



Case Study:



Rock the Ballot





Section:

Overview



Mission

Illuminate and remove the barriers to millennial down ballot* voting.

*** for low-profile (non-presidential) political candidates**

The Hunch Given that 61% of Millennials receive their news through Facebook (according to a Pew Research Center study conducted last year) we suspected that the information our user's receive would be mostly limited to presidential candidates.

The Data From our user interviews, 5 out of 7 of users reported feeling not as informed as they'd like to be about non-presidential candidates, 4 out of 7 users reported encountering unfamiliar names on their ballots.

The Opportunity Right now, Rock the Vote is focused on getting Millennials to the polls. They have the opportunity to help voters make an informed decision about who to vote for once they get to the poll.

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Section:

Competitive Research



Our Methods

We took some time to evaluate the competitive landscape.

We used:

- Competitive Analysis
- Feature Analysis
- Heuristic Analysis
- Usability Testing



Competitive Analysis

We would need a high-level view of who the competition was, what their value proposition was, and how they were achieving it.

We looked at:

- Rock the Vote
- Fair Game
- Countable
- Who's on the Ballot
- Ballotpedia
- NYC Board of Elections
- Congress+
- Voter

	Platform	What their goal is	How they're achieving it	Notable Features	Link
Rock the vote	iOS, Android app (for 2016 election) Responsive website (for all year round)	To make voting easier for young adults by simplifying and demystifying voter registration and elections	Utilizing their brand personality to evoke to young adults that being involved in politics and voting is a big part of being cool. They provide resources for users to register to vote, pledge to vote, find basic information about candidates, etc.	- Rock the Vote has an Online Voter Registration and Lookup Tool you can use to find your current voter registration status as well as some helpful state-by-state election resources. This tool is also offered as a white label tool that is free for partners of Rock the Vote. The platform is mobile-friendly, available in 13 languages*, and approved by the Presidential Commission for Election Administration. - Interactive map that lets users select their voting state and get more information of their state elections	rockthevote.com
Fair Game	iOS, Android app	To open the eyes of American citizens, informing them about the truth of inequalities by using gamification techniques.	Creating an educational game that exposes inequalities. By forcing them to engage with these topics, users may feel more invested in the outcome of the answers, and be aware of the truth behind inequality.	Interactive gamification, creates more suspense and surprise when answers are revealed. This increase in emotion helps create memorable experience.	https://appsto.re/us/Pfn1dU
Countable	iOS, Android app	To encourage political awareness and action. To provide a quick and easy way to understand the laws Congress is considering and also streamline the process of contacting lawmakers, so that voters can tell them they want them to vote on bills under consideration.	Combines use of articles targeted towards select causes and information on your state representatives. By laying out the voting actions of representative in clear teams, it's easy to feel informed of the positions of state politicians.	Laying out voting behavior with engaging visuals. Providing summaries of bills. You can easily share your opinion with representatives. Use of icons makes it easy to search for specific topics.	https://www.countable.us/
Who's on the ballot?	Responsive website	To Provide voters with the tools they need to make an informed choice on Election Day.	By focusing on location, having users enter in their addresses, they're able to provide users with targeted information.	Poling place map, address, and times of operation. Succinct list of candidates with link to learn more about them.	http://whosontheballot.org/
Ballotpedia	Responsive website	Their goal is to inform people about politics by providing accurate and objective information about politics at all levels of government.	By providing in-depth information about candidates, their ideals, plans and the elections in general. It's the only place online where voters can find a general informational article about a candidate not published by the candidate. NOTE: Ballotpedia's original scope was information about what is on voters' ballots, with emphasis on neutral data, to assist them in their voting decisions. The organization's coverage expanded to include candidates and general U.S. political information.	Sample Ballot Lookup feature, by entering your address and email the sample ballot pulls from over 15,000 candidates running in over 7,400 elections to show you what's on the ballot for your registered address.	ballotpedia.com
NYC Board of Elections	Responsive website	To administering and enforcing all laws related to the elections in NYC	Providing documentation on various national laws and acts (National Voter Registration Act, Help-American Vote Act) as well as transparent information on political spending, etc.	Download PDF documents related to these laws and acts	https://www.elections.ny.gov/
Congress+	iOS	Encourage users to be informed and active political citizens.	By delivering in-depth, organized information (e.g., biographical, contact information, campaign statistics) about the 535 members of Congress, and ways to go about contacting them and following their updates.	One page with links to the person's social media profiles, phone #s, email address, etc.	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/congress+/id291322881?mt=8
Voter - matchmaking for politics	iOS, Android app	To help users find which candidates and issues relate to their personal interests and values.	Through a quiz-like format, users answer a few questions about their opinions on certain issues and the app will generate a list of politicians and influencers that share similar thoughts.	User tinder-like swipe left/right to answer quiz questions. When answering questions, you're able to tap on the card for more information about the issue	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/voter-matchmaking-for-politics/id332655927?mt=8




Feature Analysis

We took a deep dive in the features of each competitor. In order to innovate, it was important to know the baseline.

What were the primary features?

What were the nice extras?

	App or Web	Candidate Summaries	Game/ Trivia	Social sharing	Link to candidate websites	News	Polling info	Election schedule	Stats on election	Interactive maps	Matchmaking	Platforms Available
 Rock the Vote	Website	X		X						X		Responsive website
 Rock the Vote	App						X					iOS, Android app (for 2016 election)
 Fair Game	App		X	X								iOS, Android app
 Countable	Website	X	X	X		X					X	iOS, Android app
 WMD's Ballot	Website	X		X		X	X					Responsive website
 Ballotpedia	Website	X				X	X	X	X	X		Responsive website
 NYC Board of Elections	Website	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			Responsive website
 Congress+	App	X		X		X			X			iOS
 PollVault	Website	X		X	X	X	X	X				Website
 PollVault	App						X					iOS, Android app
 Vote.com	App	X	X	X	X	X					X	iOS, Android app

Heuristic Analysis

Once we understood current product offerings, we sought to understand the usability of each product.

We looked 10 different data points, including:

- Visibility of system status
- Matches between the system and the real world
- User control and freedom
- Consistency
- Error prevention

Scale					
0	Worst				
1					
2					
3	Best				
		Rock the Vote (App)		Balotmedia	What's on the ballot?
		Rating	Notes	Rating	Notes
Visibility of system status	2	1	- No status of where I am in the sign in process (had to click 3 times to reach homepage) - loading wheel at the bottom when enter a new screen to show information is loading - dropdown message with checkmark when check an unfinished task under the track your progress category - registered successfully message appears after signing up	1	- No visible information of how deep a user is in navigation/breadcrumbs, depends on browser back button control - When conducting search it provides loading feedback. It can take a while to load depending on content
Match between system and real world	1	1	- Unclear category names (don't know where it's going to lead me after I click on it) - does not use conventional icons or wording for 'get social' when clicked on it takes you to a page where you can get information on how to be social, but doesn't take you to any social media sites	2	- Communicates in a clear and concise way for the target audience - Uses conventional social network icons but the location sometimes is not appropriate, it gets confusing when images are right next to them.
User control & freedom	1	1	- Has back buttons to allow users to go back, hamburger menu to go back to homepage, Modal with an exit option - stuck in sign in screen (if email already exists)	1	- Uses browser controls to navigate back on pages
Consistency & standards	2	2	- Unconventional calendar view and selection process during onboarding - 'thanks voter champion' banner at bottom of homepage looks like a button - clicking 'learn about the candidates' takes you to 'election center' page - consistent stacking of tabs that all function the same way (takes you to a new screen)	2	- All tabs have a hero image that states exactly what the page is about with a clear title, the text used on this images is consistent but colors, position and size makes it seem off - Button names and links conventions are consistent and follow the normal standards - Mobile version of the site does not obey the mobile navigation standards, mobile states are not part of mobile conventions, this confuses users - Inconsistency with maps some are interactive other appear to be but are not, this is confusing
Error prevention	2	2	- Provides error message when do not fill in the right/all the info needed in sign up	2	- Provides asterisk for required fields but users have to guess that the asterisk refers to required fields as it doesn't have a key or legend that clearly establishes the meaning of asterisks in the form fields - Provides field validation
Recognition rather than recall	0	0	- does not tell you what screen you are in (e.g., no page titles) - color is only on one of the screens (blue on the homepage)	0	- Provide map with states that seems to be interactive but they are not, this confuses the user. When users scroll down and pick a city the map is no longer visible.
Flexibility and efficiency of use	2	0	- Does not provide 'sign in' option for returning users (if signed up via the website, but first time using the app) - shows today's date as the default date of birth - back buttons takes you to the homepage, not the last screen they were on	0	- Does not provide much options for advanced users, in fact the only feature we can consider is search bar
Aesthetic & minimalist design	1	2	- Some screens display the logo 2-3 times (once on the nav bar and once on the page itself) - overwhelming information on footer - organize information into collapsed tabs on the homepage	2	- Some pages have too much links one on top of the other it is hard to figure out what is what and where to click - Footer has more than 100 navigation links, looks crowded and confusing - Dropdown menus on top of images are hard to distinguish
Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors	3	2	- Error messages during sign up indicates what form fields need to be filled in	2	- Provides a clear understandable error message with the recommendations of possible solutions - Tried signing up for mailing gave me an error stating that it wasn't my fault, more than they were experiencing technical difficulties.
Help and documentation	2	0	- Clear label on form fields - FAQ in footer - does not provide any contact information - no search bar	0	- Does not provide any help or FAQ options - Forms are clearly labeled - Contact options are confusing. About Us dropdown menu offers 'Contact Us' but then has another option for emails, these could all be under contact category for clarity and findability
Tech Notes			- Embeds or adds a few questions from the Fair Game app, able to go to the app store to download Fair Game - link to tomorrow lobby tumblr app	2	- Does not have an app, website is responsive. Provide interactive maps, they could do a lot more with them.
Takeaway			- Overwhelming aesthetics and amount of content on a page (e.g., logo appears more than once on a page) can distract users from task at hand. At times, it felt like the app can mislead users when trying to accomplish a task (e.g., when you click on a category it does not take you to a page you'd expect)		- Offers a lot of information that sometimes could be overwhelming because of all the quick links in the content. Some pages have lots of links one next to the other, makes it hard to choose or know exactly where to click. - Their eyebrow states that viewing their website in a mobile browser is a mobile app. A button that said 'I could set a reminder notification took me to a page with a document that I was unable to download. Various links look me to a new webpage.

Source: Nielsen Norman Group
<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>





Section:

User Research



Our Methods

We began investigating our users. What did we suspect the barriers to be? Would there be any truth to our assumptions?

We used:

- Empathy mapping
- Surveys
- User Interviews
- Affinity Mapping



User Research

To create a successful product, we needed to analyze a few different aspects of our users.

We looked at: perceived learning styles, voting experience, research behaviors, and their feelings on how informed they consider themselves to be.

Interviews

24 data points and 7 user interviews

(2 males, 5 females) helped us understand how our users behaved.

Survey

10 data points and 11 survey respondents

(6 males, 5 females) helped us understand why.

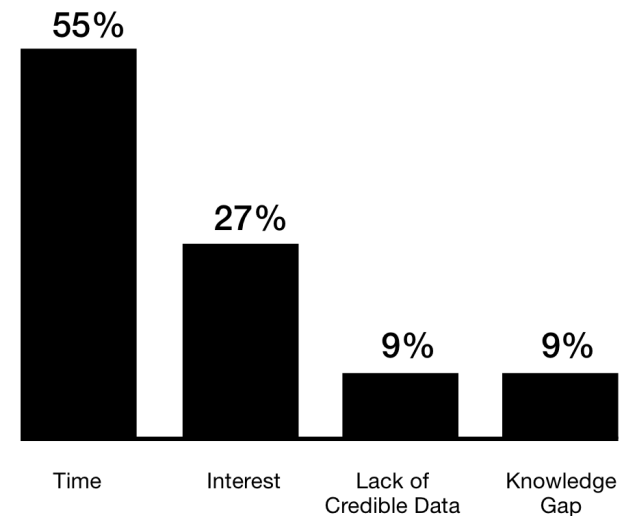
Affinity Mapping

Time and apathy were cited as the two largest barriers to engaging in candidate research.

Affinity Mapping Results

- I need to be engaged with the material
- I vote for candidates who I felt shared my values
- I don't want to make a mistake while voting
- I need resources tailored to my needs
- I wish I did more research

Survey Results





Section:

Results



Results

Our MVP **To relate issues that millennials care about to the candidates they'll see on their ballots**

Our Value Statement Politically uninformed millennials need an easy to use resource to educate them about ballot content because they want to be aware of down-ballot candidates but their interest is often outweighed by the effort required to fill their knowledge gap.

The How We hope to achieve this by providing users easy and timely information about secondary/down-ballot candidates and enabling them to access their 'picks' before they enter the voting booth.

Persona Creation

Mark, The Uninformed Voter

Age: 20

“I already knew who I was going to vote for president but when I looked at other candidates, I didn’t feel prepared.”



Interest in Politics



Influenced by Mass Media



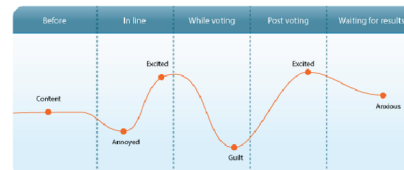
Familiarity with Down-Ballot Candidates



Time Spent Researching



Election Emotional Cycle



Goals/Needs

To know all of the candidates on the ballot

To not spend much time on research

To not feel uninformed

How We Can Serve

Creating engaging and simple content

Enabling users to access content on-the-go

By providing personalized voting information

Solution

How would Mark use the app?

He would

- Confirm his registered voting address
- Open the 'candidate match' tool and drag sliders to reflect his personal stance on the topics provided
- Generate the results
- Learn about the candidates who share his views
- Save his picks to his 'ballot' for quick referencing



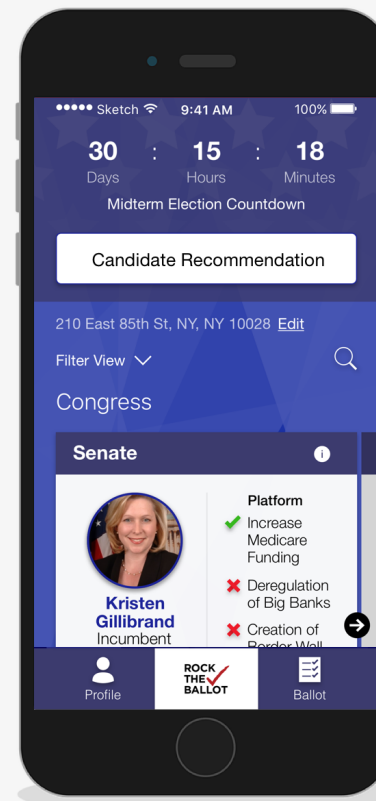
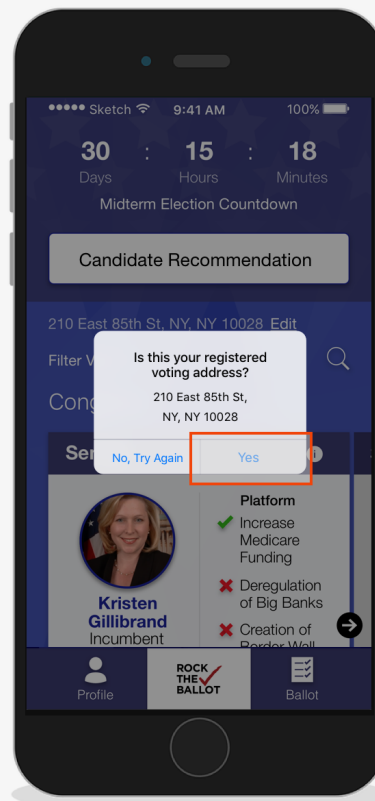
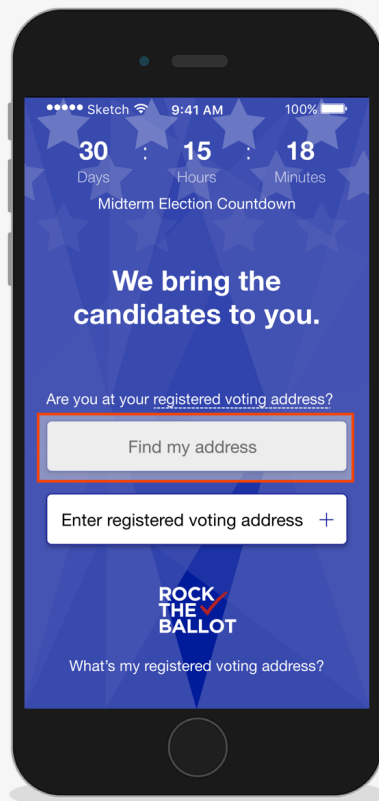
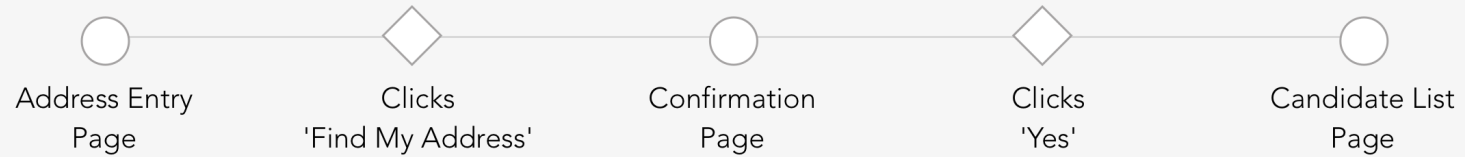
Section:

Screenshots

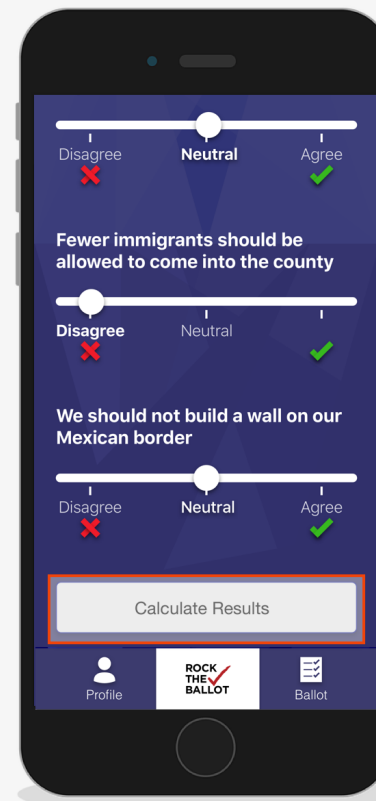
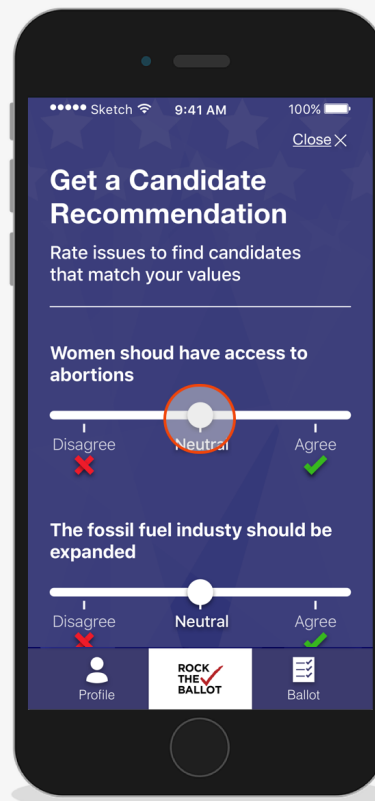
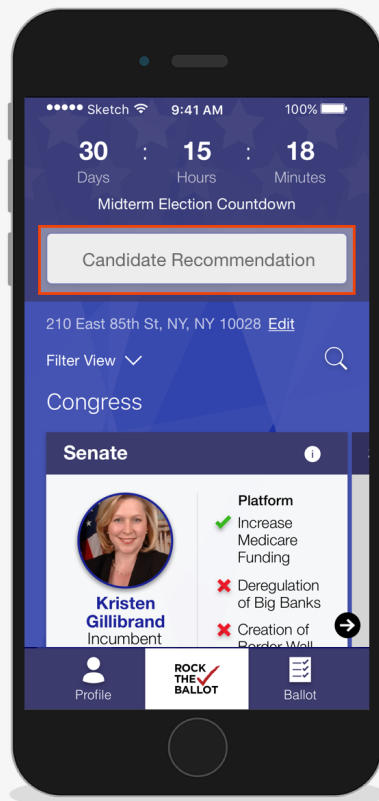
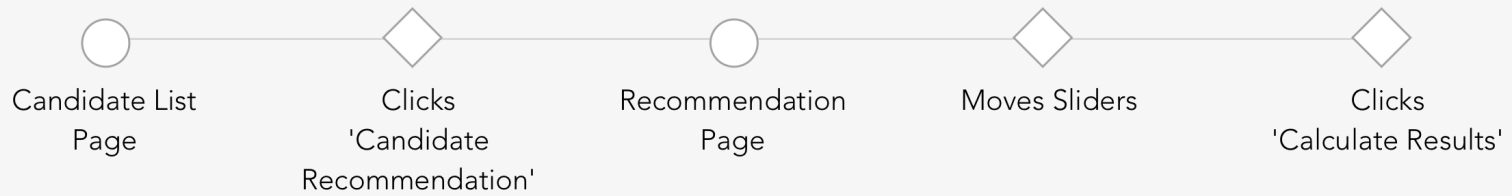


Getting Started

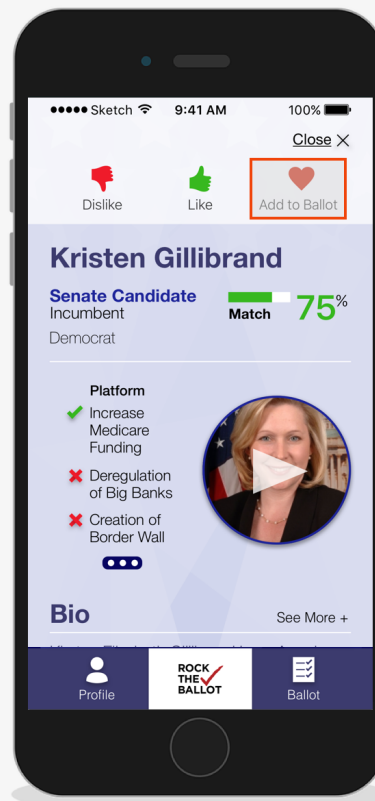
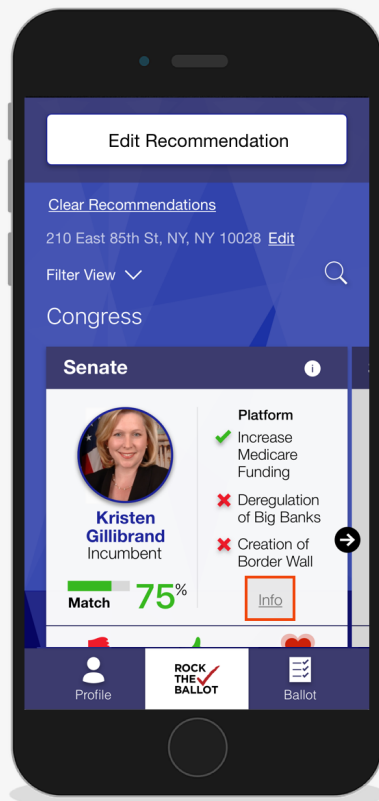
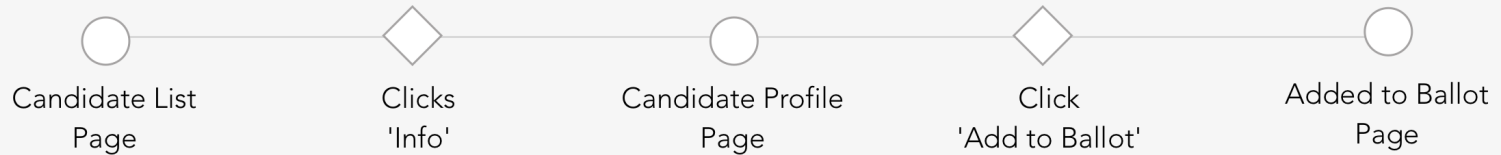
○ Pages ◇ Actions



Finding a Match



Viewing the Results



Section:

End

Let me know your thoughts

