



User engagement case study



Intro

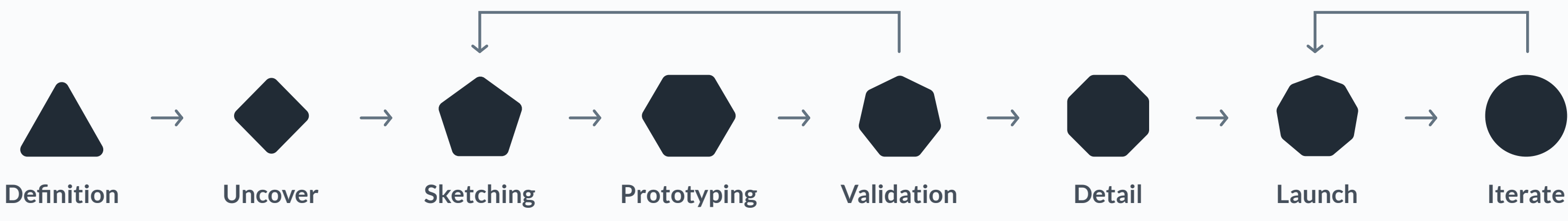
For most people, home improvement isn't a good experience, to say the least: Hiring a contractor is expensive, overwhelming, and rarely enables you to get precisely what you want. At the same time, DIY is often unattainable due to a lack of skills and confidence. Hometalk empowers every person to create their dream space, through the strength of our community and network of experts. From tutorials and shopping lists to personalized help and professional services, we aim to seamlessly connect online and offline experiences to make home improvement stress-free and fun.



Challenges

Talking to people online can sometimes not be the most natural thing in the world and overwhelming. At Hometalk, the community mostly mature and is very sensitive to language. When someone shares a project they have worked on for a long time and dedicated effort and thought to it, other members of the community usually like to support them and empower them with kind words about the project. While working at Hometalk, along with one associate designer, we noticed that users that are not engaging with posts tend to retain worse. So we set out to research this problem and design an experience that would be both user-friendly and a joy to use.

My process



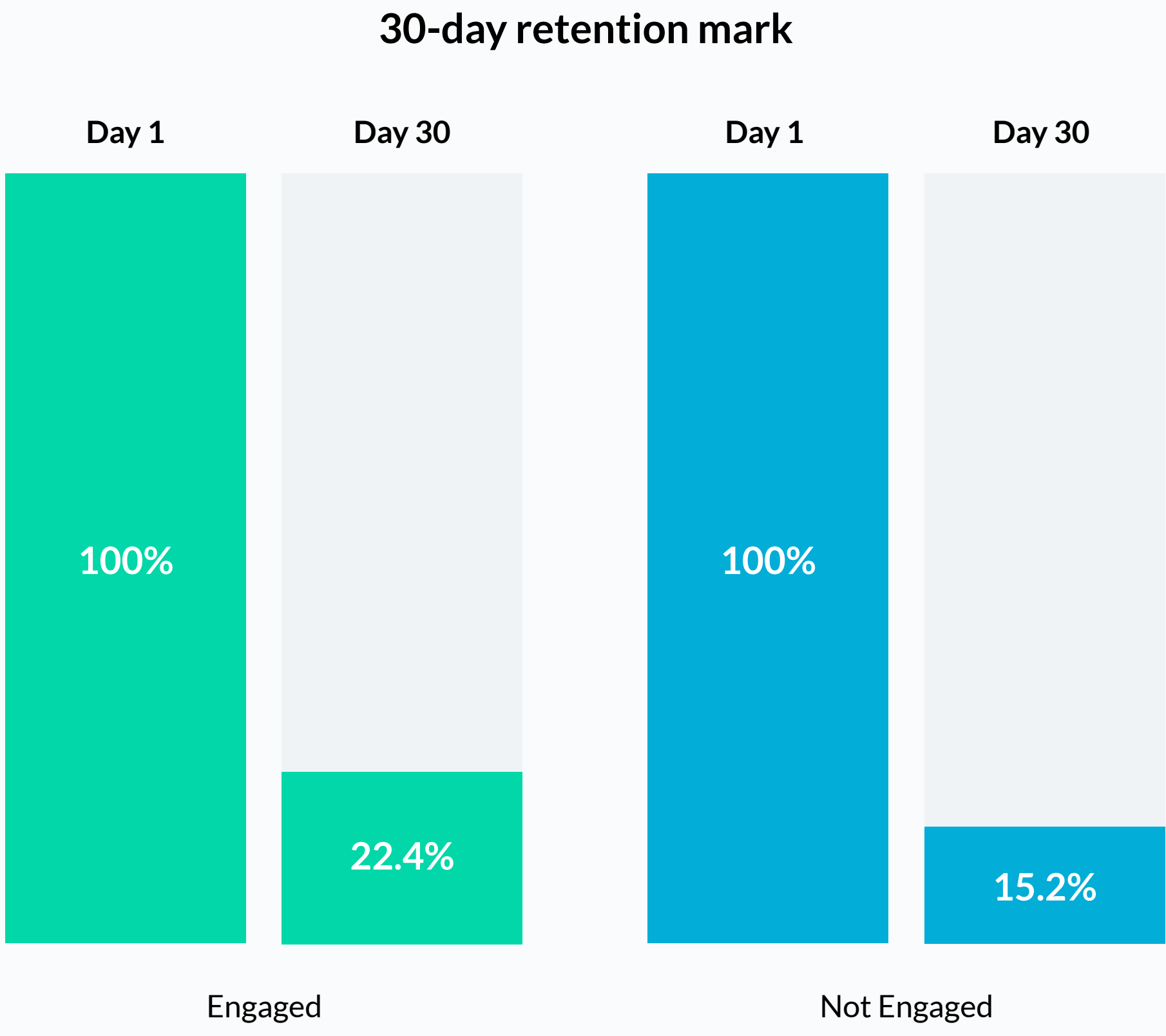
Definition - The problem

Users are not engaging enough with the site and its content. The lack of engagement results in a lower 14-day activation rate and a lower retention rate. Overall this means that the click-through rate is more moderate, and income from ads is lower. This is an excellent opportunity for growth. The first step was to figure out how many users are dropping off.



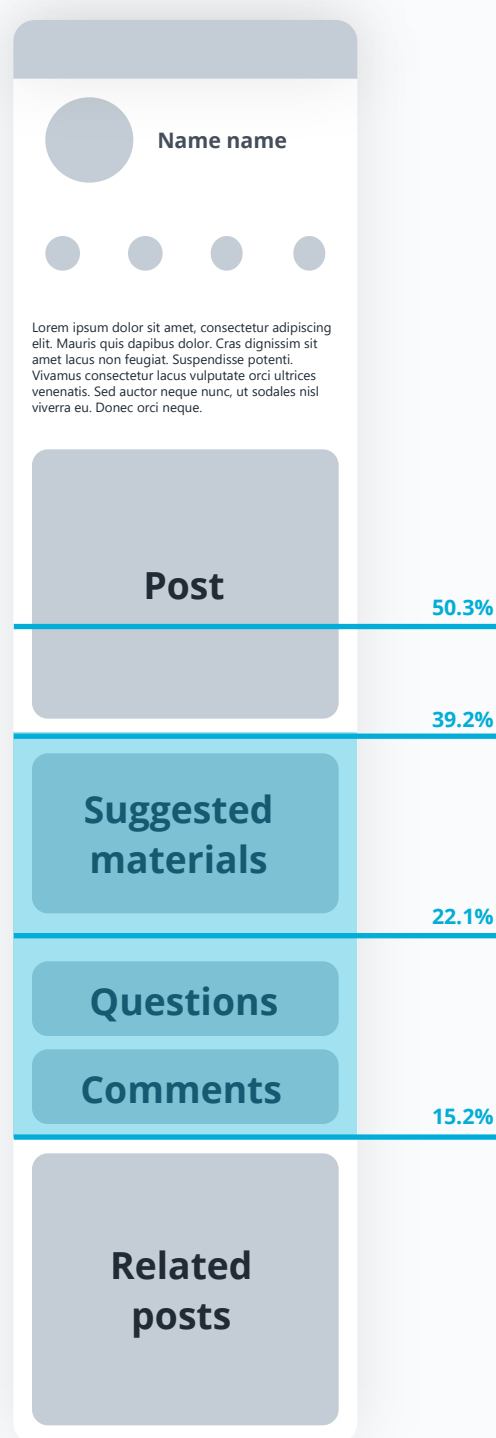
Uncover - Looking into the data

Data shows that users who are engaging with the site in the form of a comment, like or a share, retain better. Looking at two groups, at the 30 days mark, one who engaged and interacted with the website and one who did not. The first group had a 22.4% retention rate and the second had a 15.2% retention rate



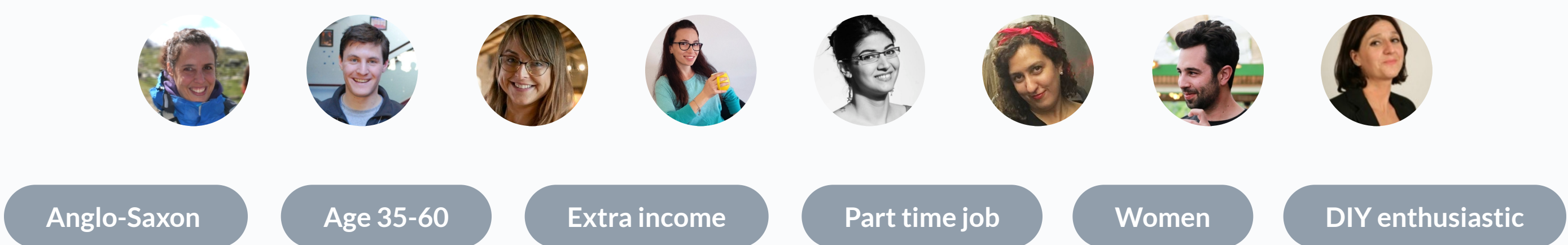
Uncover - Where should we do it?

Out of the users who do not engage, tracking events indicate that the majority of users that drop off (who did start to look at the post) are after the post content, between the affiliation links to the comment/question section. This location will be a great place to interact with users.



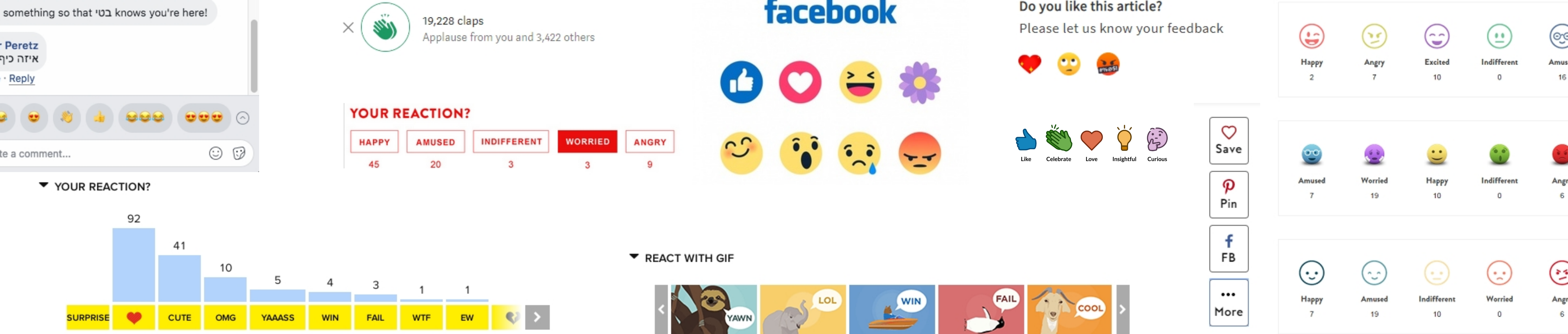
Uncover - Focus group and interviewing users

We gathered users into the office and asked them to use the site. We created a list of questions to ask the users. In the end, they got a gift card.



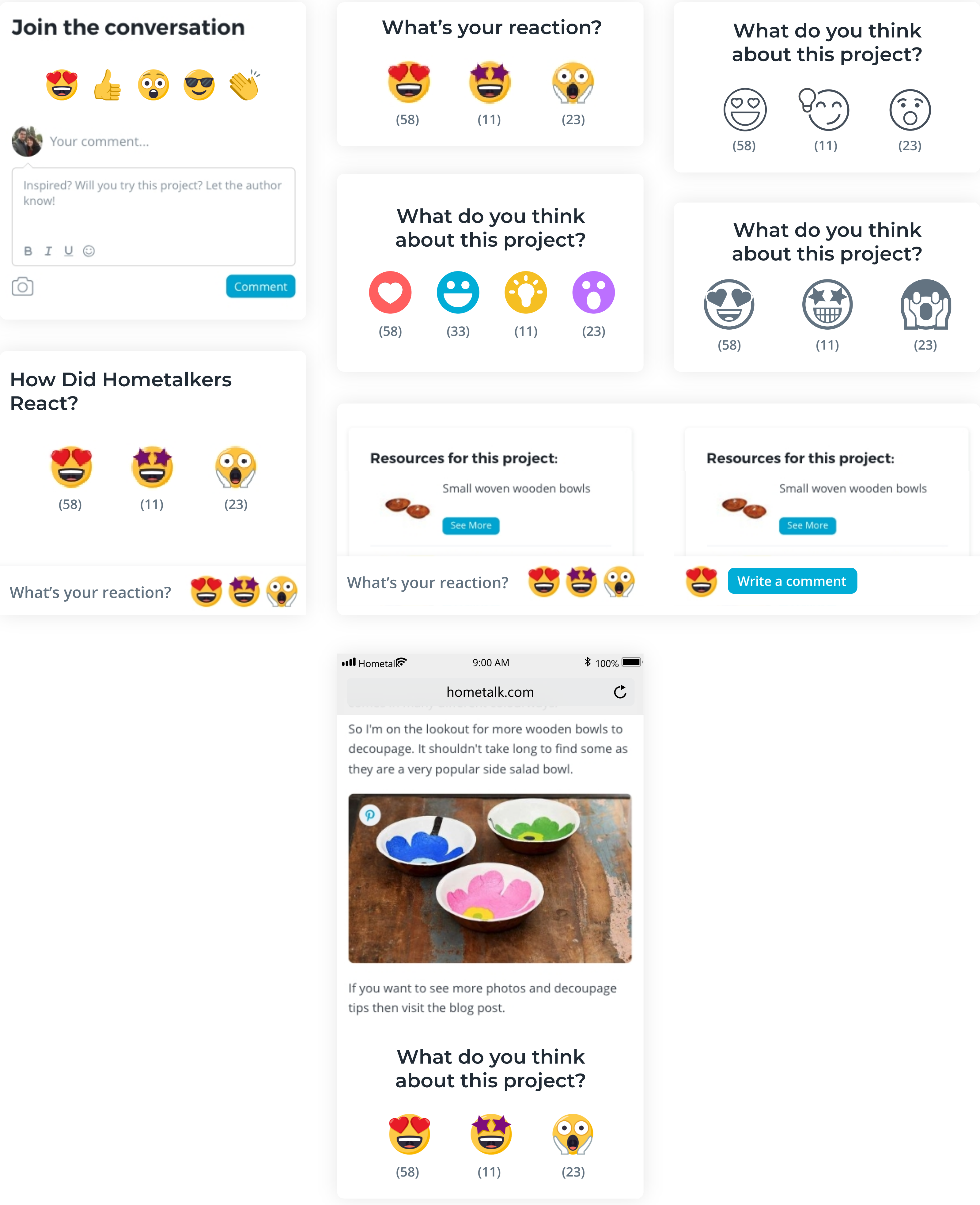
Sketching - What's out there?

It's essential to check what your competition is doing with similar problems, Check industry trends, and research creative solutions to get inspired by. Looking at the following examples, you can see a pattern within the industry.



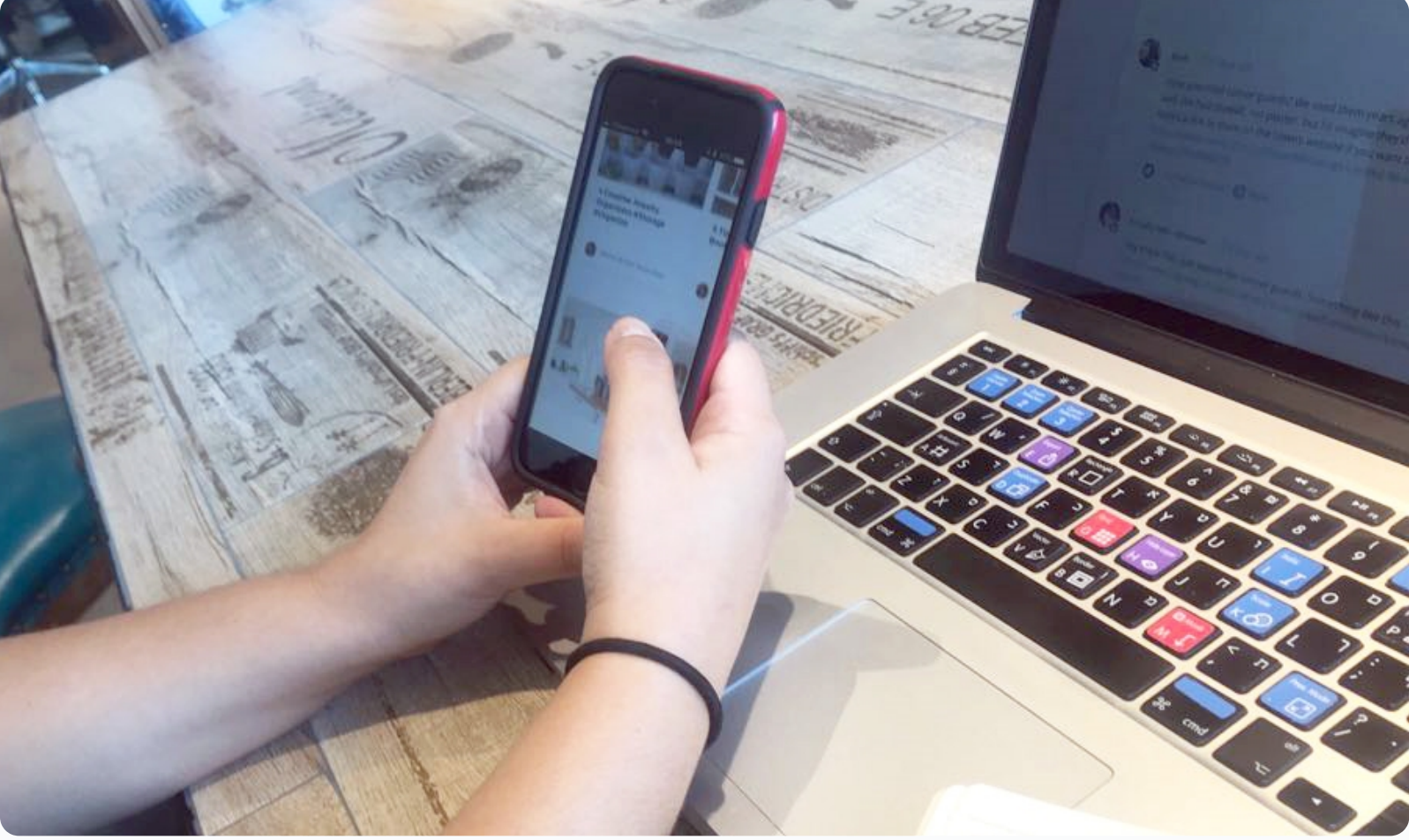
Sketching - What we started with

We narrowed our selections to a clickable panel of emojis, 3-5, differing in styles, colors and emotions, since we gathered a lot of users to our focus groups, we eventually used 2 types of emojis: EmojiOne and apples emojis.



Prototyping

Taking the mockups back to our focus groups, we tested out the new feature and interviewed the users again. We tested the users' reactions to the new emojis and the overall engagement to the posts. The responses to the emojis were far from what we expected. We then understood that we had made this feature appealing to the younger audience, millennials in particular. The conclusion was to go back to the drawing board and use the specific words our users' said.



Validation - Taking user feedback and implementing

After collecting and reviewing the qualitative data from the interviews, we used the quotes we wrote down from our focus groups to determine a better terminology for the project. Our target audience did not fit with the emojis we've used, although the younger users in our focus groups reacted better to them. The older audience, the one we were aiming at, engaged less with the emojis. When asked why they did not use them, they answered: "I don't understand those icons". Some of the users did what to engage with the answers/posts but were not sure how to compliment the post's author. The majority of them said things that implied their willingness to compliment or show appreciation to the post's author.

"I don't understand those icons."

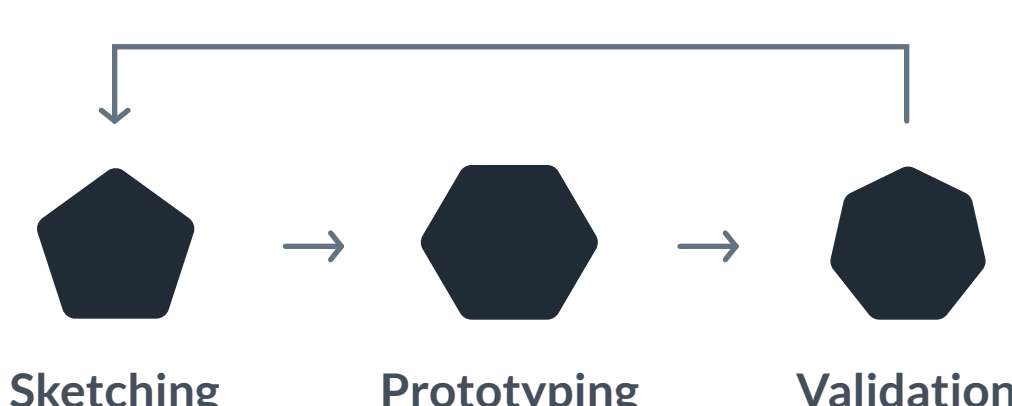
"I'm afraid to write something insulting."

"I just want to say thank you for sharing."

"I want to show my appreciation to the user."

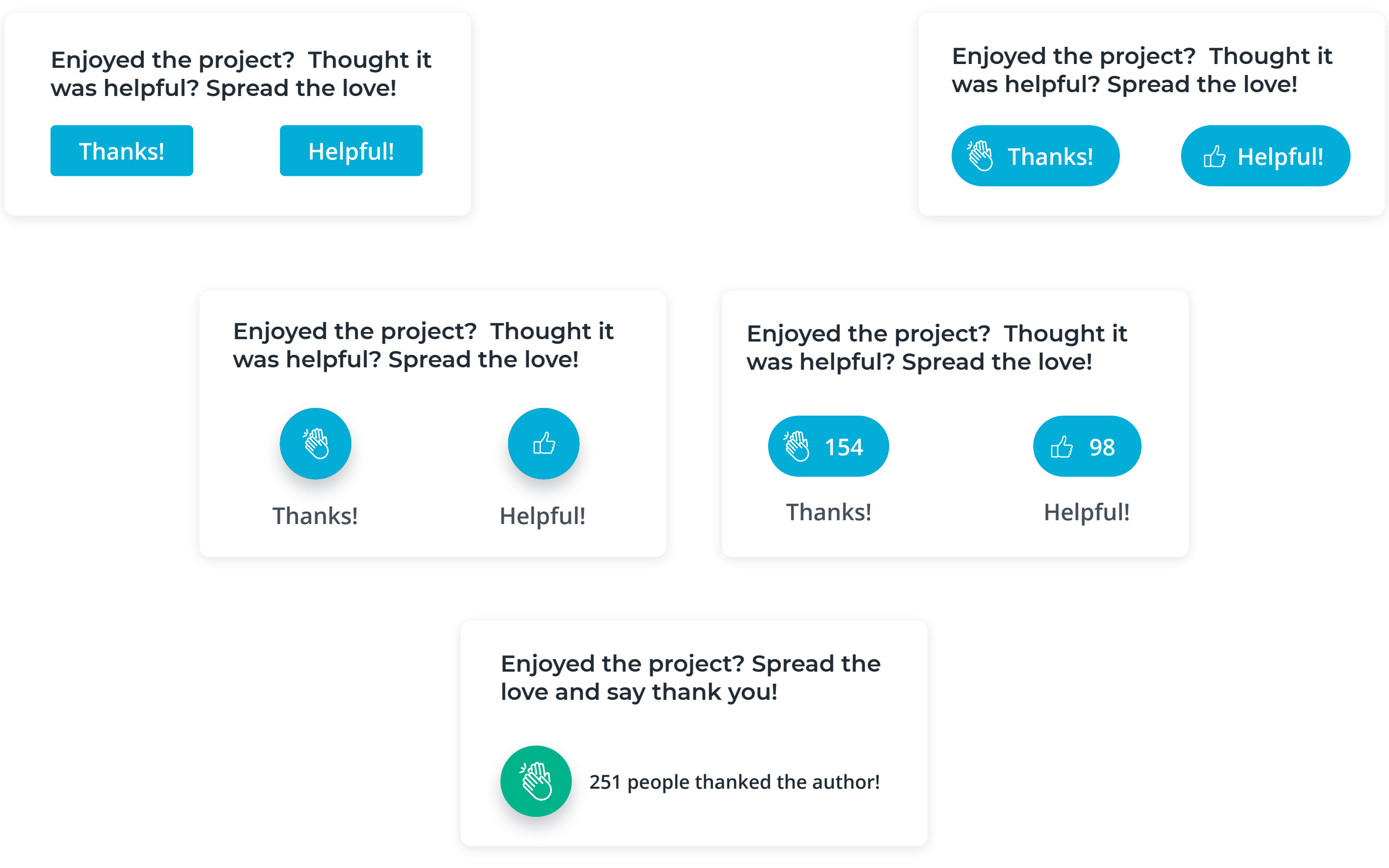
"I don't want to talk to her."

"I want to empower him."



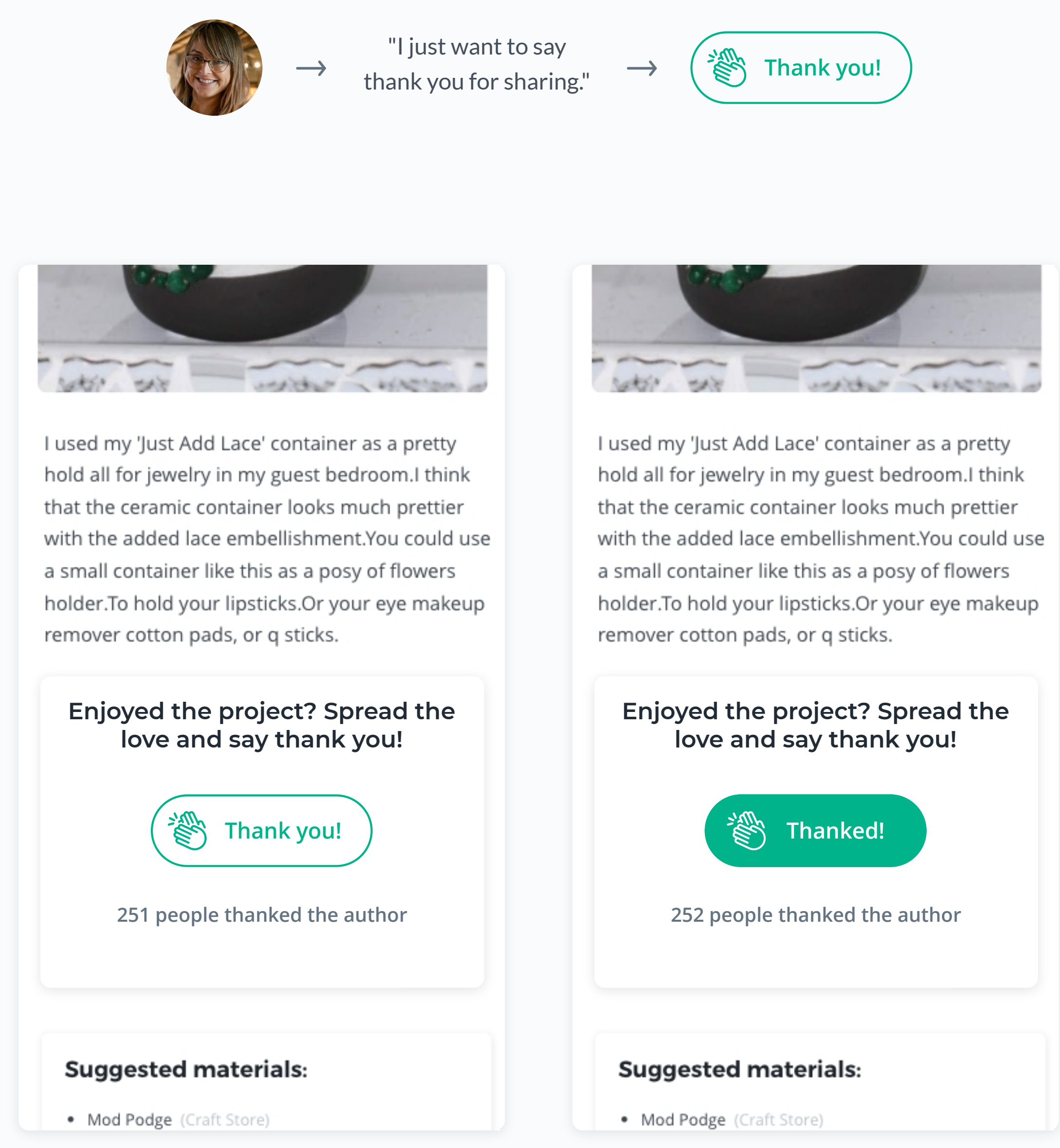
Detail - Text? Icons? counters?

Taking the quotes and sentences, we sketch a few layouts of buttons with different micro copies and one or two call to actions, expressing gratitude to the post's author. One what about thanking the author for sharing, and the sound was about marking this project/tip/tutorial as helpful.



● Launch - An outcome we initially did not think of

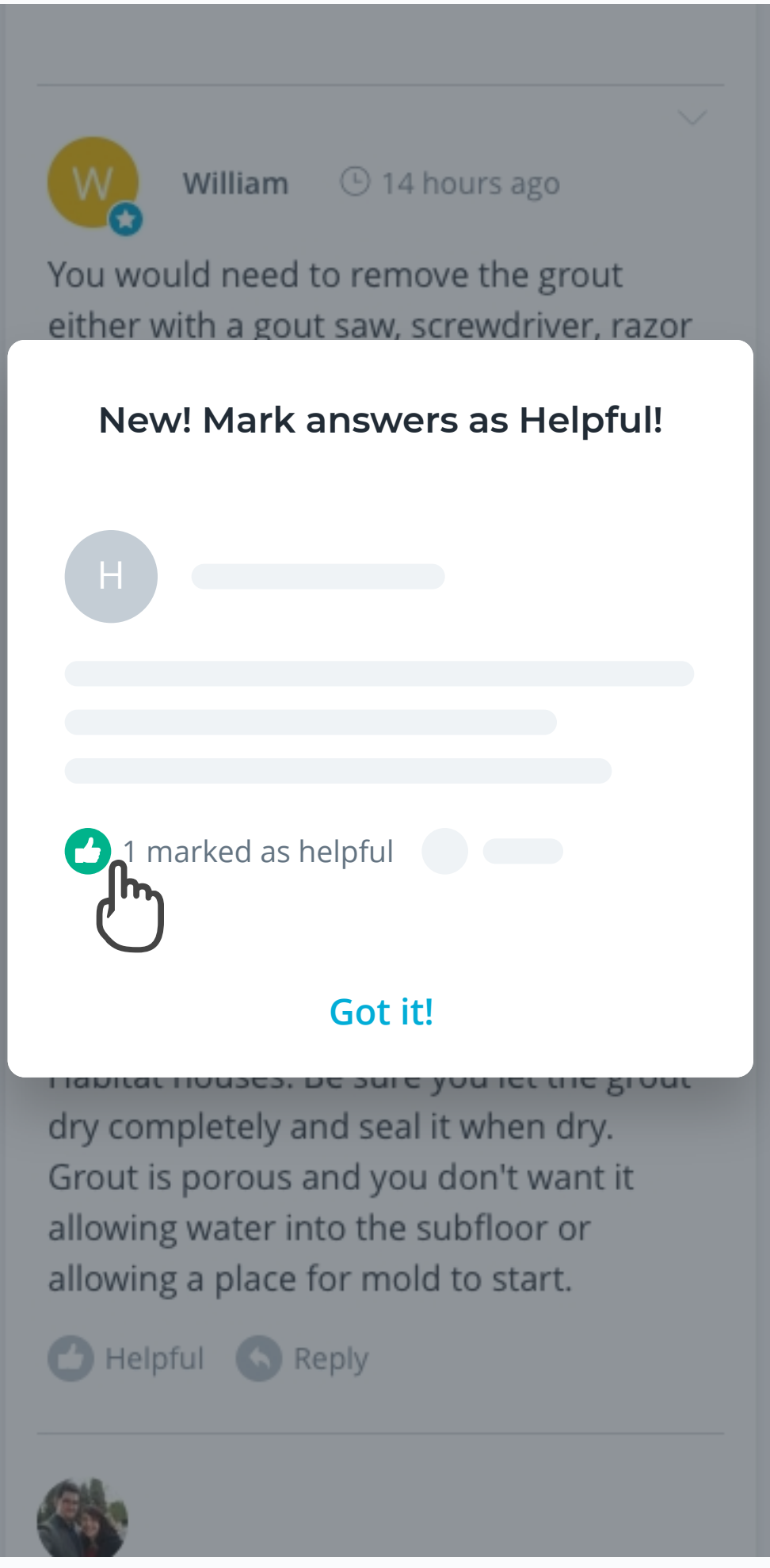
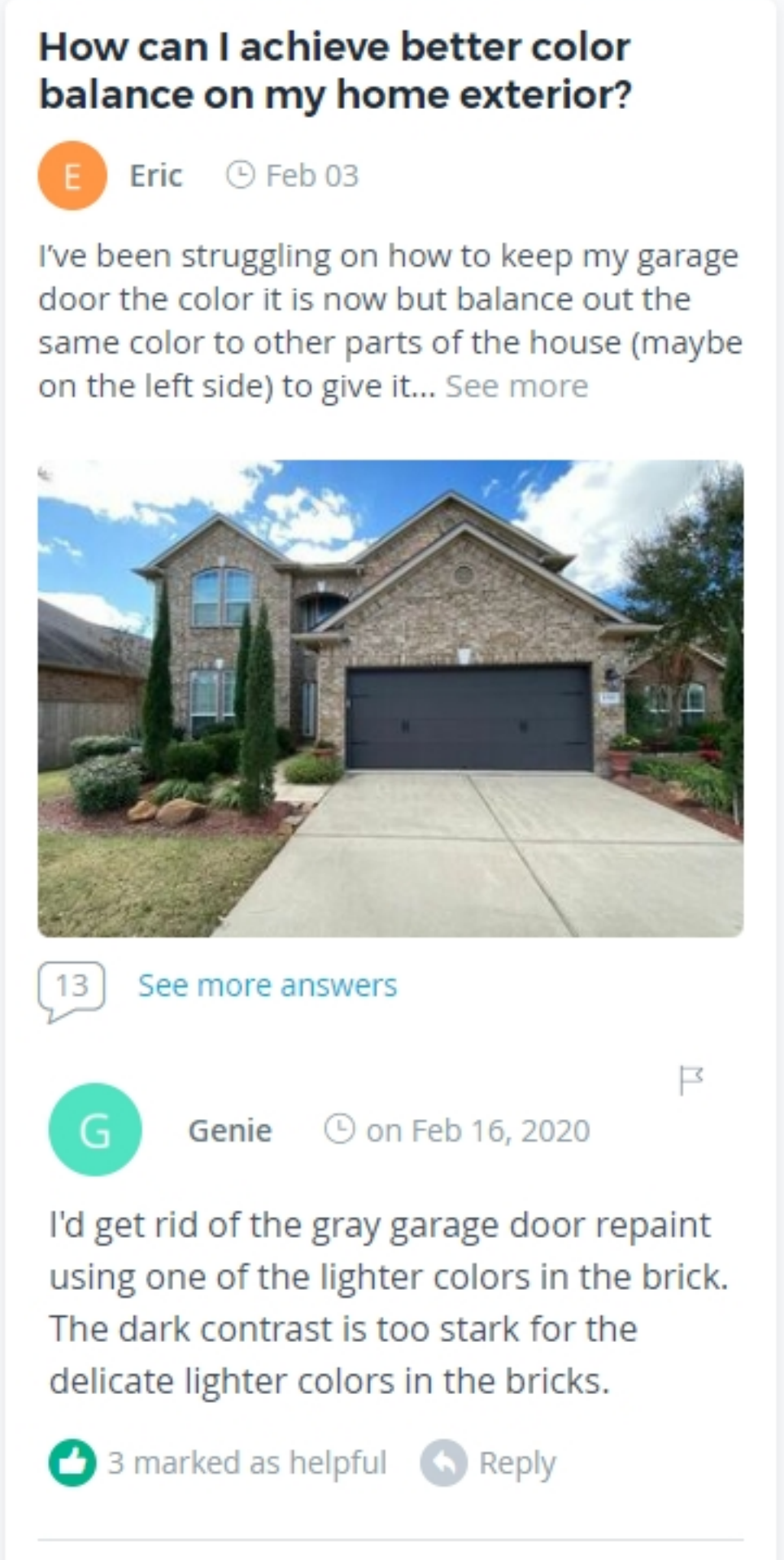
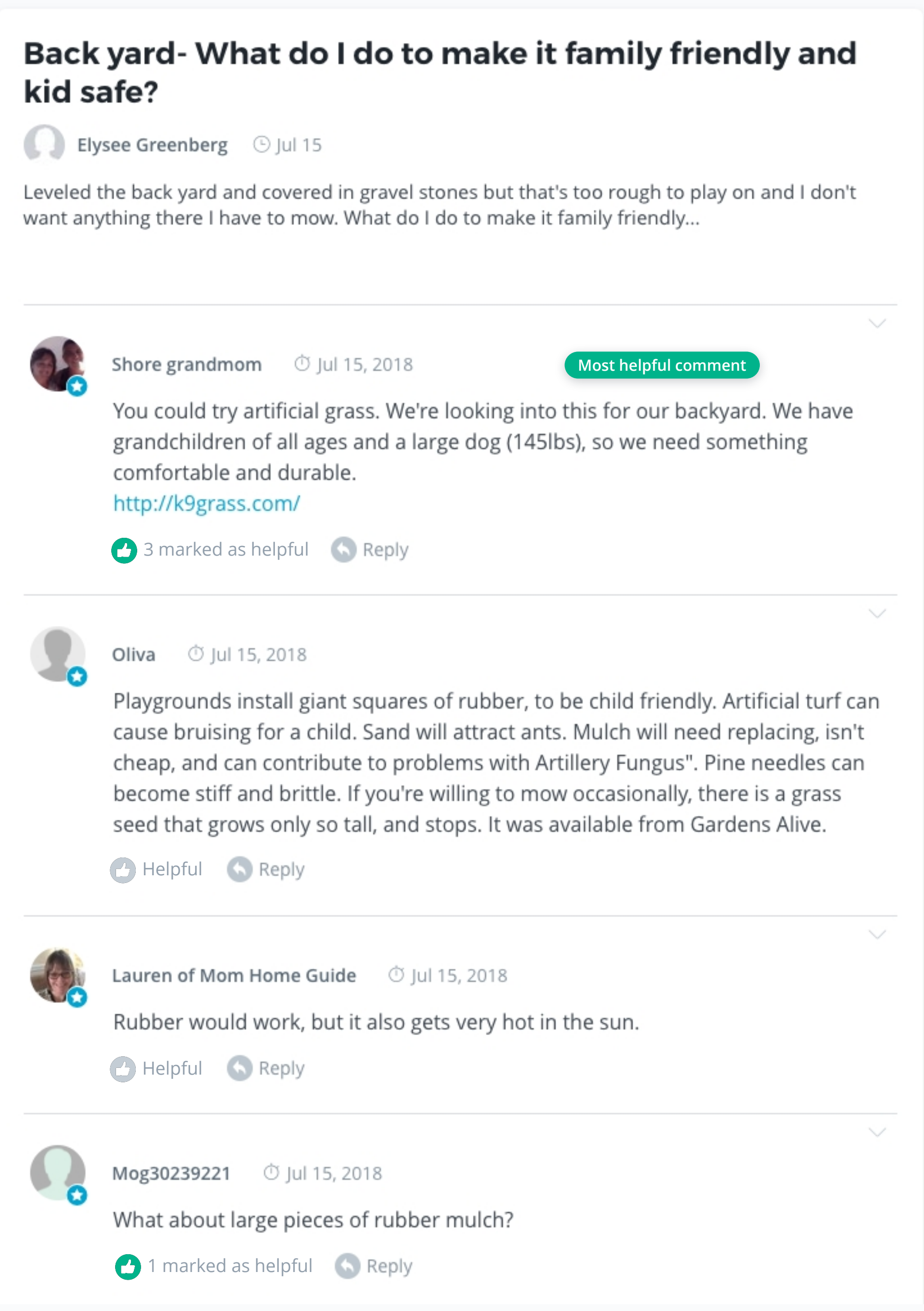
After testing out the new sketches, we finalized the design and lunched both on desktop and on mobile the one version of the button. The final design that was chosen took the actual words some of the users used, and translated it into a button. This button shows the post author a reaction from the other users that want to express their gratitude about the project. In their mind, it is more meaningful then a "Like" or a "Heart". The initial launch was a more mature MVP that was open for 50% of the population,



● Iterate - Mark as helpful

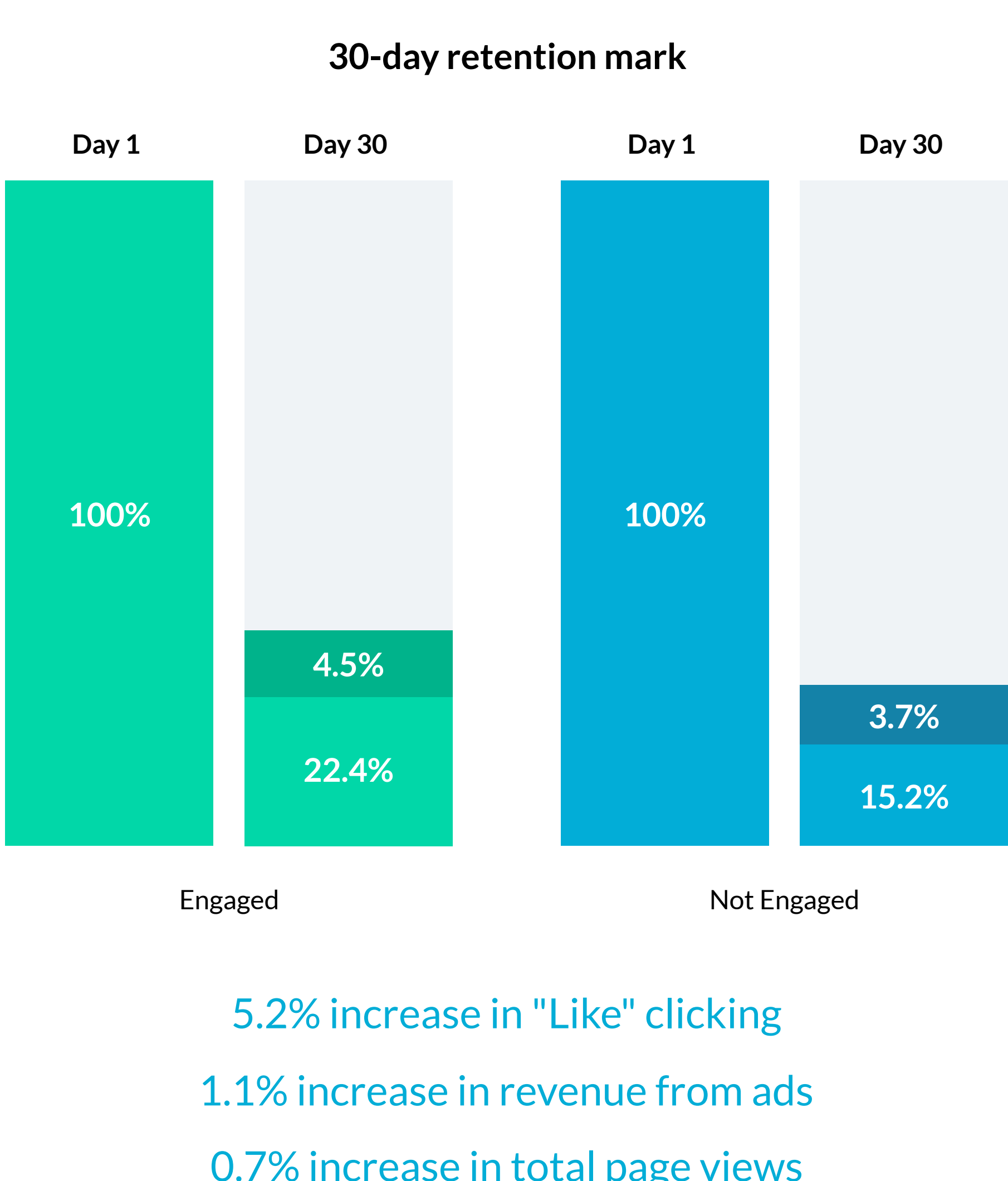
Another part of Hometalk is the discussion forum. Hometalkers come here to share smaller projects or ask questions related to DIY from questions about getting stains out of a carpet to tips and ideas about projects with wooden pallets. The click rate on the "Like" button was 11.3%. We decided to test out a hypothesis:

Users will engage better with an answer to a question if we change the terminology for the like button to "Helpful"



● Iterate - Looking into the data

Data shows a 4.5% increase in retention for engaged users and 3.7% for non-engaged users. Total page views were increased by 0.7%, and revenue from ads had risen by 1.1%. We talked and interviewed a few users that answered questions and got a "Helpful" mark. They expressed more satisfaction from helping the community, they understood that other people that come to the forum, are looking at the answers and using their advice.



5.2% increase in "Like" clicking
1.1% increase in revenue from ads
0.7% increase in total page views

Users that got a "Helpful" mark, were x2 likely to answer more questions on the discussion forum

Let's summarize

Going into this project, we thought we new the right answer. We thought we know how to increase users' engagement , even after market research and sessions of brain storming in the team and with our target audience. The answer only came to us after we conducted 3 focus groups and iterated again and again to fine tune the feature. After we rolled out the complete feature, the acceptance and feedback was amazing. All and all a great addition to the already thriving community at Hometalk.

Don't think you know what's right for your users, test it and than decide.

The team and I (photographing) working on a user's journey at Hometalk

