

CS/PSYC 6750 - H4 (Prototype)

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# FAM JAM

An application to facilitate easy communication among family members.

## WHAT IS IT?

'Fam Jam is' an application that allows family members to communicate easily. The target users involve families that live under one roof but have their own busy schedules. The application has more than just basic calling and messaging functionalities. It brings together a number of fun features that involve all the family members. This not only helps improve co-ordination of schedules but it also reassures you of your family's well-being and lets you keep in touch with them as and when you need to.

## WHY IS IT NEEDED?

Before I came to Tech, I was born and brought up in India. My parents are both working citizens and my sister is an MBA student. Everyone would be extremely busy during the day and planning events and daily chores would prove to be quite a task. I realized the need for a tool that would help distribute chores around the house as well as help in organizing family events. Such a solution will not only simplify communication but will keep the family close despite their different individual locations.

## FEATURES

The application has two major categories:

1. **CONNECT** is used to keep the family in touch via messaging, photo sharing and video.

The subcategories are:

- **Message Center:** Family members can manage individual or group chats with each other.
- **Fast Click:** Feel like a picture will explain what you want to say more than a message will? This feature allows users to click pictures, set a time limit for viewing them and edit them before sending.
- **Video Chat:** Connect with family members individually or via conference calls using video chat.
- **Add a Member:** The application allows users to add more family members or friends they consider family.

2. **ORGANIZER WIZARD** is used to help plan family outings and distribute chores.

The subcategories are:

- **Group Calendar:** Planning family nights and events are made easier by using this feature. It allows users to note down their individual times and note down messages on a common calendar.

- **Chore Distributor:** This feature lets users organize work around the house in a simple fashion. Each person can choose what work they want to do and set time slots every day for those chores. When the user clicks on the time slots, he is presented with details about the chore and once the chore is completed, he can press “Done” to disable it.

## PERSONAS

I am using personas of the same family as I did in the mockup, in order to show how the app can be used.

Emma Johnson is a 17-year old who lives with her parents and brother Nick, in Chicago. She is involved in a bunch of school activities such as being the captain of the girls’ soccer team, member of the Green Club and violinist in the school band. Yes, her schedule is pretty packed. Mr. Johnson owns a restaurant “Le Café”, which is a 10 minute drive from home. He is opening up a new branch in California and keeps flying back and forth to manage the set up. He leaves home every morning and returns late in the evening. Mrs. Johnson is a vet and drives 15 minutes to her clinic every weekday. She returns home late in the evening as well. Nick is 15 years old and goes to the same school as Emma. He is a talented artist and editor of the school magazine.

The four of them always have each other’s backs but are extremely busy with their own lives. It is very difficult to organize family events and chores because it is very rare to find all four of them in the house at the same time. Recently, Emma found an application called ‘Fam Jam’. This app made communication within the family way more efficient and it even brought them closer!

The screen shots below show how Emma uses the app.

## THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMING THE MOCKUP TO A PROTOTYPE

I decided to use Axure to prototype FAM JAM because it gave me the flexibility to keep changing the physical appearance, link screens easily and convey my idea in the best possible way.

**1. Landing page:** The landing page has a title, login icon and a button to start using the app.



2. 'What do you want to do' page: The two main categories are displayed here - 'CONNECT' and 'ORGANIZER WIZARD.' Click on the circular 'FJ' icon to reach this page from any other page.



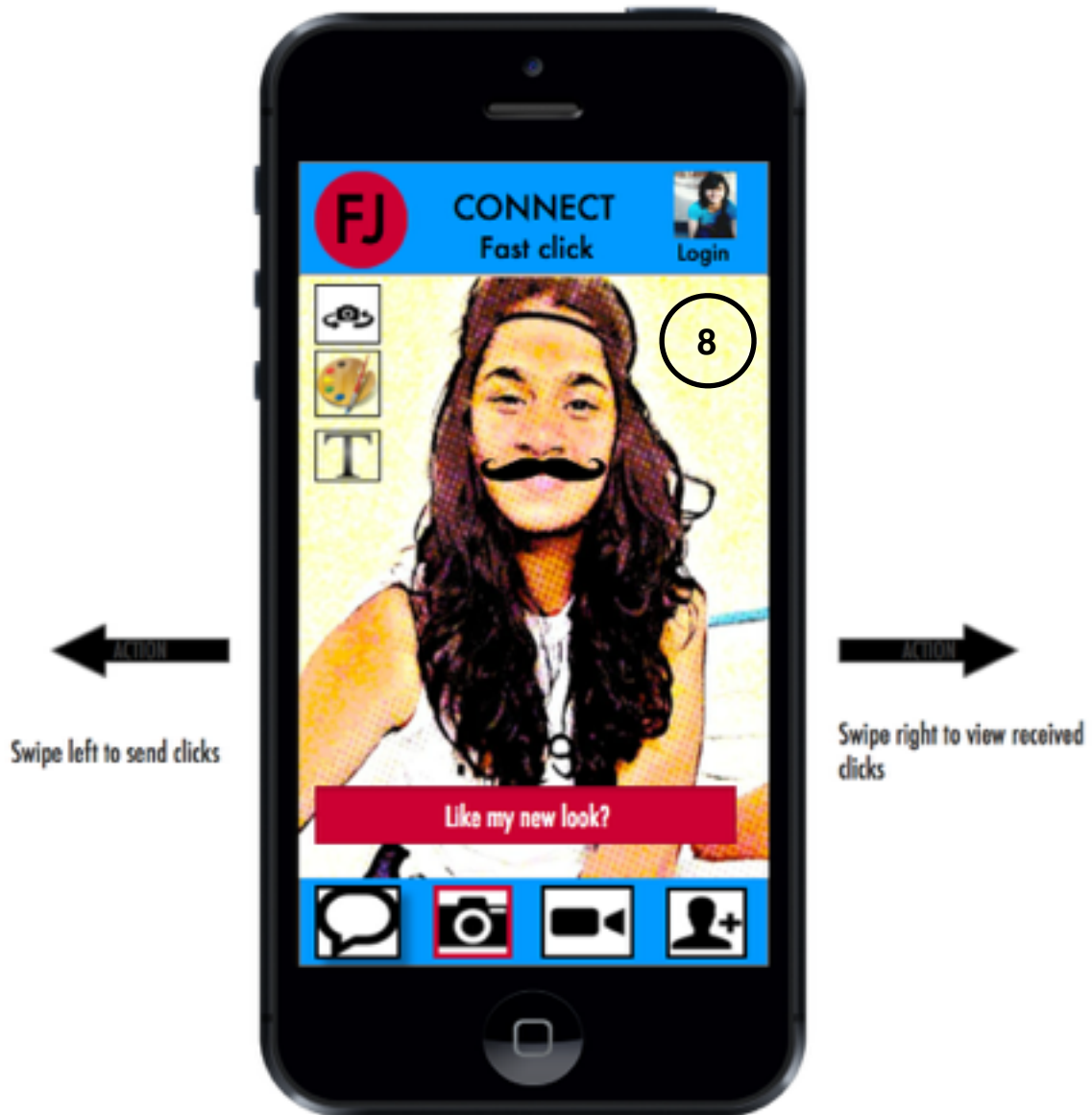
**What changes and why?** As compared to the mockup, I changed the look of the 'FJ' icon. Instead of keeping just the letters 'FJ', I made it look like a circular button. This makes the icon look more like a clickable object as opposed to just letters, which would have been a **bad design decision**.

**3. CONNECT Message Center:** Manage individual and group chats here. Use the icons at the bottom to navigate between screens.



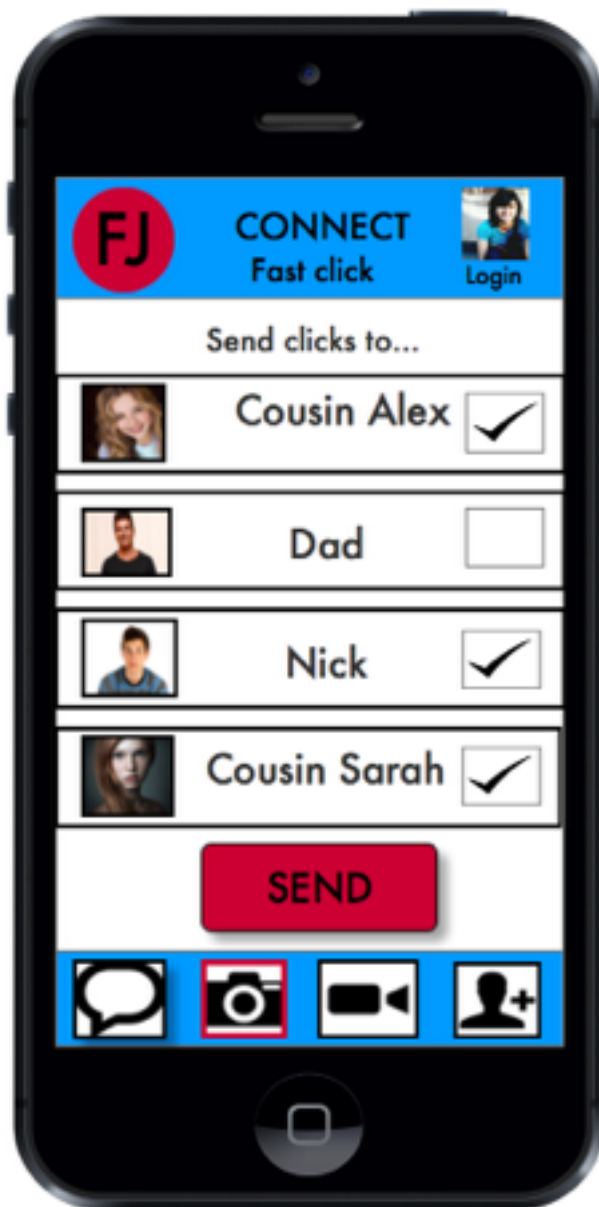
**What changes and why?** I changed the name of the feature from 'Group Messages' to 'Message Center'. This is because I wanted to include not only group chats but also individual chats and 'Message Center' is a more universal term in comparison. This gives the user freedom to talk to just one person if needed.

4. **CONNECT Fast Click:** Click, set a time limit for, edit and send pictures on the go!



**What changes and why?** I changed the alignment of icons while building this page. The ‘rotate camera’, ‘color palette’ and ‘text’ icons were originally arranged above the navigation icons, but this made the interface look cluttered. I wanted to make the system more **simple and intuitive**, so I aligned them vertically to prevent any confusion.

5. On swiping left, the **SEND CLICKS** page opens.

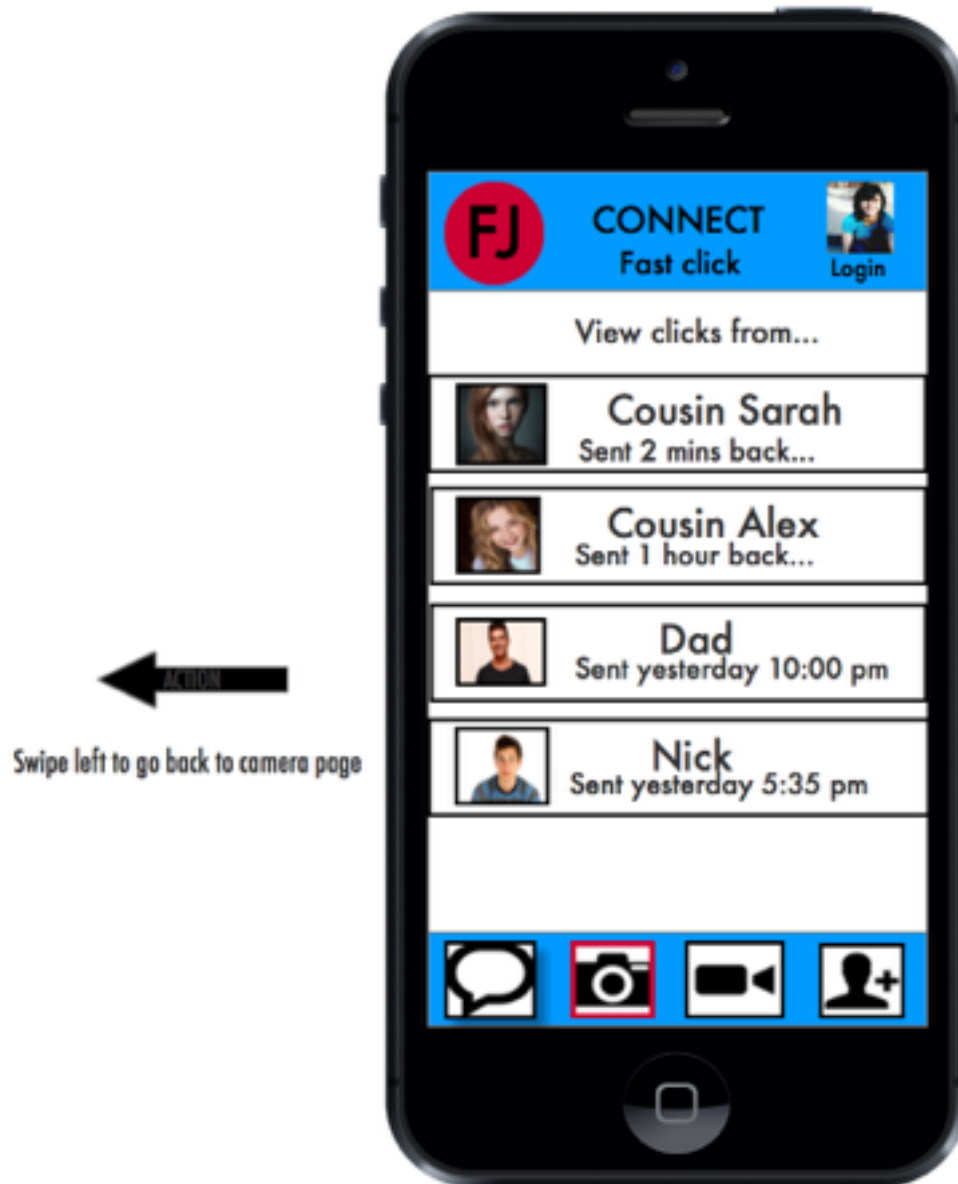


**ACTION** →  
Swipe right to go back to camera page

**What changes and why?** I changed the shape of image icons on this screen from circular to square in order to maintain **consistency** with the icons on all the other screens.

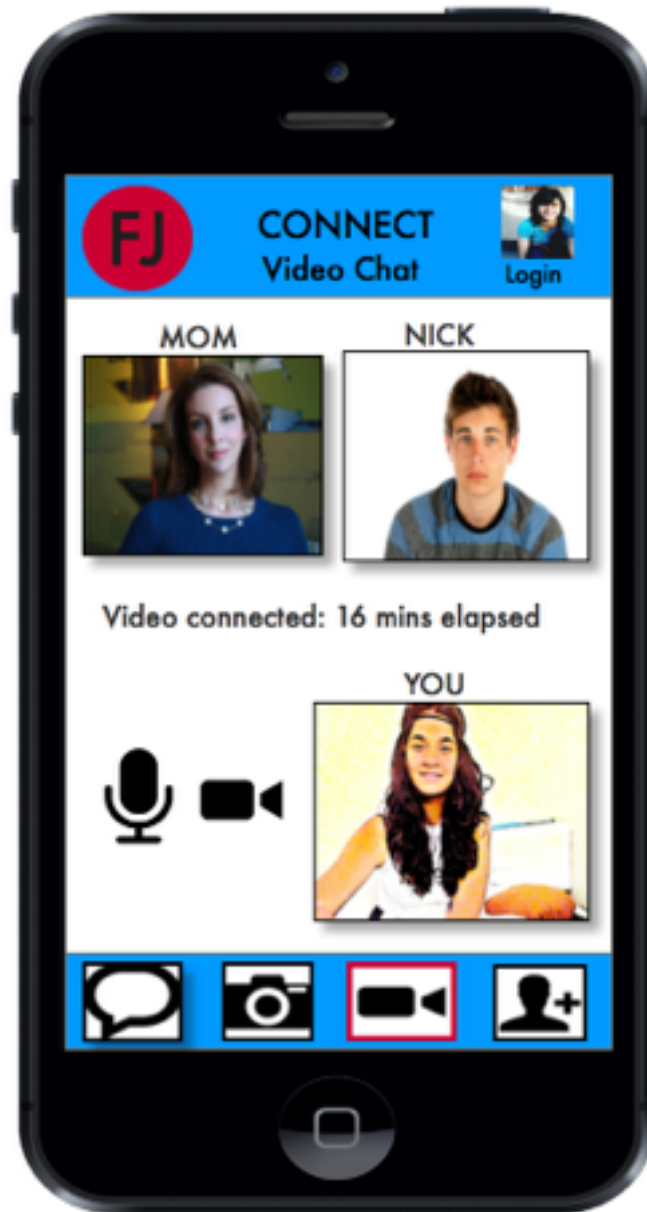


6. On swiping right from the 'Fast Click' screen, the 'VIEW CLICKS' page opens up.

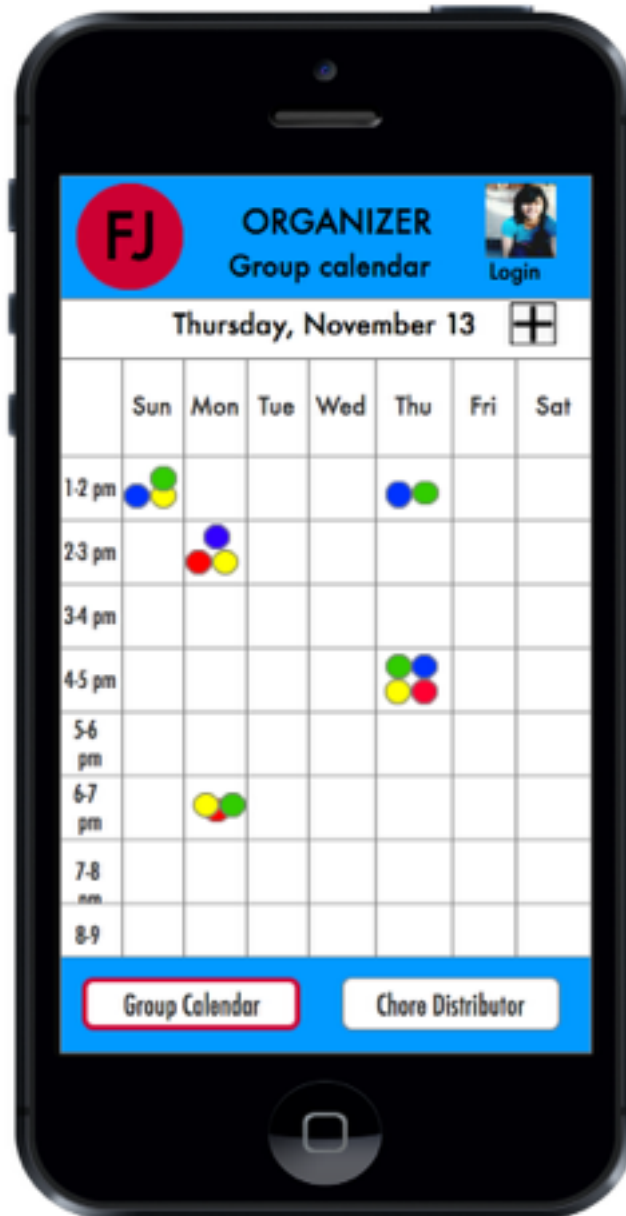


**What changes and why?** On this screen as well, I changed the shape of image icons from circular to square in order to maintain **consistency** with the icons on all the other screens.

7. **CONNECT Video chat:** Chat using individual and conference video calls.



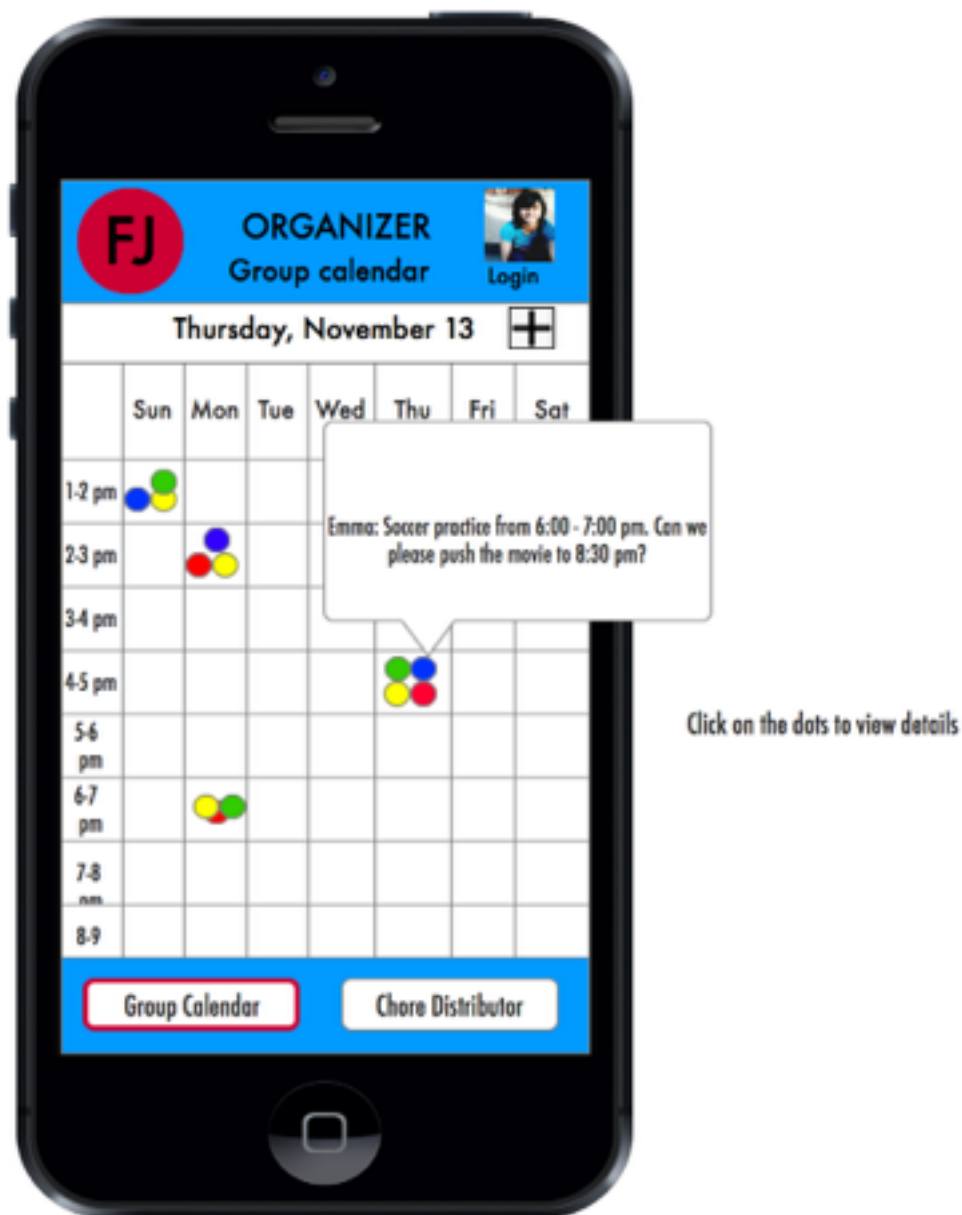
**8. ORGANIZER WIZARD Group Calendar:** Indicate your schedule, preferences and write a message on this common family calendar. This will simplify planning activities together.



Click on the dots to view details

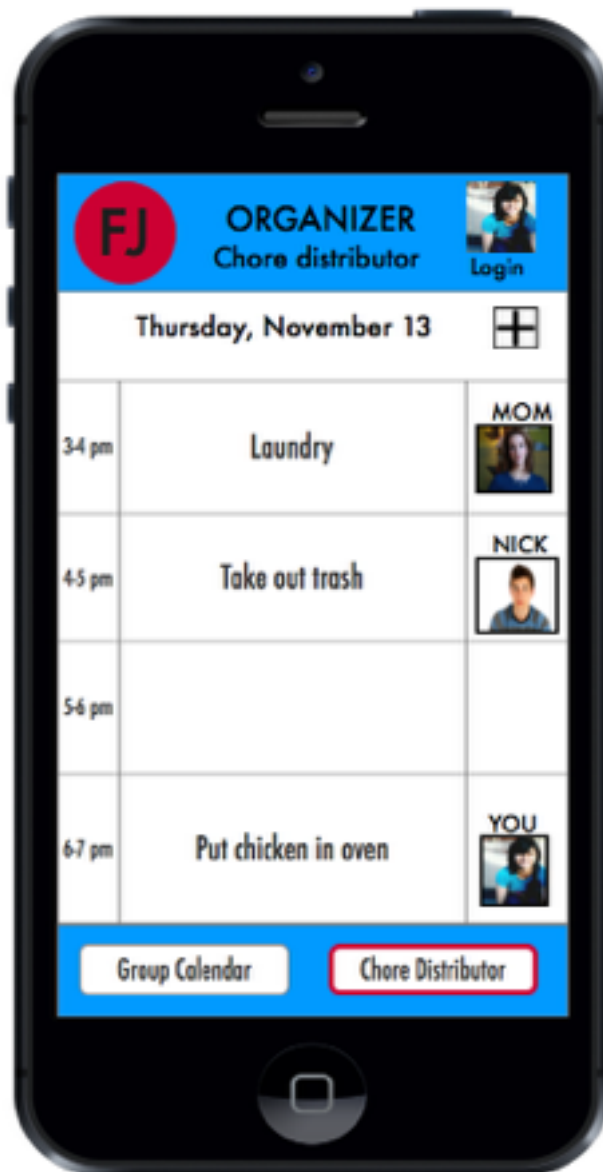
**What changes and why?** In the mockup, there was no indication of forming a new appointment on the calendar. To make this more evident, I added a 'Plus' icon to the screen. This lets users make new appointments.

9. Clicking on one of the dots will give further details about the appointment. In this case, blue represents Emma's appointments.



**What changes and why?** A small change I made was to display the date on top of the screen as per the appointment selected. This **familiarity** of viewing the date at the top of a calendar makes it easier to interact with the system. In this case, the blue dot selected was on Thursday, November the 13th.

**10. ORGANIZER WIZARD Chore Distributor:** Make assignment of tasks easier using this feature.



**What changes and why?** I changed the shape of the icons to square in order to maintain consistency with the rest of the screens.

11. Click on an assigned chore to view details.



**What changes and why?** After clicking on the task, you can follow instructional details and click on 'Done' when you finish the task. This will disable it from the chore distributor. Instead of opening a new page after clicking on the task, I chose to display a pop-up as it is more appropriate and increases **efficiency**. It allows the user to dismiss the messages quickly.

The link to the prototype is <http://zudc7m.axshare.com>

## **DISCUSSION ABOUT DESIGN DECISIONS**

My goal was to build a system that is simple and intuitive. The reason for this is, families consist of users spread over a wide range of ages - right from teenagers who can easily use mobile devices to grandparents who may not be able to use them as easily.

Not everyone is adept at using applications. Incorporating a high level of learnability was a crucial step while building this prototype.

To make it simple, I tried to incorporate familiar icons, short labels that convey the function of features clearly and conventional user interactions such as swiping left and right, clicking on icons, navigating using icons at the bottom of the screen etc.

In the case of 'Chore Distributor', I included the feature of pop-ups after clicking on a task. The predictable nature of a pop-up immediate alerts the user that he needs to read the instructions and can click on 'DONE' to dismiss the message.

I experimented with a number of colors for the interface and eventually settled on blue and red as the primary colors because they are contrasting and bright. They add to the app's 'fun factor.'

I intentionally did not prototype the 'Add a new member' feature because it is a feature that is used in apps all over and many people are familiar with its functionality. On the contrary, I felt it was necessary to include the feature in the app because it gives users the flexibility to add new family members or friends they consider as close as family.

Overall, I wanted to create an application that is enjoyable and interactive to family members of all age groups.

## **CONSTRAINTS**

Axure gave me a lot of flexibility while designing the prototype and fit my requirements pretty well.

The few areas that proved to be constraints:

- The prototyping tool has a slight learning curve and given a limited time, I was not able to explore and learn it in as much depth as I would like to have.

- I would have liked the option to incorporate more interactions other than generic clicking, pop ups etc. I would like to experiment more with dragging and swiping interactions.
- Clicking through pages slows down the prototyping output to an extent. I would like to create a prototype that is almost as quick in changing screens as an actual application would be.

## **REAL LIFE IMPLEMENTATION**

In my opinion, implementing FAM JAM in the real world is definitely possible. It uses a conventional app structure and is deliberately made easy to use.

One area that might prove to be challenging is integrating video, 'Fast Click', multiple-user calendars all in one app because such an app might consume too much battery.

Another would be to build a system similar to Google Docs that allows multiple users to edit the 'Group Calendar' and 'Chore Distributor' all at once.

Implementing this system in the real world will definitely overcome most of the challenges faced while prototyping because advanced methods can be used to reduce the response time while clicking through the application and better interactions such as swipe, drag etc can be incorporated easily.

## **FUTURE SCOPE**

If I had more time and skills, I would love to show how members of a family can create their individual accounts and then invite each other to form a 'family' on the app.

I would also like to show how multiple users can edit the 'Group Calendar' together, similar to a Google Doc.

**CONCLUSION:** After creating just the mockup, I did not realize certain subtleties such as inconsistency in design and unclear labeling. Before building the final prototype, I interacted with it myself as well as asked my room mates to interact with it. This made me aware of small flaws in the system. I can see how building a prototype improves interaction with a system and I got to learn a lot while doing so.

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