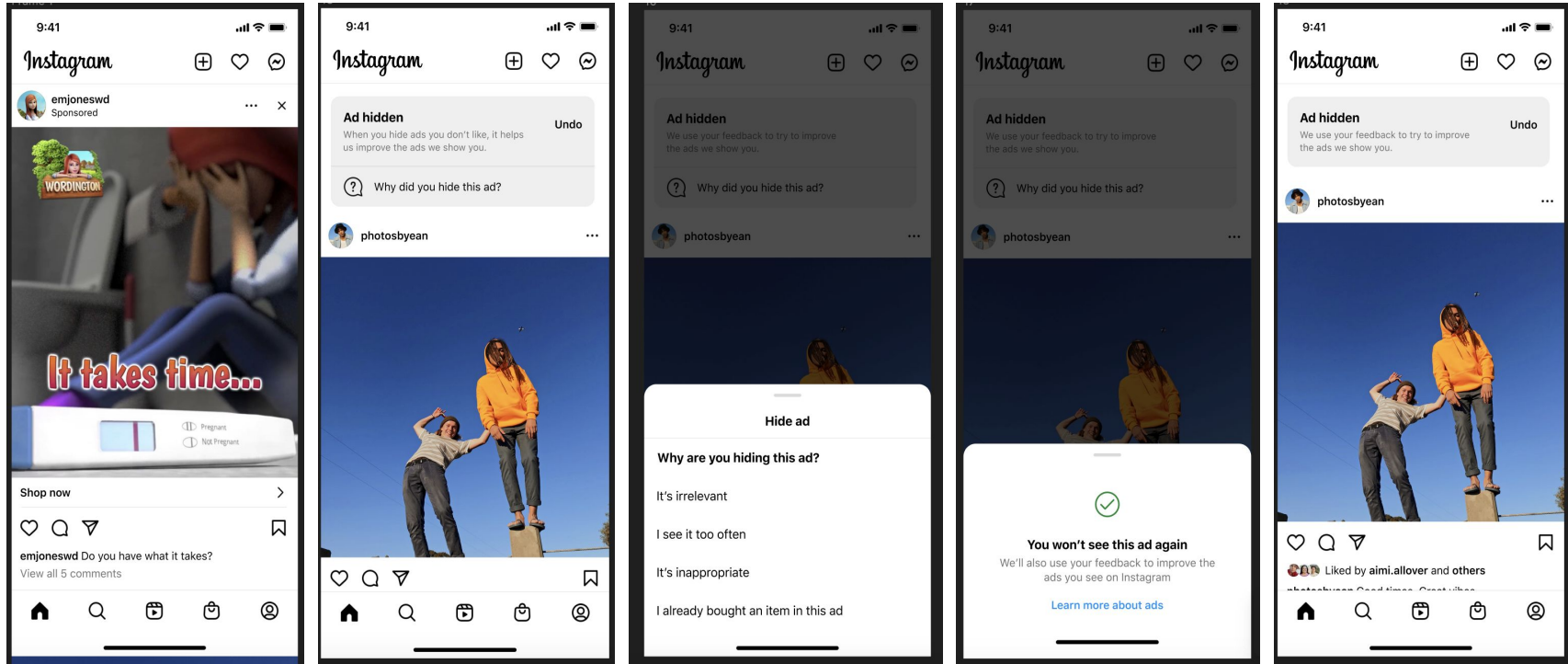
The old flow wasn't built to be IG's main source of feedback. Each screen says basically the same thing in different words, and it's all snooze-inducing—users probably aren't taking this info in.

Priority A
1. You hid this ad
2. **You won't see it again**
3. Would you like to tell us about why?
4. Why it's helpful (Chopping block)

Priority B
1. You hid this ad
2. **We're using this feedback**
3. Would you like to tell us about why?
4. Why it's helpful (Chopping block)

Feedback
1. This is

I went through many possibilities for the heading and subtext here, laying out our priorities for the screen and examining how well each variation fulfilled each one. This gave me a framework for picking a favorite.

You just improved your ads.
When you hide an ad, it gives us important feedback on what not to show you.

Why did you hide this ad?

Your feedback makes ads more relevant.
When you hide an ad, it gives us important feedback on what not to show you.

Why did you hide this ad?

This feedback helps us tailor ads to you.
When you hide an ad, it gives us important feedback on what not to show you.

Why did you hide this ad?

Hiding ads reduces irrelevant content.
When you hide an ad, it gives us important feedback on what not to show you.

Why did you hide this ad?

You won't see this ad again

Less content   More content

Reasons: Sentences   Reasons: no change   Reasons: Sentences   Reasons: Sentences   Reasons: no change   Reasons: Sentences   Reasons: Sentences

First draft

The first draft features pepped-up copy and simplified messaging.

We also cut down the flow from four screens to two. When users hide the ad, they're taken directly to the feedback screen, but they're able to keep scrolling if they don't want to take the survey.
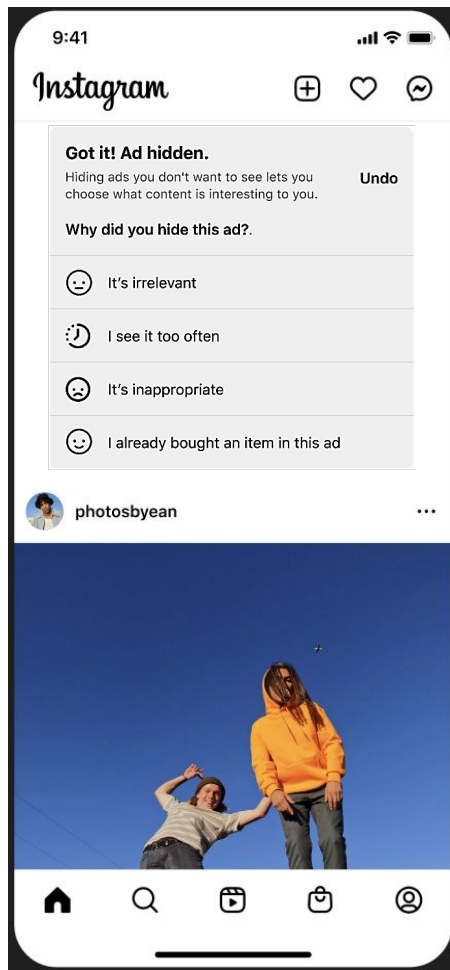
Crit feedback

We took the project to an internal crit session, and got really useful feedback:

- We could stand to streamline the copy even further - the subtext on the first screen was considered too long.

- Too many exclamation points 😔

- The second screen didn't confirm the way we wanted. "Thanks for your feedback" doesn't drive home the point that the user's ads will be affected going forward because they took this survey.

Second draft

I cut down the copy on the first screen, and put some streamlined explanation in the second screen.

In this draft, we're making a tradeoff between lightweight interface and motivating the user beforehand. At this point in the design's evolution there's just one extra tap we need from them—we don't have to sell them on it as much.

We're accomplishing our other two goals: it's a really quick interaction, and the effects are clear.
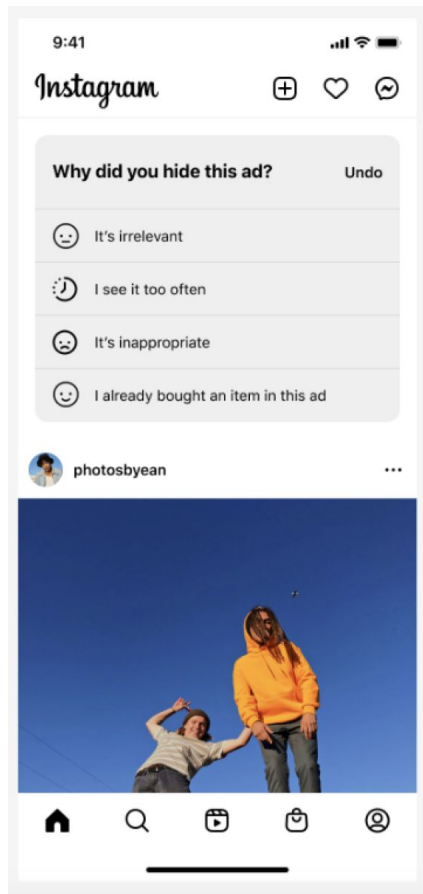
Research

A research session was coming up, so we submitted our screens to be tested. We got some important results:

- Users were unclear on whether the string "Ad hidden" meant that they had gotten rid of the ad once, or if it would be hidden from them from then on.
  - Clear confirmation that they'd improved their ad algorithm was one of the primary goals for the project, so I knew this had to get straightened out.

- The subtext on the second screen was unclear. It says we'll "try to" improve the user's ads, which felt like a hedge.

Further revision + shipping

I did some more explorations and settled on a redux of the second screen that was unequivocal on the takeaways we wanted the user to get from this flow.

We got sign-off from the PM and team lead, and sent the project off to eng!
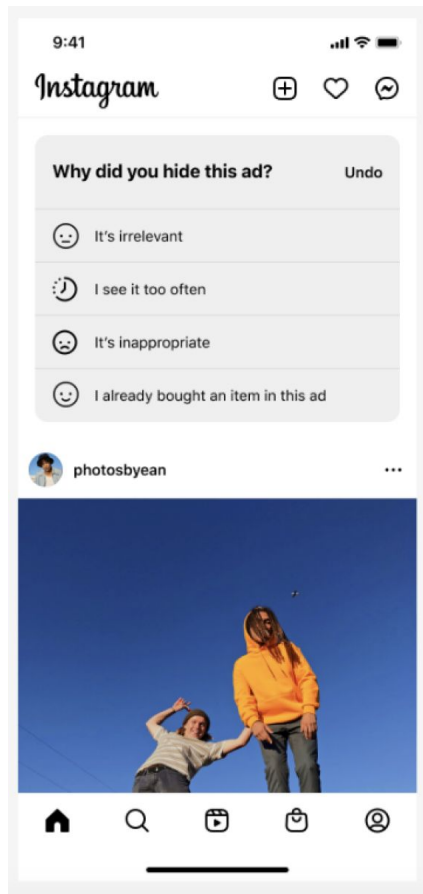
Summary

- Lightweight Negative Feedback was initiated to make up for lost ad signals.
- The challenge was to motivate users to provide feedback voluntarily, while making the process as frictionless as possible.
- With help from crit sessions and our research partners, we fine-tuned the design to ship a polished feature.
- 6 months later, the lightweight negative feedback project has majorly increased ad feedback from users! While the data is internal-only, what I can say is that we're all really proud of our work.

Contact Info

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