Patterns for Sign Up & Ramp Up

Inspiration and Guidelines from the Web 2.0 Landscape

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2. Make the sign-up process feel effortless
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Site		**Blogger**	**Jott-It**	**Radar**	**Flickr**	**YouTube**	**Twitt**
Principle	Solution	Blog Platform	Blog Platform	Community-Based	Community-Based	Community-Based	Comm
Sign Up and Log In							
Give the user good reasons to join.							
	Value Proposition Statement	x		x			
	How it works/How to use it			x - Easy as 1-2-3 infogra	x - Shown in a grid with links to tour.		x
	Why Join? List	x			x - Shown on registration page.		
	Preview of steps	x					
	Contextual prompts to join	x - To leave comments on blogger blogs.				x	x
	Featured content on homepage	x - VERY minimal. Only 2 featured blogs.			x - One large photo.	x	x
	Tailored Information						
	Site Tour	x			x		
	Create w/o joining		x				
	Notes	Although there are two, almost ad-word sized featured blogs, almost all of the page real-estate is dedicated to communicating what blogs are and how easy it is to create one.	The very first prompt is "Create a Page." There's no explanation, but what's interesting is that you can take action immediately. Mental model is more like Microsoft Word: You create the document THEN save it when you're ready.	Another walled garden.	Large "Create Your Account" button on white field encourages sign up. Although Flickr could surface tons of content, they stick to highlighting one thing... which is all a visitor may take the time to note anyway.	The homepage is all about content.	
Make the sign-up process feel effortless.							
	Simple initial registration			x - VERY simple: 6 fields on first page.			
	Comprehensive initial registration		x - Takes you straight to Dashboard, no registration needed.				x - Nice
	Contextual field-level explanations			x			
	Setup wizard				x - First step is pick a screen name. For the later Flickr s		
	Progress meter	x					
	Checklist				x - Part of "set up your basics"		
	Skippable steps						
	Optional steps in overlays						
	Visible, three-step process	x - Clear, large numbers, progress meter, and arrow-shaped "Continue" buttons support this.					
	Notes				All you have to do is sign in using your Yahoo ID. Nothing else is necessary.		
	Field-Level Explanations and Errors			x - With big bright icons and explanations.			
	Page-level validation (upon terminal act	x		x - Refreshes field-level	x	x	
	Advanced Setup Option (passive)	x - Nothing is skippable but you can choose to go to Advanced Setup if de			x - "Set up your Flickr basics" -- a 5-step processs.		
	Setup page						
	Sign in using an existing ID				x - "Sign In or Join Now"	x - Login and Sign Up are on sa	
	Import external profile information						
	Notes	Keystroke validation is used to show password strength, but errors don't appear until terminal action.				This is how NOT to do error handling: when page is validated, secretive fields like security verification and	

Introduction

This document contains a library of patterns used by sites in the Web 2.0 landscape to support the new user sign-up and ramp-up experience. By examining the implementation of patterns across sites, we were able to extract usage guidelines (when to use it) and design guidelines (how to use it) for each approach.

Sites Examined

For this assessment, conducted in Autumn 2007, we chose sites that thrive on user engagement and have at least some social component. Both well-established sites (Flickr, YouTube) and cutting-edge sites that introduced novel paradigms (TripIt, ShareThis) were included in the evaluation.

Data Collection

Documenting every step through screenshots, we evaluated first-hand the sign-up and ramp-up experiences of each of these sites. Printing and posting the screenshot flows for each site up on boards, which helped us to visualize the relative length and depth of each flow, we examined how each site addressed the following:

- Homepage content
- Initial calls to action
- Registration flows
- Error handling
- Finding and inviting friends
- New user calls to action

Analysis

Next, we conducted a comprehensive audit of solutions used by the sites, noting which sites used each pattern and what could be learned about that pattern from each site.

By looking across sites at the implementation of various solutions, we extracted usage and design guidelines for each pattern. This document contains these guidelines along with images showing exemplary sites from the audit that used each pattern. These patterns are organized according to the overarching design principles they support.

Social Networks:

MySpace

Facebook

Linked In

Xanga

Orkut

Ning

Blog Platforms:

Blogger

Tumblr

Jott-It

Community-Based Sites:

Flickr

YouTube

Twitter

Radar

Yahoo Answers

43 Things

Satisfaction

Other:

Digg

Pageflakes

ShareThis

TripIt

EXCUSE
PLEASE HAVE LOOK
VERYGOOD PRICE HERE
WELCOME
THANKS FOR VISIT

Principle One:

Give the user good reasons to join.

To persuade a new user to sign up for a service, a site should strive to increase perceived value while reducing the investment required to join. The strategies in this section focus on motivating users to join by communicating benefit to the user both explicitly and implicitly.

"Psychological and economic theories suggest that humans seek to minimize costs and maximize gains. Increasing the perceived benefit/cost ratio increases a person's motivation to engage in the behavior." -B.J. Fogg

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.1 Value Proposition Statement

A few, easily-scannable lines describing the purpose of the site, often using highlighted keywords.

Use to...

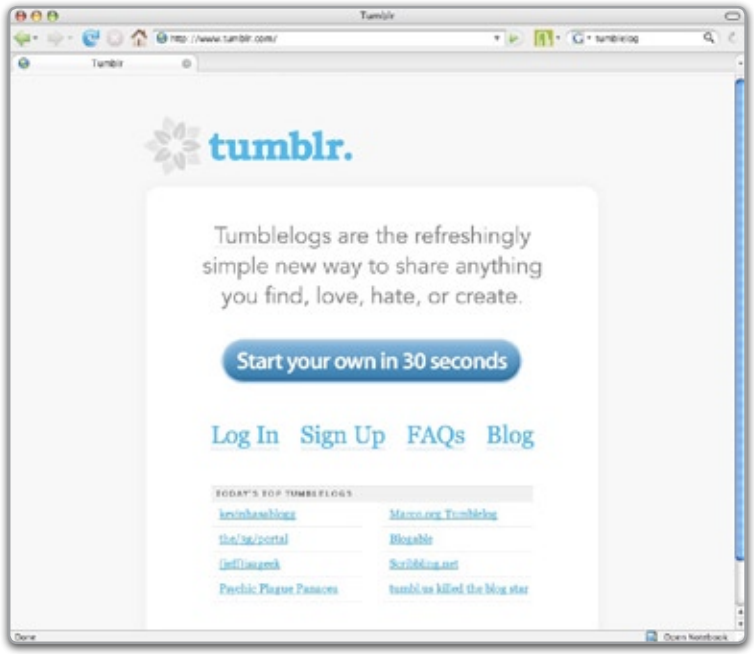
- Quickly communicate the value of the service to the end user.

Caveats

- A value proposition may be unnecessary if the purpose of the site is simple and obvious (e.g., Google.com).

Design Guidelines...

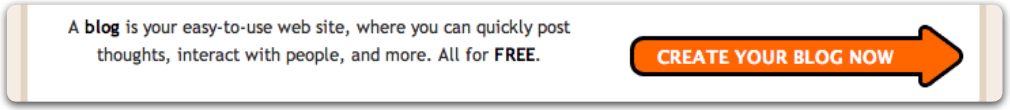
- Focus on the value to the user. It's not about what they can do, but WHY they might want to do it.
- Make it scannable by using bold keywords, line breaks, and/or parallel constructions.
- Visually connect it to the logo and sign up action if possible.
- If used in conjunction with a tour, link to relevant sections of the tour.



Instead of using a busy, content-centric homepage, Tumblr reinforces their offering of simplicity by introducing the Tumblelog concept through a simple statement of value. This statement is written in personal language ("anything you find, love, hate, or create") rather than industry jargon (e.g., "Facebook is a social utility") and is closely coupled with the "Start your own" action.

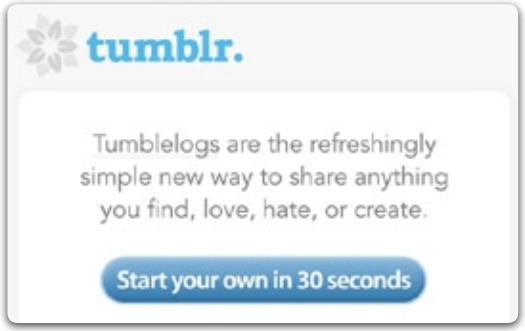
Examples

Facebook

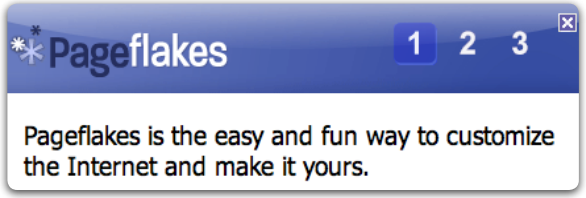


Blogger

Orkut

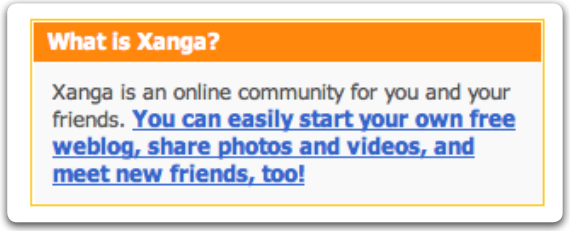


Tumblr



Pageflakes

Radar



Xanga

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.2 How it works/How to use it

A prominent visual presentation, often in a “1-2-3” format, of the site’s primary use case.

Use to...

- Communicate how easy it is to use.
- Explain interactions between the user and the service.
- To introduce new paradigms.

Caveats

- Featuring only one use case or a limited set of features may communicate that the site can only be used for one thing or in one way.

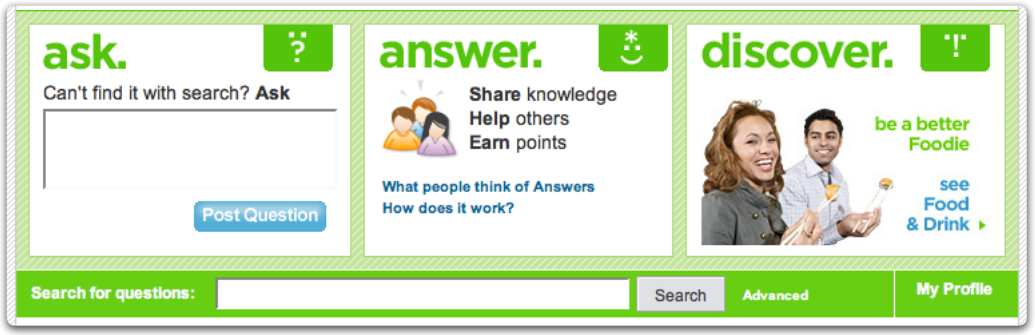
Design Guidelines...

- Limit the number of steps to three.
- Tell a story.
- Write in the second person (“Twitter asks, ‘What are you doing?’”) or use the imperative tense (“Take a picture…”).
- Connect the steps in a logical flow.
- Use a meaningful graphic to illustrate each step.

To introduce the new paradigm of instant picture-message sharing, Radar provides a visual explanation of its service using a 3-step process with clean, consistent information graphics. Visual elements tie the panels together.

Examples

Twitter



Yahoo Answers

TripIt

Radar

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.3 Why Join? List

An easily-scannable list of reasons to join. These “reasons” may be actions (“Upload Photos”), promises (“Save time planning trips”), or features (“Flickr is part of Yahoo!”).

Use to...

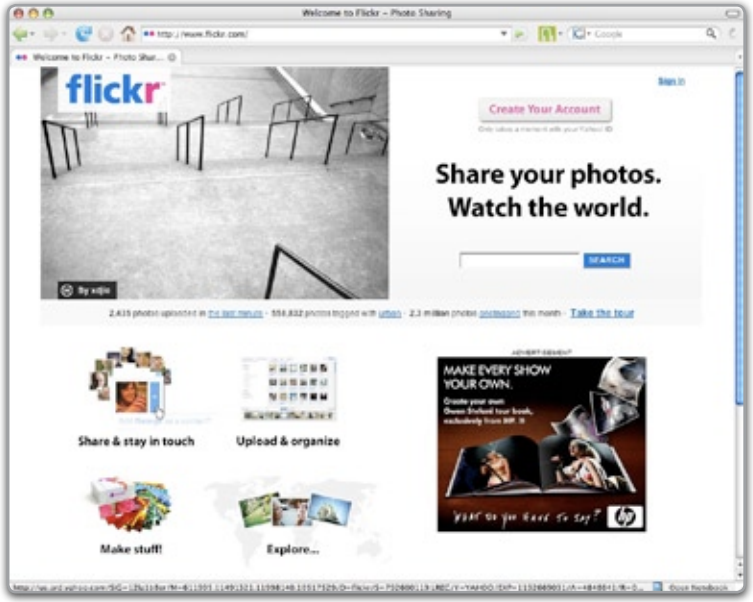
- Highlight primary or interesting features.
- Highlight unrelated features that can’t be summed up in a value proposition or step-by-step flow.
- Convince the user to join by presenting compelling reasons or highlighting features.

Caveats

- While scannable, a bulleted list may seem dull and Power-Point like, and users may ignore it.

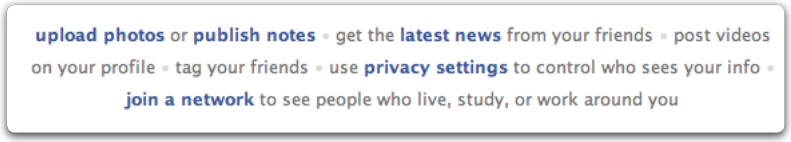
Design Guidelines...

- Don’t be feature-oriented, be value-oriented. Instead of bombarding users with a long list of features, focus on the users’ goals.
- Using icons and information graphics can increase scannability.



Because Flickr allows you to do many things with your photos, presenting these discrete offerings as a scenario would feel forced. Instead, Flickr uses a grid of images highlighting unique and interesting things you can do with Flickr.

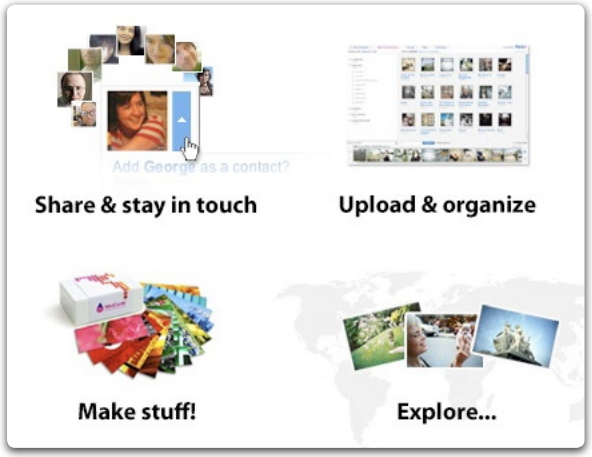
Examples



Facebook

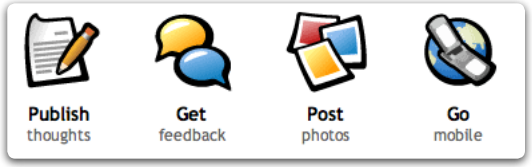
Flickr (On Registration Page)

Digg

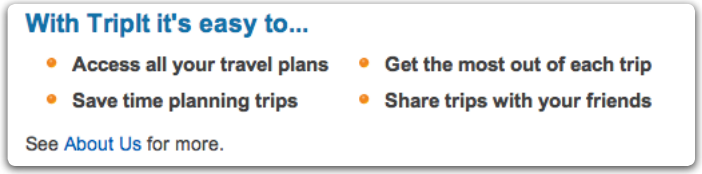


Flickr

MySpace



Blogger



TripIt

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.4 Preview of steps

An indicator of how long sign-up takes or how many steps are involved. It may indicate time or number of steps.

Use to...

- Reduce mental roadblocks by communicating how easy it is to join.

Design Guidelines...

- Visually tie the preview to the actual process by using consistent visual elements as progress meters or step indicators.
- Use simple, active language.
- The preview should be closely-coupled with the action to get started.

Blogger summarizes the three steps to creating a blog using large round icons and brief (three words each) descriptions. Both of these elements are reiterated in the screens that follow.

Examples

Blogger

Tumblr

Pageflakes

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.5 Contextual prompts to join

A shortcut to signing up (or logging in) offered at the moment where a user has encountered a specific reason to do so.

Use to...

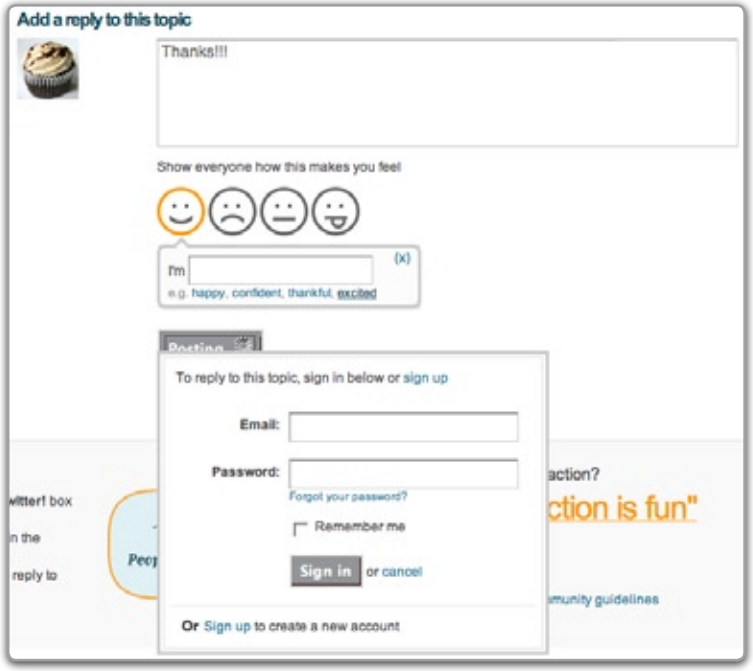
- Allow users to discover reasons to join for themselves.
- Reach users when they are internally motivated to achieve a specific end. Because the motivation to act comes from within, the user will be more likely to sign up.
- Create a compelling decision point: If the user wants to carry on with the activity they began (e.g., leaving a comment), they must sign up.

Caveats

- Allowing users to invest too much in a specific course (e.g., writing a long comment) without realizing that they must join to continue could leave the user feeling manipulated and frustrated.

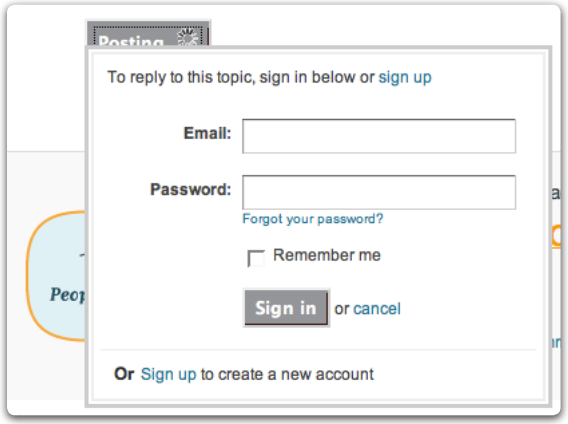
Design Guidelines...

- Contextual prompts should be written and presented in a helpful and compelling way.
- Communicate specifically what the user will get in this context by joining (e.g., “to see the full results”).
- Don’t make a contextual prompt feel like an error (e.g., The red “You Must Be Logged-In to do That!” message may make users feel they did something wrong).
- Don’t let the user encounter a wall without providing a relevant way around it: Instead of a “You must be logged in...” pop-up with an OK button, provide current users with a sign-in form and new users with a way to sign up contextually.

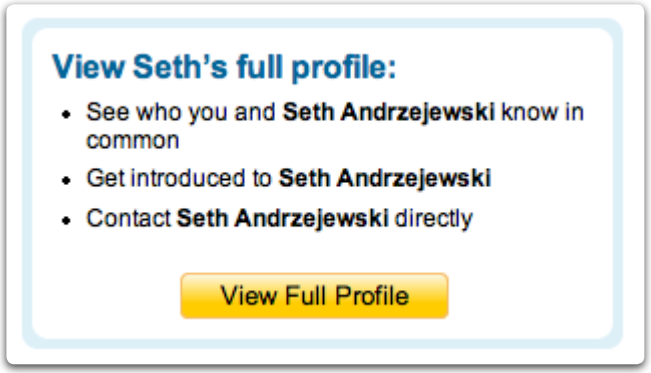


Satisfaction requires users to sign in or sign up to leave a comment. While imperfect in that it might frustrate the user, the sign in or sign up overlay is handled elegantly. It maintains context (so your work is not lost) while being actionable.

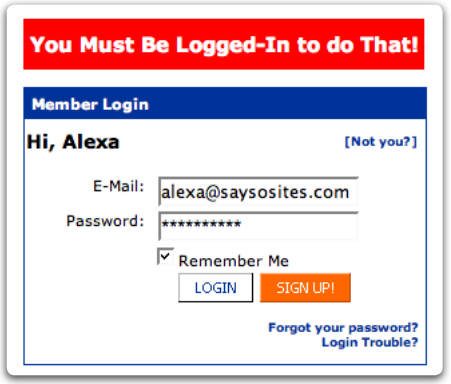
Examples



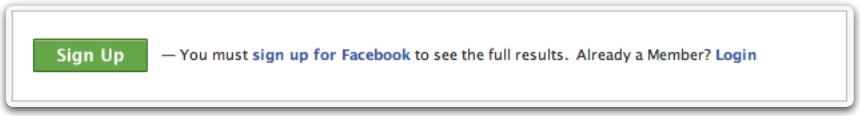
Satisfaction



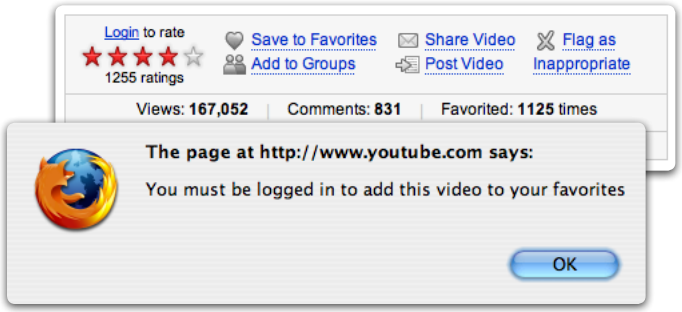
Linked In



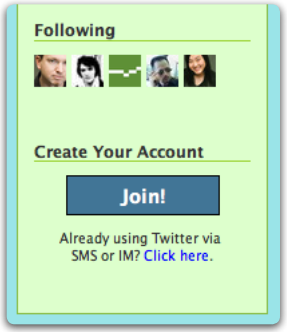
MySpace



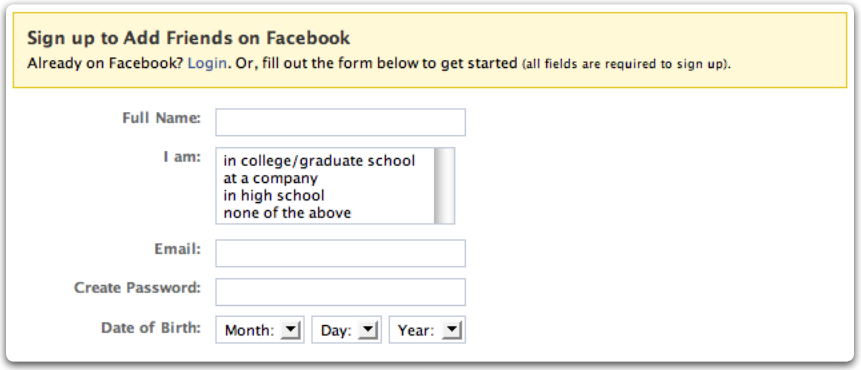
Facebook (on friend search page)



YouTube (if you click "Save to Favorites")



Twitter



Facebook (if you click "Add a Friend")

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.6 Featured content on homepage

Content that is surfaced and highlighted based on some criteria (recency, popularity, interestingness, etc.).

Use to...

- Communicate that real people are using this service all the time.
- Increase credibility by communicating value without stating it explicitly.
- Show how others are using the site.
- Keep the homepage fresh and interesting.
- Draw attention to quality content.

Caveats

- The more elements shown on a homepage, the less visible each particular element becomes. If too much content is surfaced, it may become noise to the user and not meaningful.
- Featured content may not be representative.
- If featured content does not appeal to a particular user, that user may feel that the site is not for them. Showing tailored information may be more compelling.

Design Guidelines...

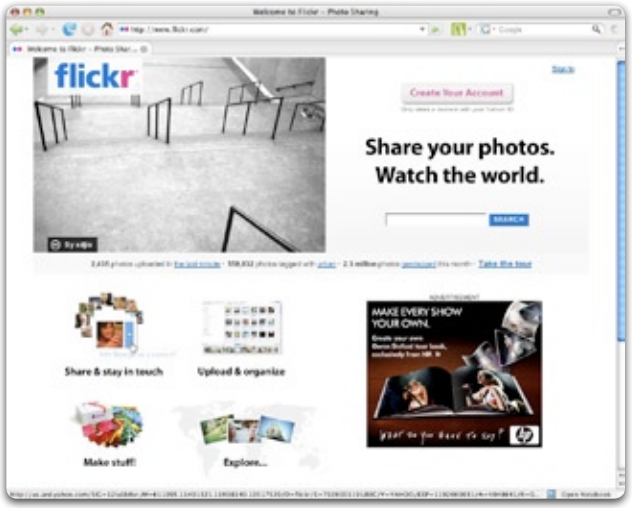
- Think quality over quantity.
- Provide a focal point. Sometimes showing one excellent example can be more effective than overwhelming the user with a grid of 4-5 thumbnail examples.
- Explain as specifically as possible why certain content is being featured (e.g., “Most Popular This Week” vs. “Cool Videos”).
- Consider which criteria are most likely to surface content of interest. The “latest” content may not be the most interesting.

Yahoo Answers creates a focal point by highlighting one excellent answer (which cycles through in a slideshow format, in which you can go back or forward if desired), while also providing a clean-looking and visually-prioritized list of recent and popular questions.

Examples

Xanga

MySpace

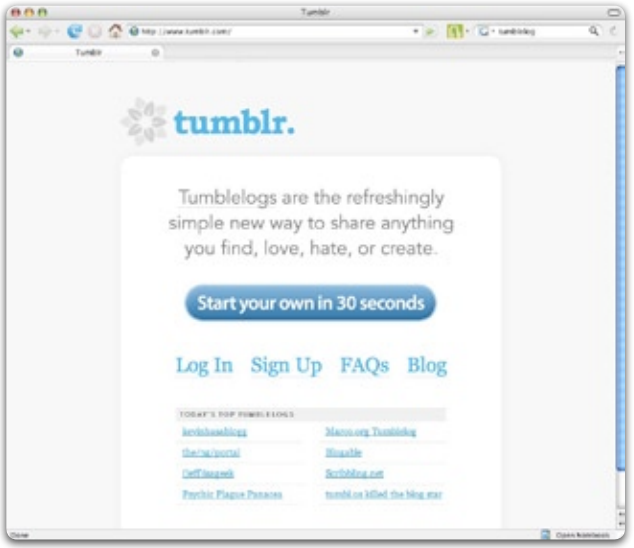


Flickr

Examples

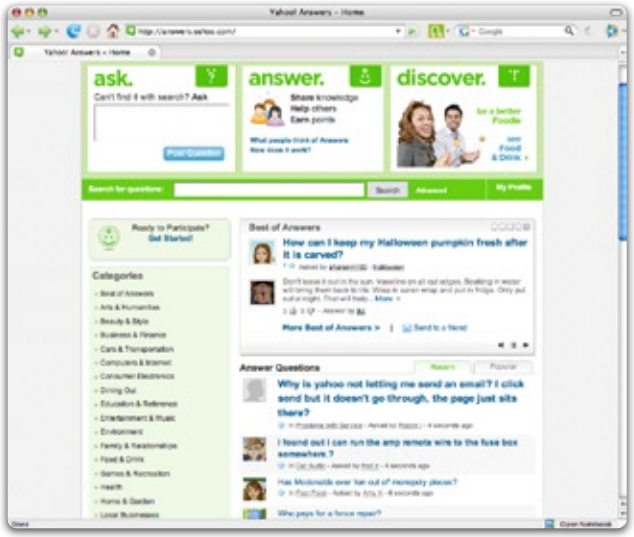
Yahoo Answers

43 Things

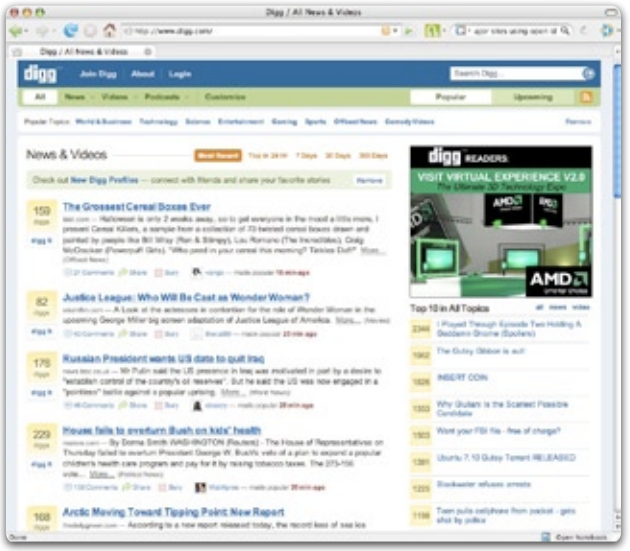


Tumblr

Twitter



Yahoo Answers



Digg

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.7 Tailored Information

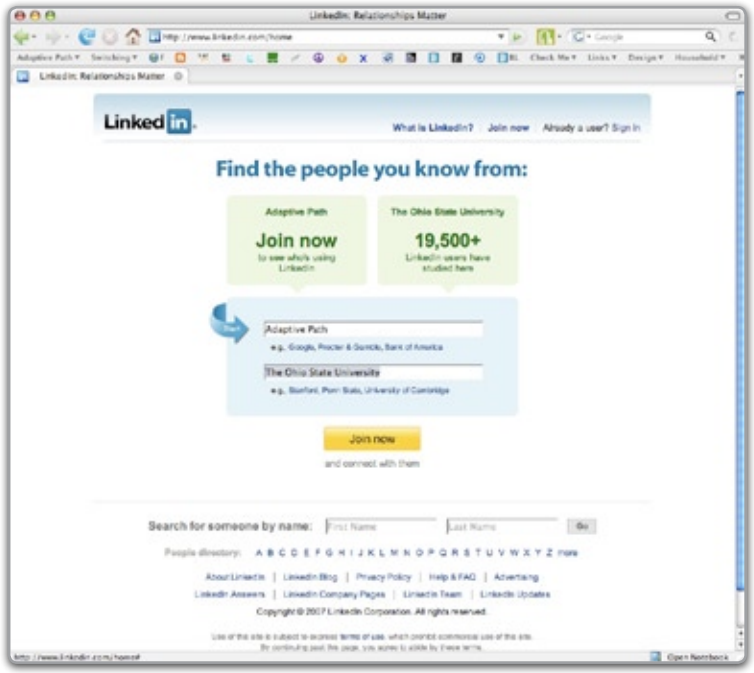
Showing the user tailored information in response to a minimal level of investment.

Use to...

- Give users a personally-relevant incentive to join.
- Answer the “What’s in it for me?” and/or “Are any of my friends using this?” question.
- Pique curiosity.

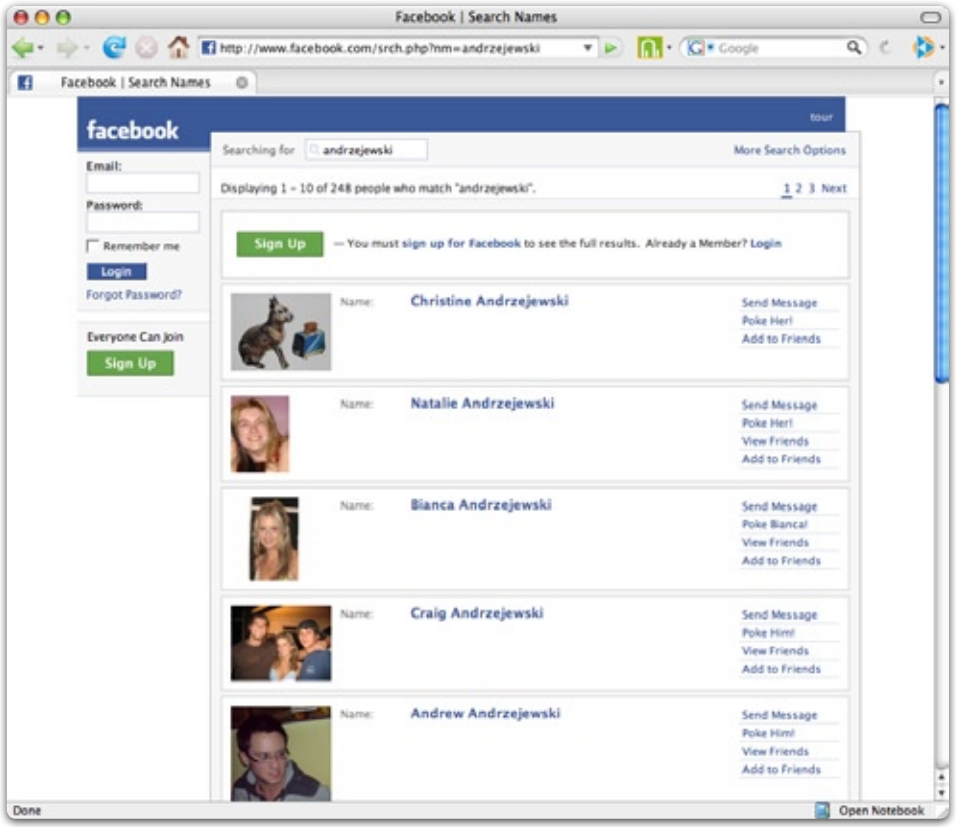
Design Guidelines...

- Make it quick and easy for the user to get to personally-relevant information from the homepage.
- Minimize investment required to get personally-relevant information by limiting any forms to one or two fields. (Consider allowing users to import contact lists to see how many of their friends are on, then integrating the results into the sign-up process.)

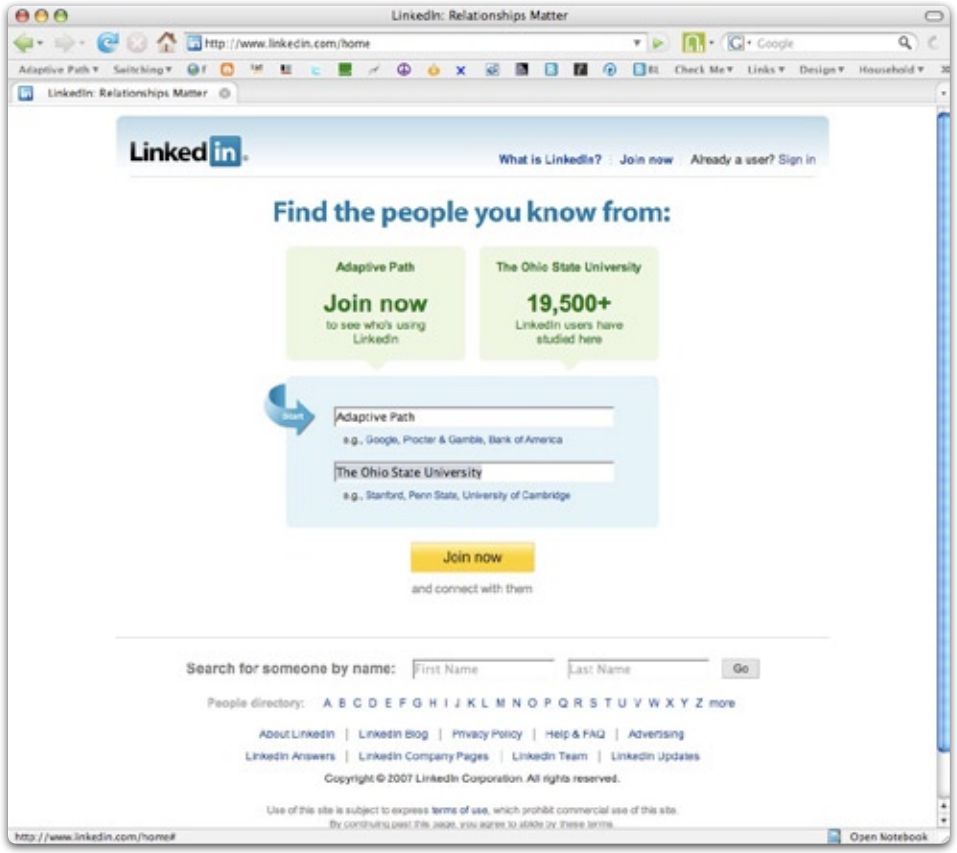


The primary feature on Linked In’s homepage is a simple form that immediately brings back tailored results—how many of your coworkers and classmates are on Linked In. It also provides a name field so users can quickly find out if a particular friend is on Linked In.

Examples



Facebook (non-member friend search)



Linked In

Give the user good reasons to join.

1.8 Site Tour

A presentation, generally linear (although shortcuts to particular pages may be provided on the homepage), that uses text and graphics to explain what you can do on a site.

Use to...

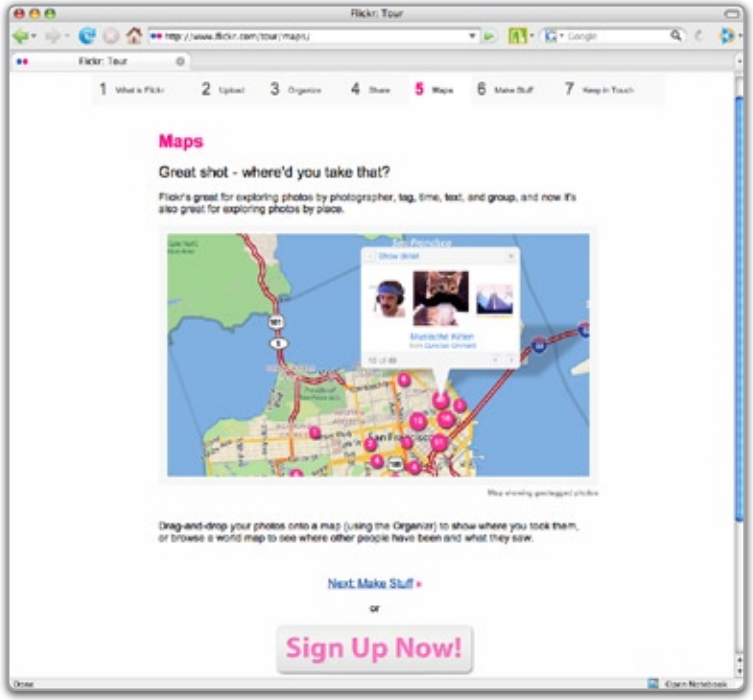
- Show what you can do with a service.
- Provide an inside look at what goes on within a walled garden (e.g., Since everything on Facebook is private, a preview is necessary to show users how Facebook can be used.)

Caveats

- It may not be necessary to use a tour when what you can do on the site is completely transparent.
- If it's less attractive to show a service (vs. allow the user to actually try it), avoid using a tour and help the user get started immediately.

Design Guidelines...

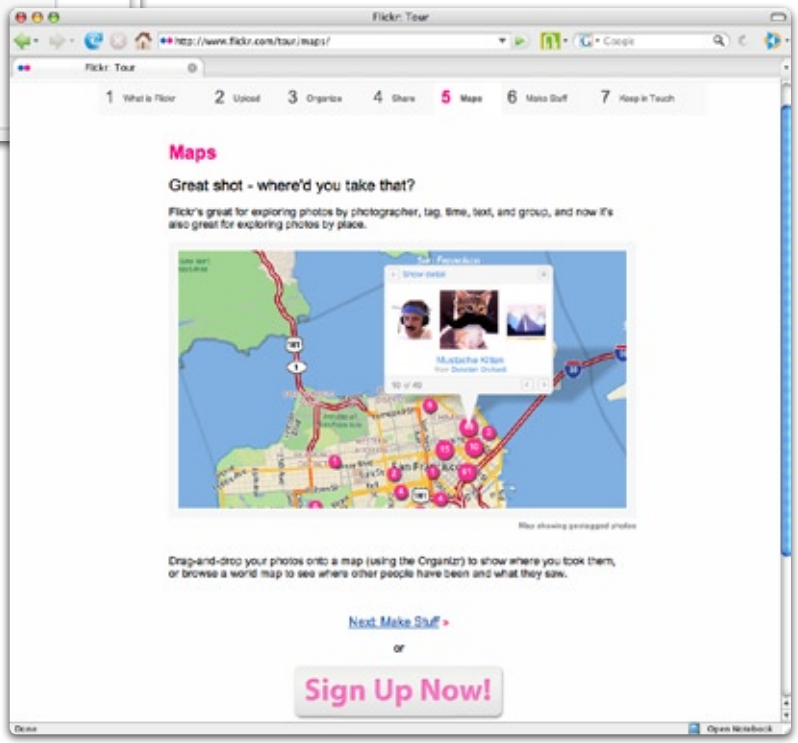
- Use clear titles.
- Use a progress indicator or navigation that clearly shows which step you're on and makes it easy to jump to another one.
- Provide next/back buttons so the user can navigate from slide to slide without moving their mouse.
- Showing humorous content and examples can add interest (see Flickr).
- Show, don't tell. When using text, keep it bite-sized and chunked.
- Provide a call to action on every page, allowing the user to sign up whenever they are ready.



Flickr's site tour uses large images and minimal text to create an easy-to-consume and easy-to-navigate tour. Their brand's personality shines through friendly language and humorous imagery (a moustached kitten). The "Sign Up Now" button appears on every page and can't be missed.

Examples

Facebook



Flickr

Blogger

iPod
Do you need more time?

Principle Two:

Make the sign-up process feel effortless.

The following strategies focus on increasing the cost/benefit ratio by making it painless to join. If signing up feels quick and easy, users will be more inclined to try it out, even if they are unsure how it will benefit them.

"Psychological and economic theories suggest that humans seek to minimize costs and maximize gains. Increasing the perceived benefit/cost ratio increases a person's motivation to engage in the behavior." -B.J. Fogg

Make the sign-up process feel effortless.

2.1 Simple initial registration

A simple initial screen containing only the bare minimum required to get started. Often followed by a set-up wizard.

Use to...

- Avoid scaring the user by overwhelming them with a long initial form, even if a longer form would allow them to do everything on one page.
- Create forward inertia; once they've taken the first step, they'll be more committed to moving forward.

Caveats

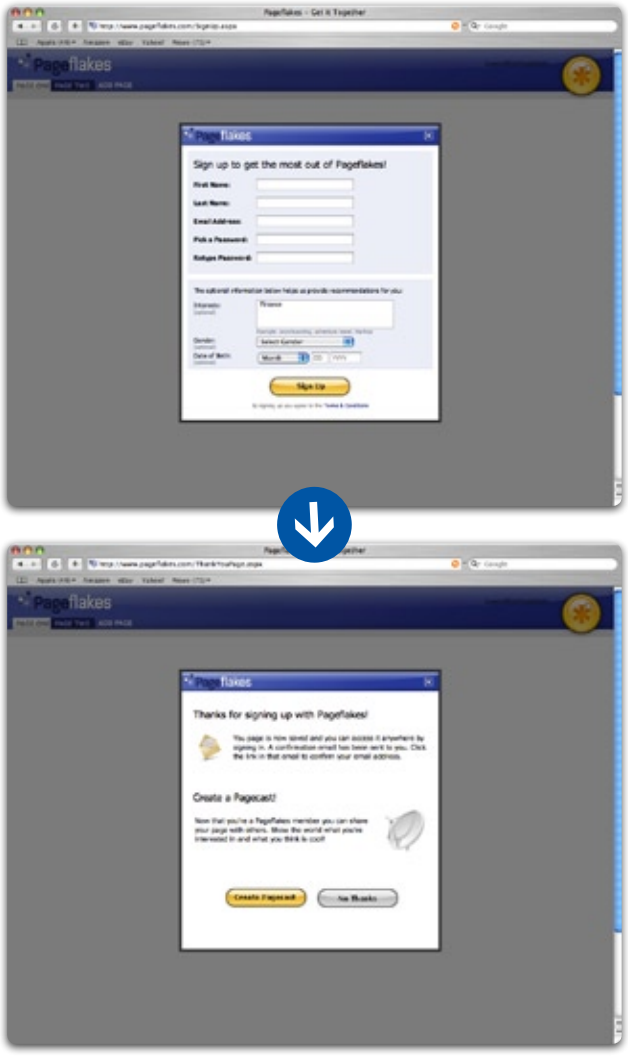
- If a user is already firmly committed to signing up and just wants to get going, they might prefer to cut to the chase and start building up their profile.

Design Guidelines...

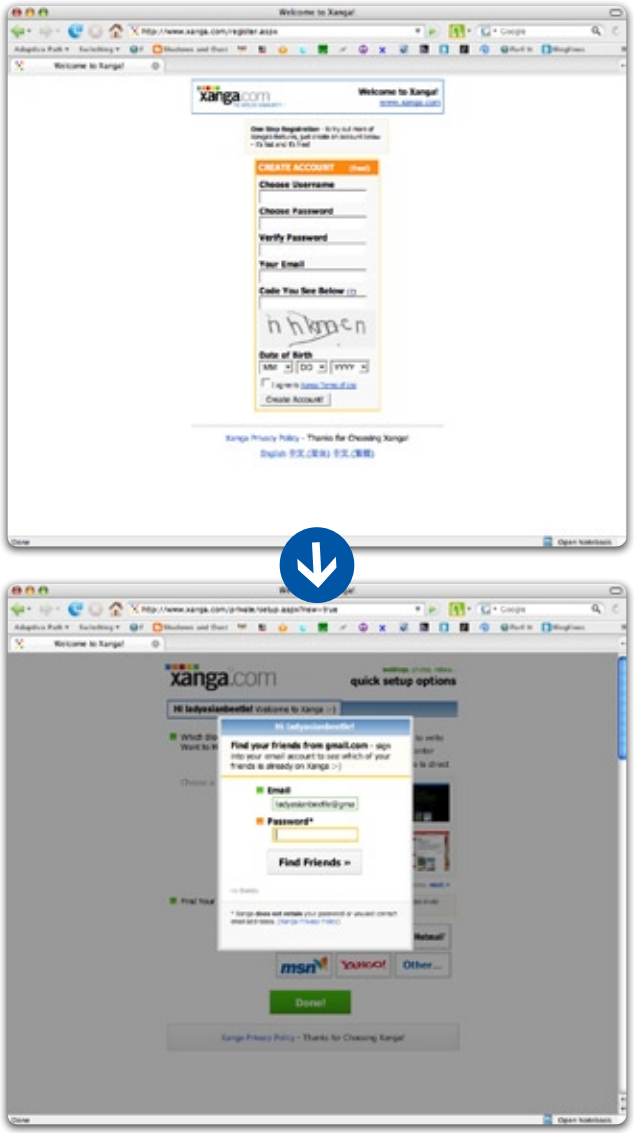
- Don't ask any questions that make users think (e.g., selecting a screen name may be a barrier). This first step should be effortless.
- Reduce visual noise by using form fields that are aligned and all the same length and type if possible.
- Try to limit the first screen to 3-6 fields (e.g., Email, Username and Password).
- Consider whether simpler alternatives can be used for fields: Instead of "DOB: Month/ Date/Year," could "Age" suffice?

Xanga's sign-up screen asks only for username, password, email, CAPTCHA and date of birth using neatly-aligned fields in a compact module. This initial form is so compact, it could almost be presented in a contextual overlay.

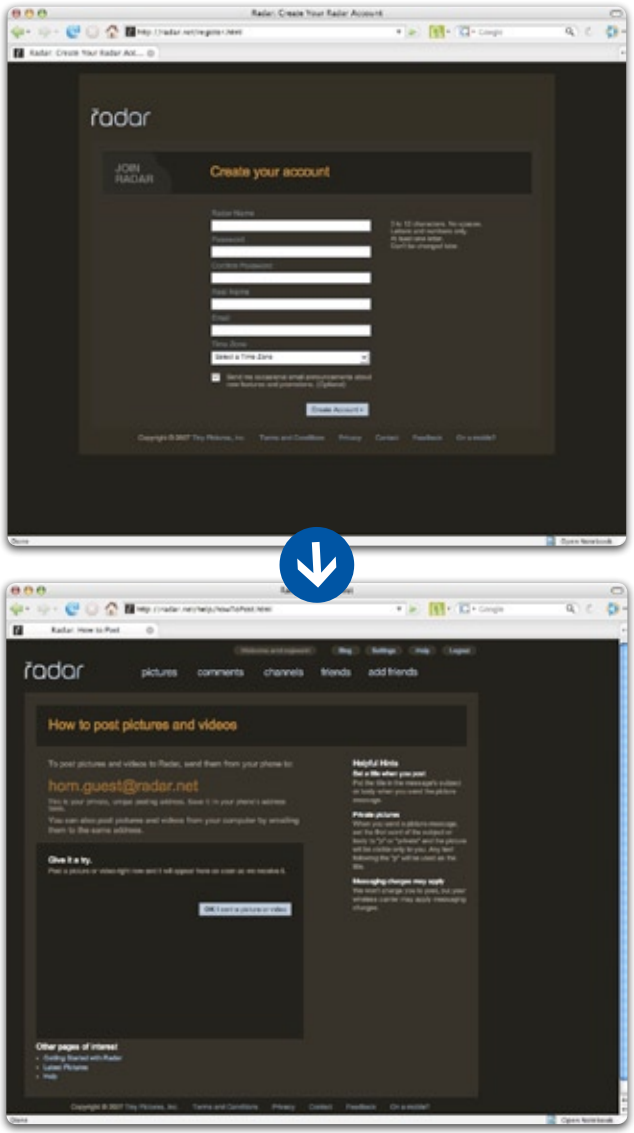
Examples



Pageflakes

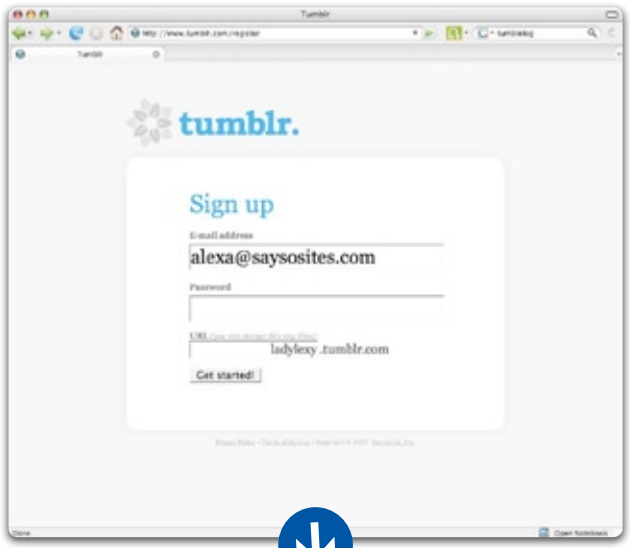


Xanga

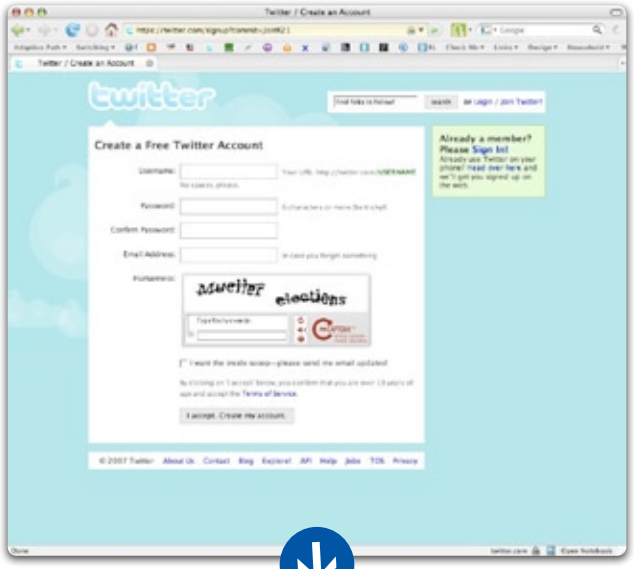


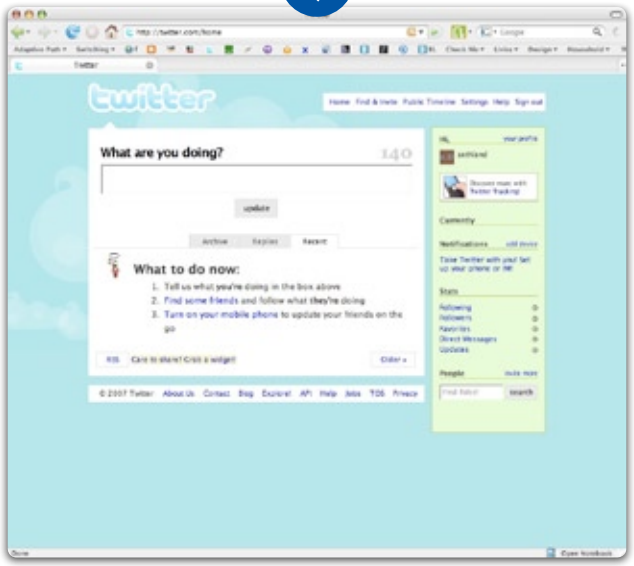
Radar

Examples

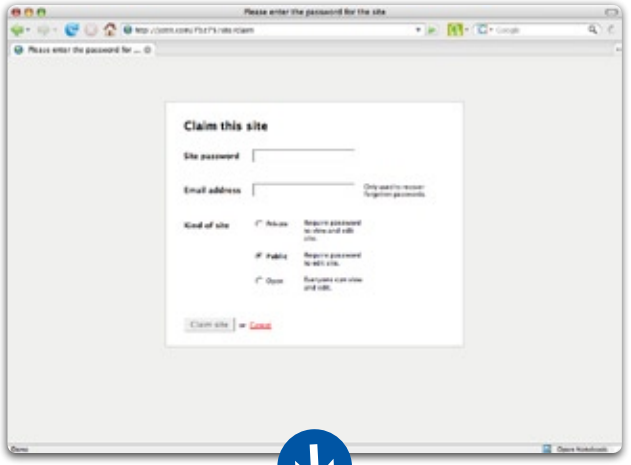


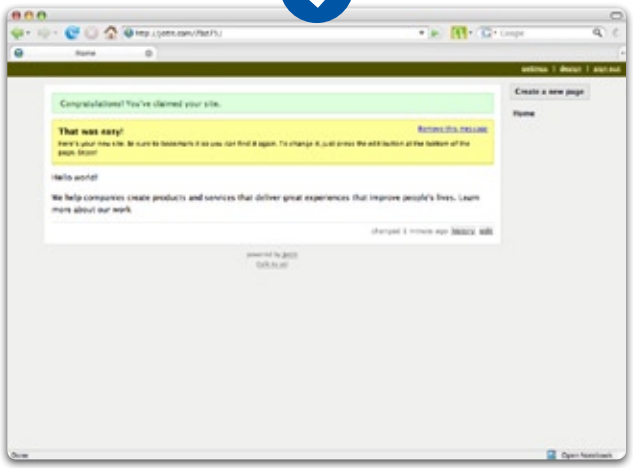
Tumblr



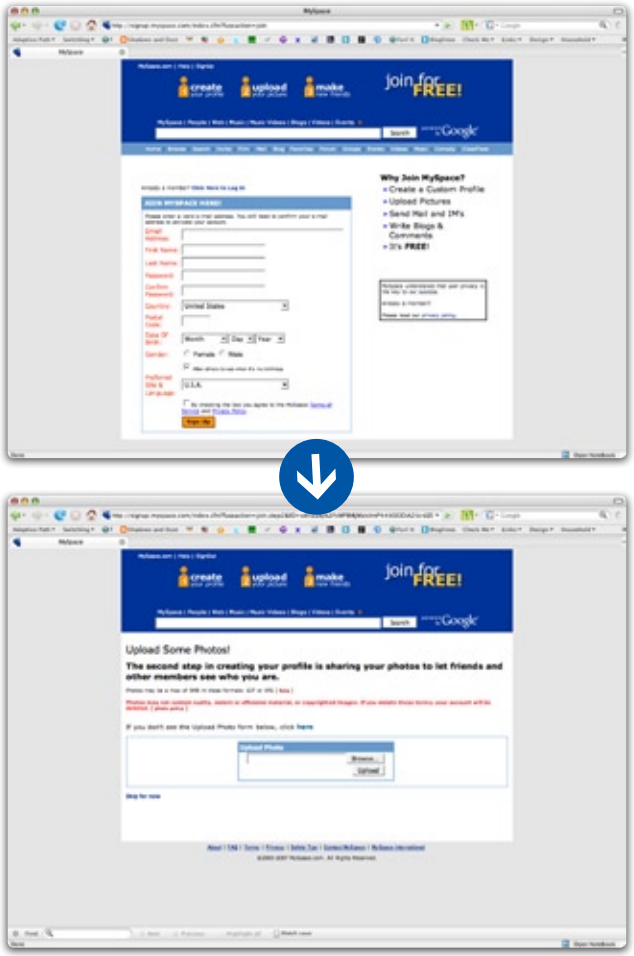


Twitter





Jottlt


join for FREE!
Why Join MySpace?
Upload Some Photos!
The second step in creating your profile is sharing your photos to let friends and other members see who you are.

MySpace

Make the sign-up process feel effortless.

2.2 Comprehensive initial registration

A comprehensive initial screen containing all critical information needed to get a profile started. Generally after completing, the user is taken straight to their dashboard view, where they may be guided through ramp-up.

Use to...

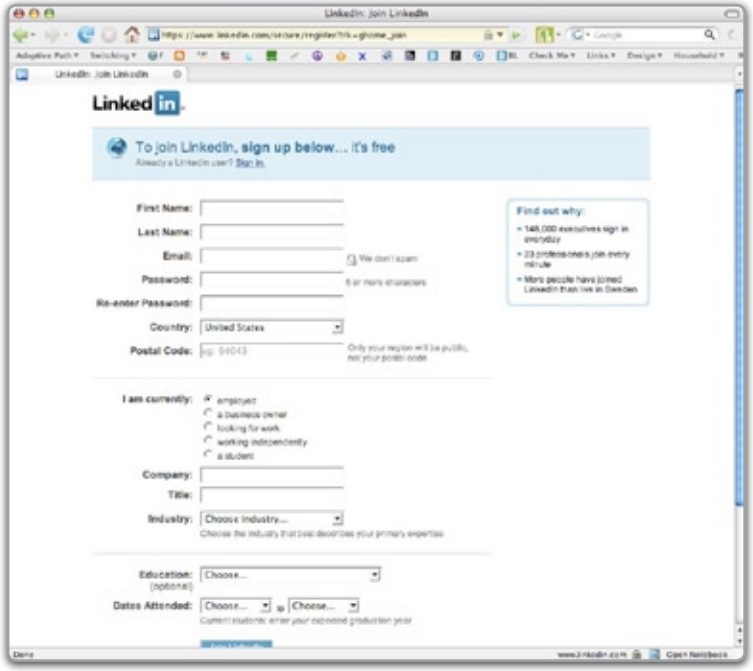
- Get the users into the heart of the site experience quickly.
- Help already-committed users get going.
- Provide tailored information right away in response to the user's answers.

Caveats

- Asking for too much information without communicating what the user will get in return might overwhelm the user or make them suspicious.
- A lengthy initial registration creates barriers to entry by increasing the investment required to try a service.

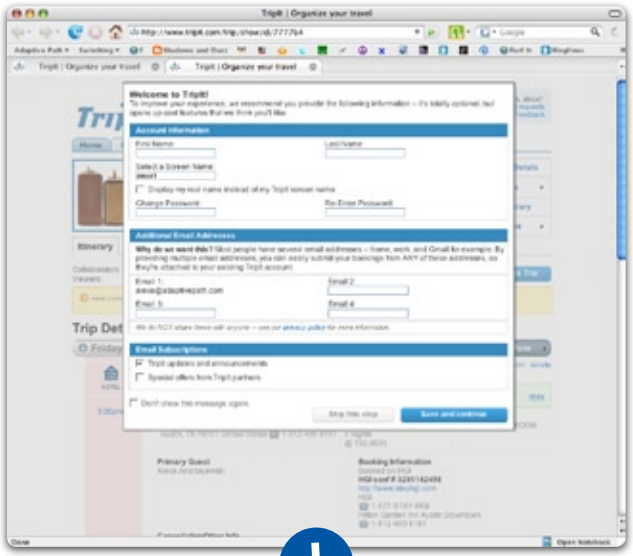
Design Guidelines...

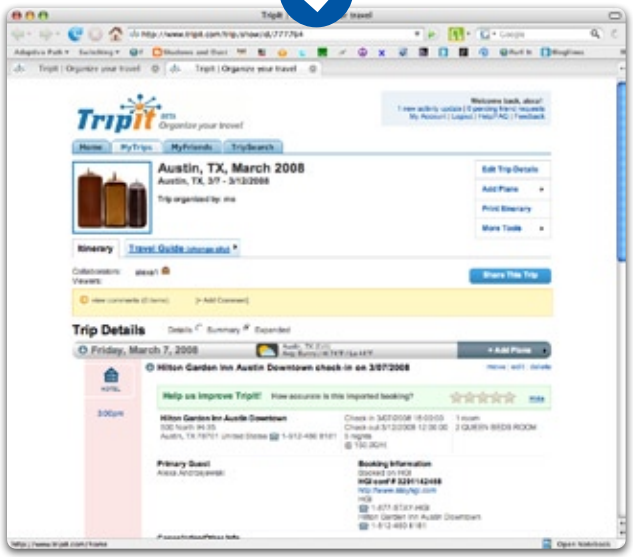
- Communicate why you're asking for each piece of information (what will the user get in return?).
- Reduce cognitive dissonance by indicating when an answer can (and can't) be changed later (e.g., Beside a display name, you might note, "Don't worry, you can always change this later.").
- Clearly indicate which fields are required and which can be skipped for now.
- Group into different conceptual sections, possibly separating required and optional fields.



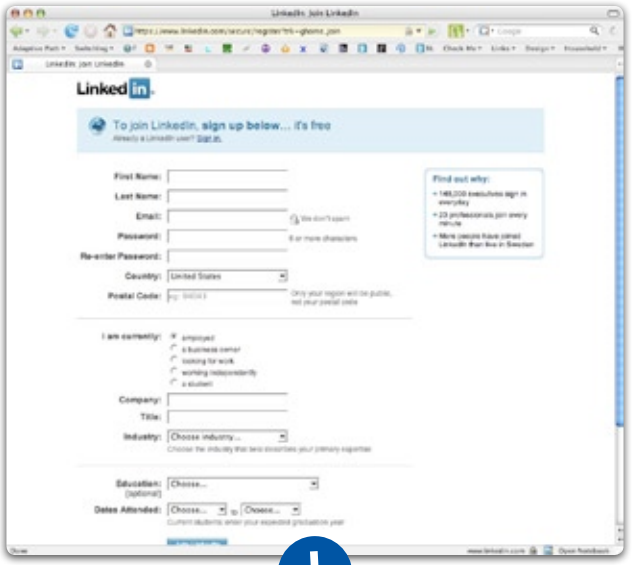
Linked In asks for quite a bit of detail to help accelerate connection-making, but does so in a clean, organized form. Optional fields are clearly marked. It does not explain why it's asking for certain pieces of information, however, although this may be self-evident.

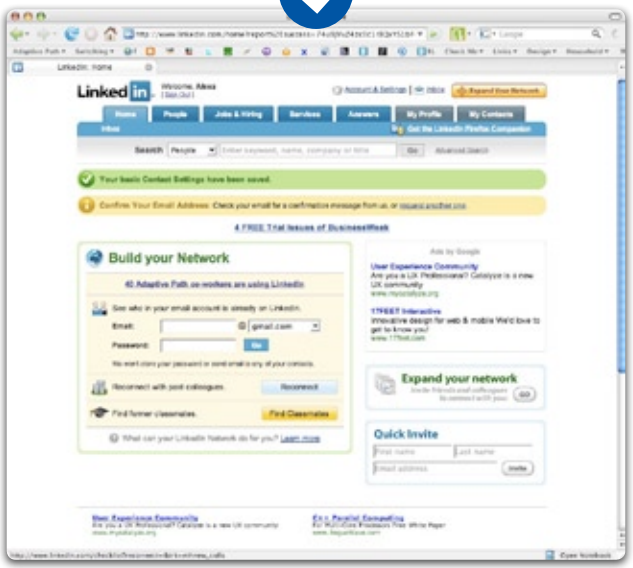
Examples



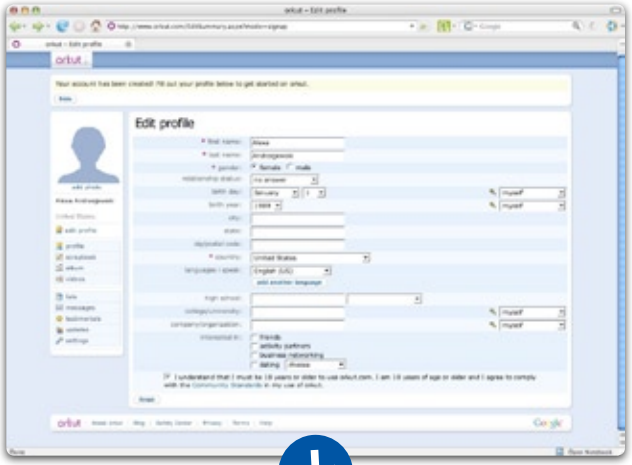


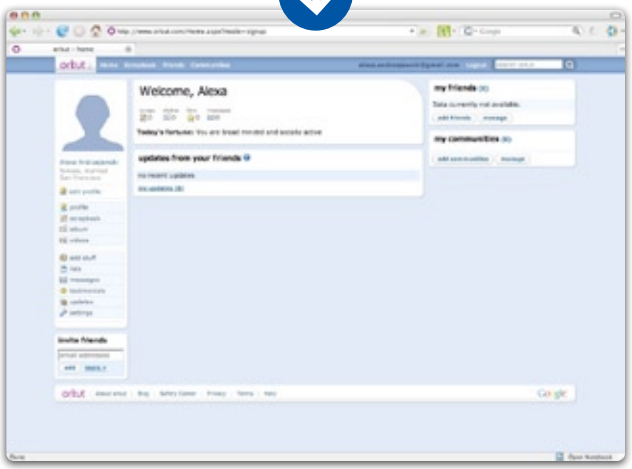
TripIt





Linked In





Orkut

Make the sign-up process feel effortless.

2.3 Setup wizard

A wizard that guides the user through setup, often using a three-step process where only one task is shown on each step.

Use to...

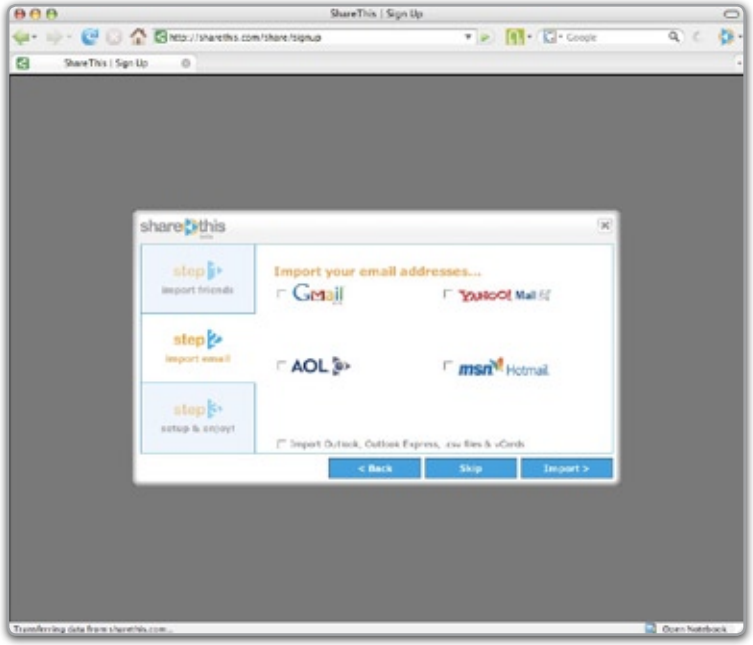
- Avoid overwhelming the user at any point.
- Focus the user's attention on one task at a time.
- Communicate the purpose and value of each step.
- Dedicate sufficient real-estate to each step. Steps like uploading a profile photo may require more space.

Caveats

- While giving the appearance of simplicity, using multiple pages to ask simple, effortless questions may needlessly draw out a process that could be better-handled in a form.

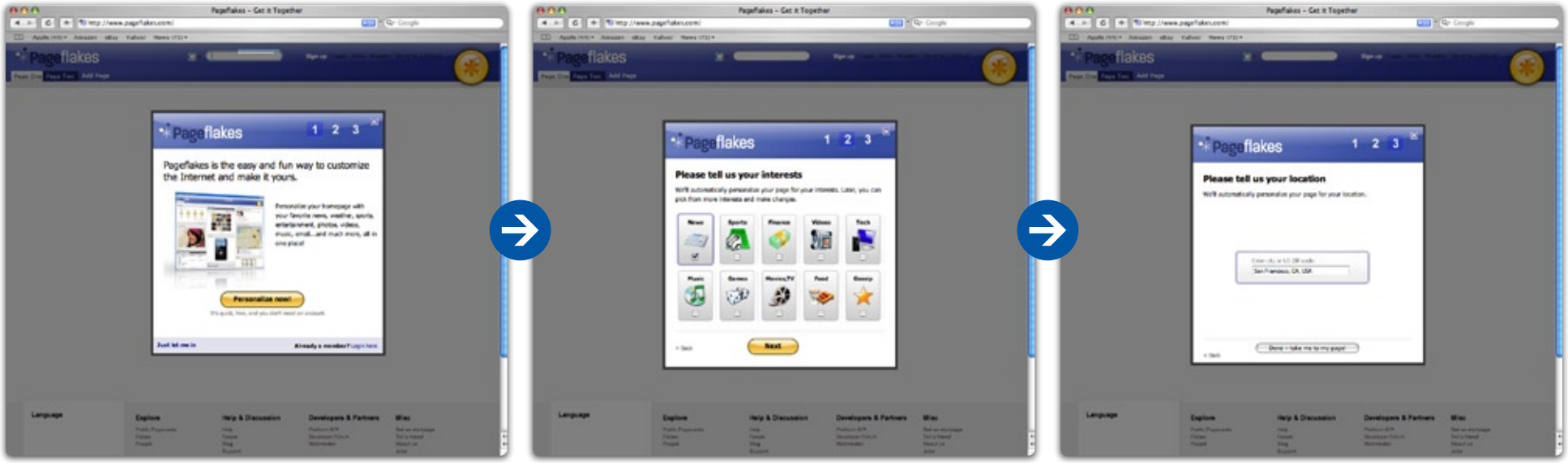
Design Guidelines...

- Use a progress meter or checklist to indicate where the user has been, where they are now, and where they are going.
- Indicate which steps are optional and provide a way for users to skip them.
- If the setup wizard or a particular step is optional, using a dismissable overlay can make this apparent.
- Use consistent visual presentation across steps, including headings, step numbering, and layout. The scope of each screen should be consistent as well.

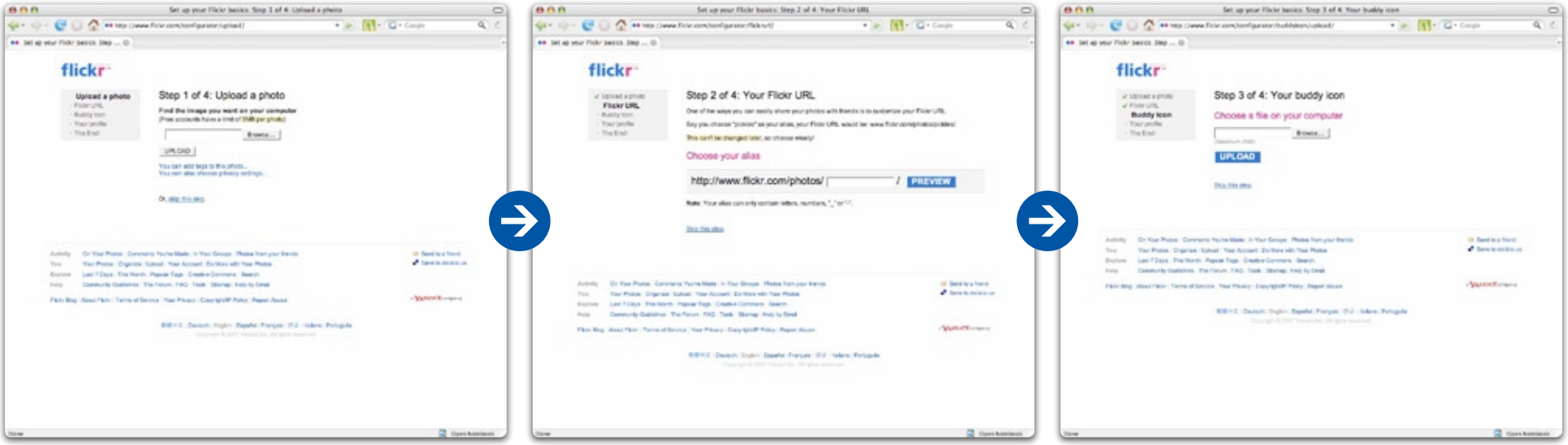


While the ShareThis setup provides robust options, its visual presentation feels simple and compact. To keep the user engaged, entering profile information is the last step.

Examples

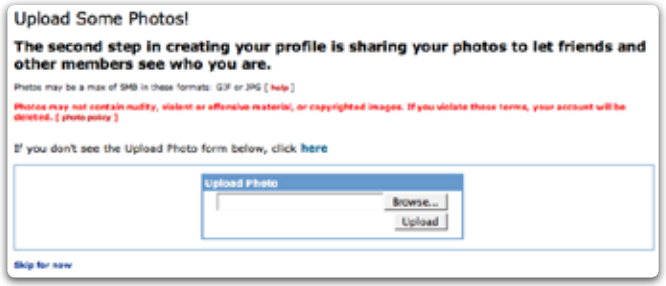


Pageflakes



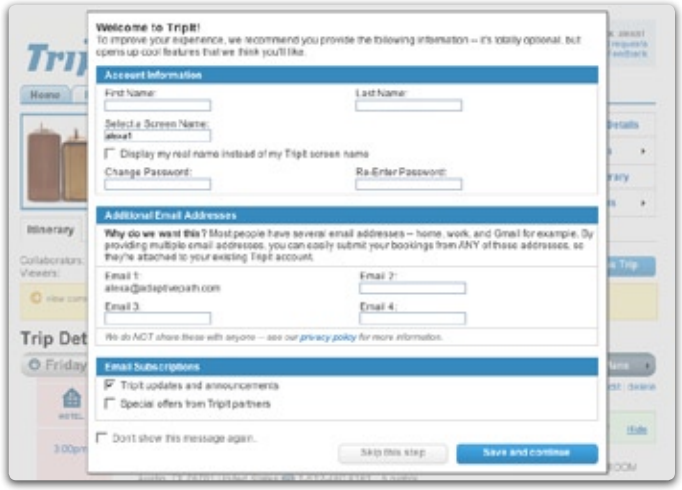
Flickr

Examples: Skippable Steps



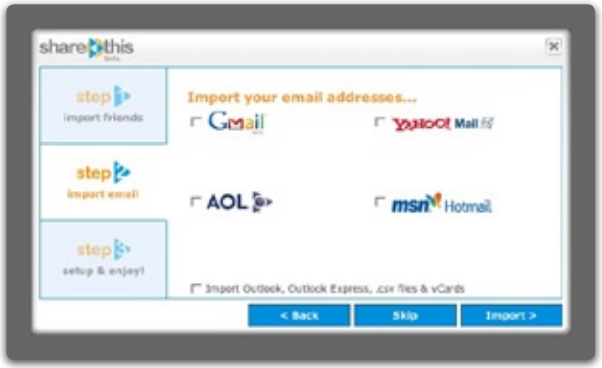
MySpace

Facebook



Tripit

Digg



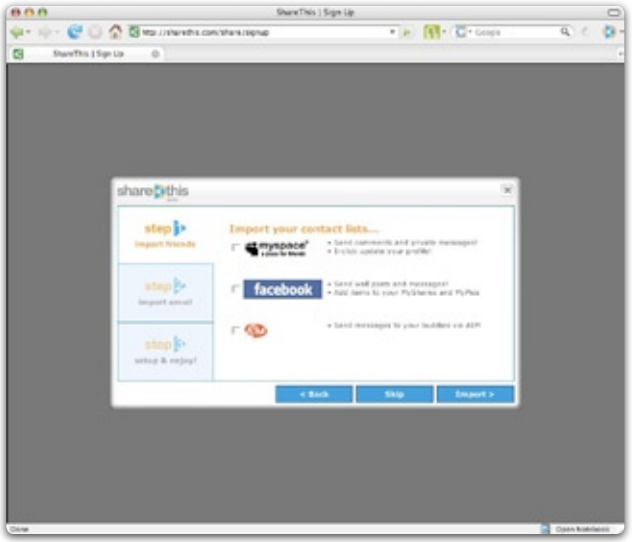
ShareThis

Pageflakes

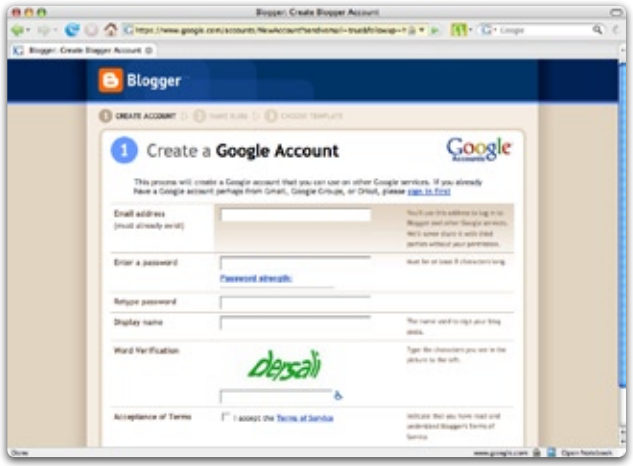
Xanga

Examples: Three-Step Wizards

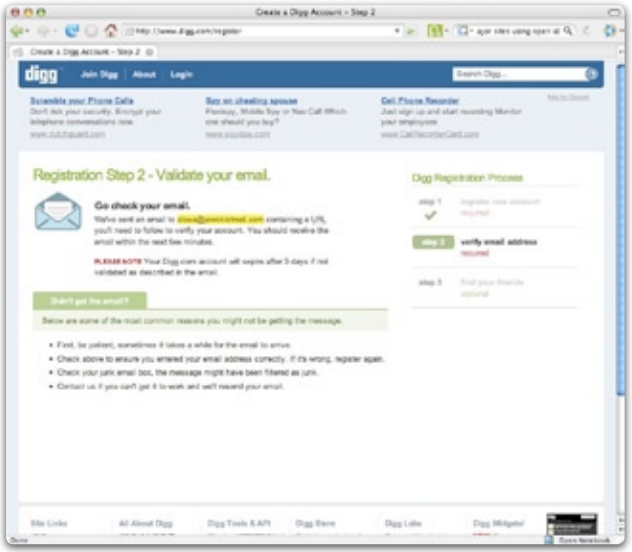
MySpace



ShareThis

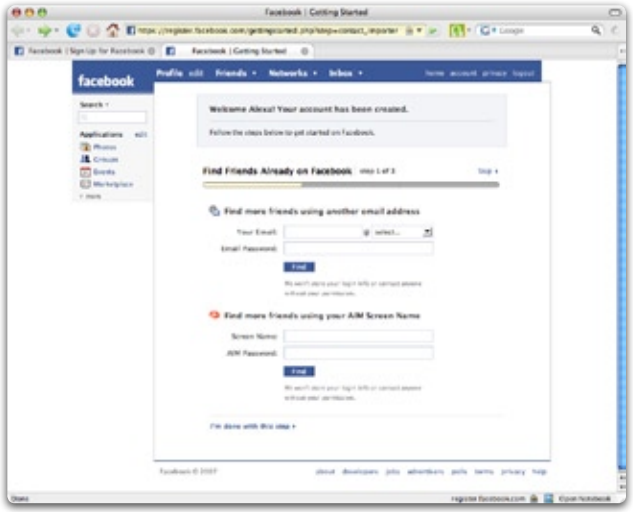


Blogger



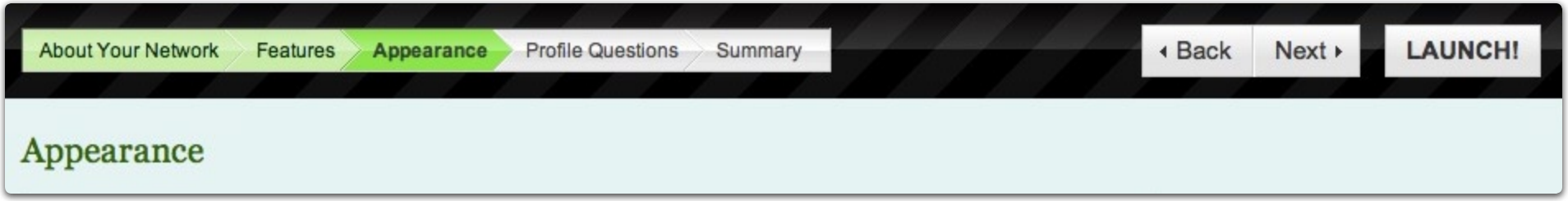
Digg

Pageflakes

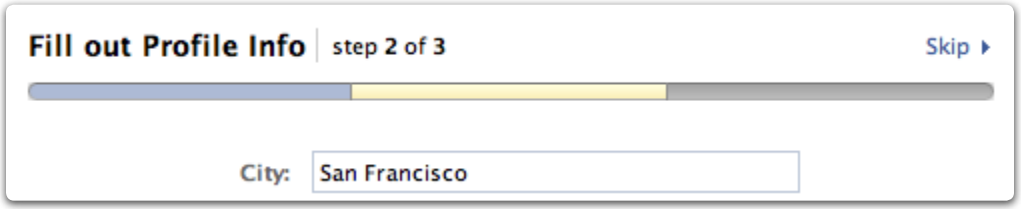


Facebook

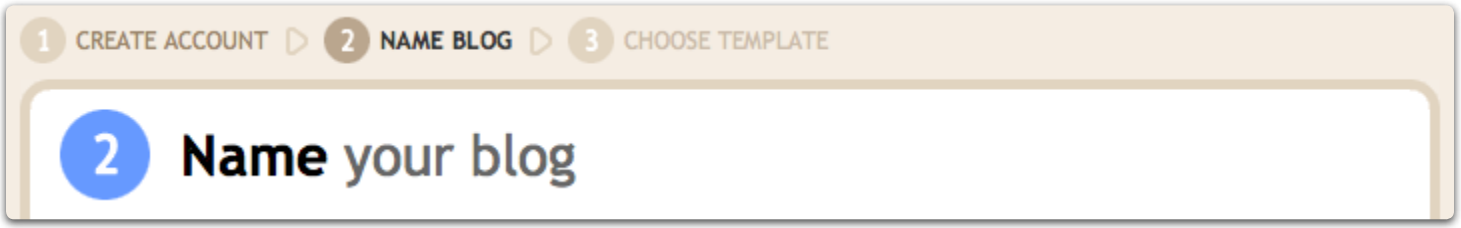
Examples: Progress Meters



Ning



Facebook



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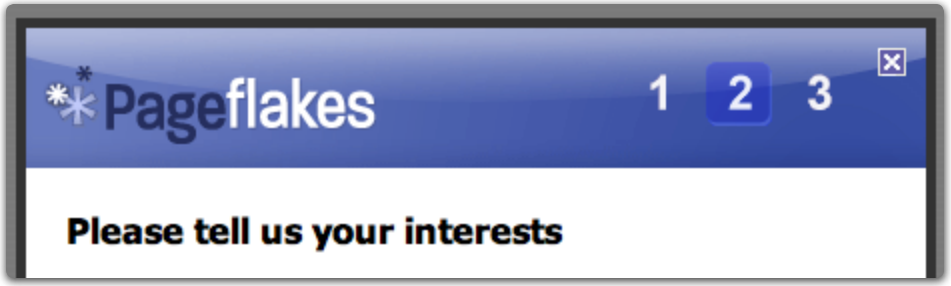
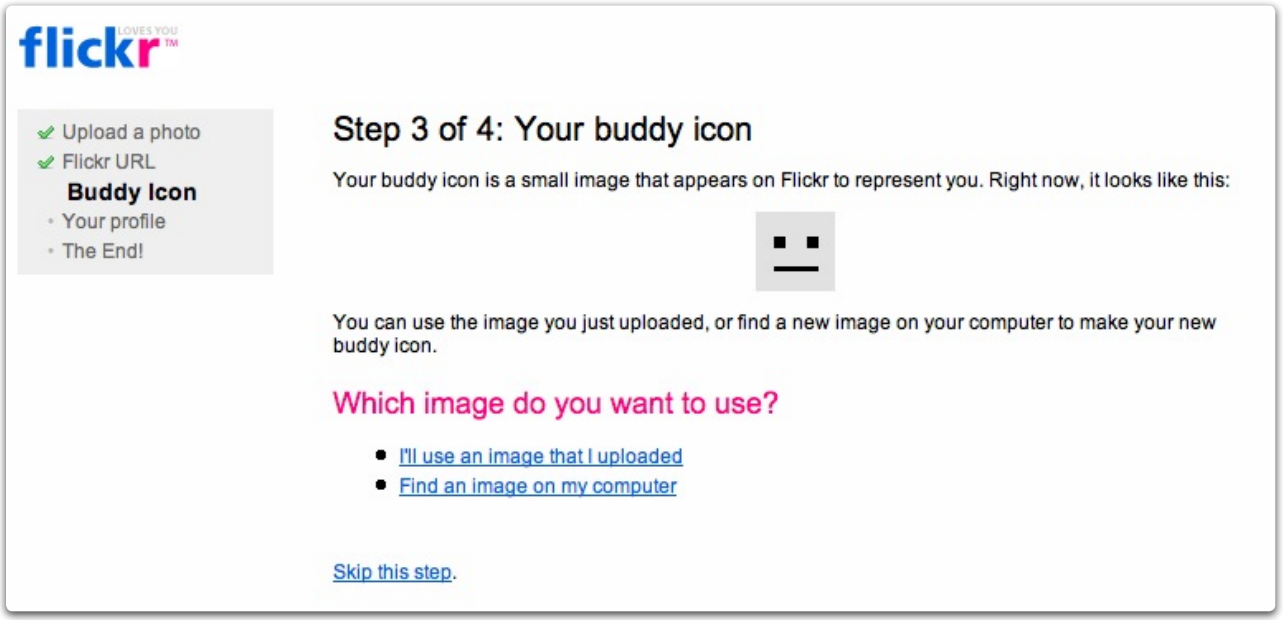


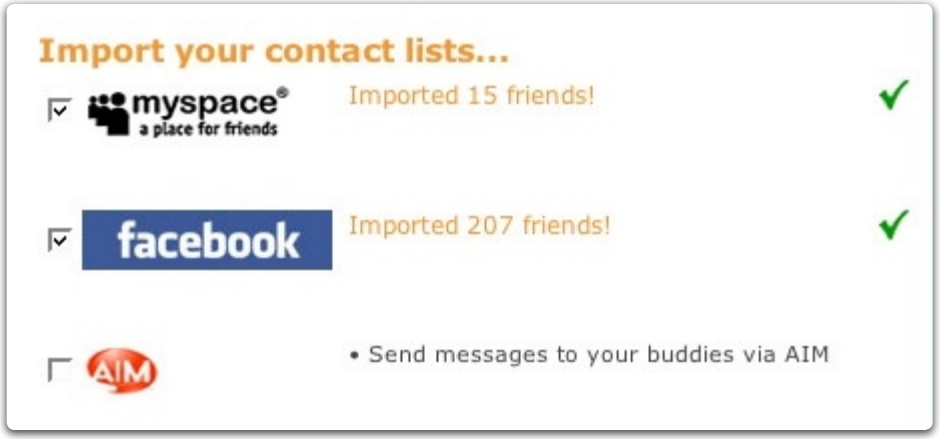
Pageflakes

ShareThis

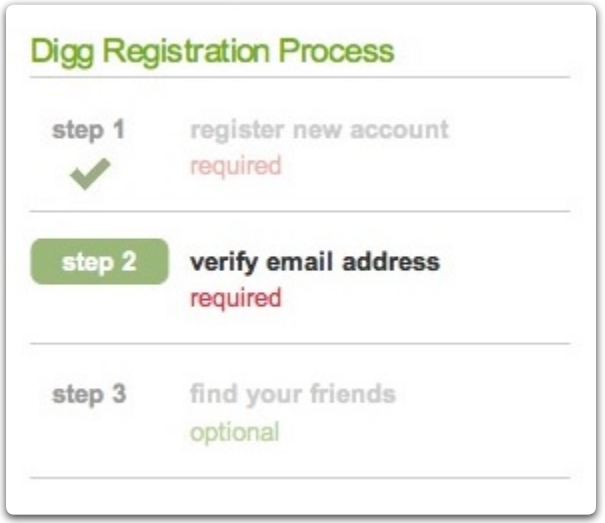
Examples: Checklists



Flickr



ShareThis



Digg

Make the sign-up process feel effortless.

2.4 Field-Level Explanations and Errors

Displaying information about each field when that field has focus and validating each field as that field loses focus (rather than when the user clicks a terminal action).

Use to...

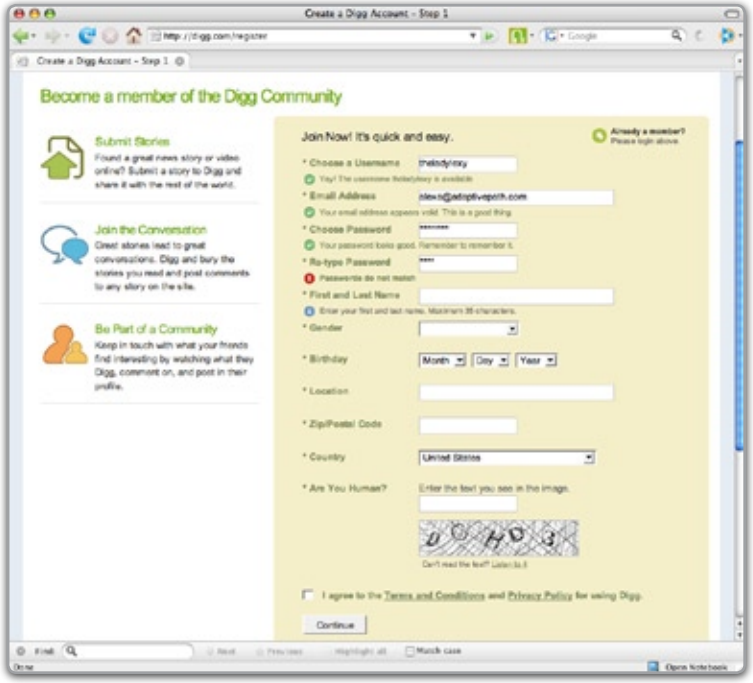
- Provide useful information in the context in which it can be acted upon.
- Allow detailed explanations of why each detail is being requested without adding noise.
- Communicate progress.
- Avoid putting the user through the frustrating experience of pressing a terminal action, getting errors, and having to reenter passwords and validation codes in addition to correcting the error.

Caveats

- Displaying certain errors (fields left blank, partial birthdate) might not make sense until the user is finished filling in a page.
- Particularly after the last field on a page, the user might never leave the field.
- Should supplement, not replace, page-level error validation.

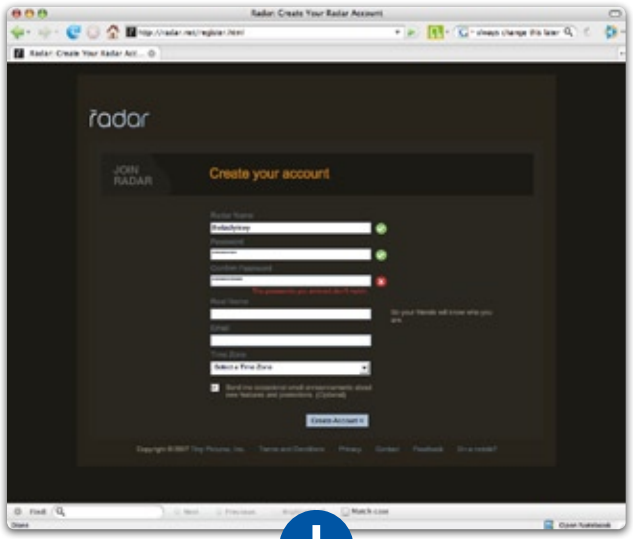
Design Guidelines...

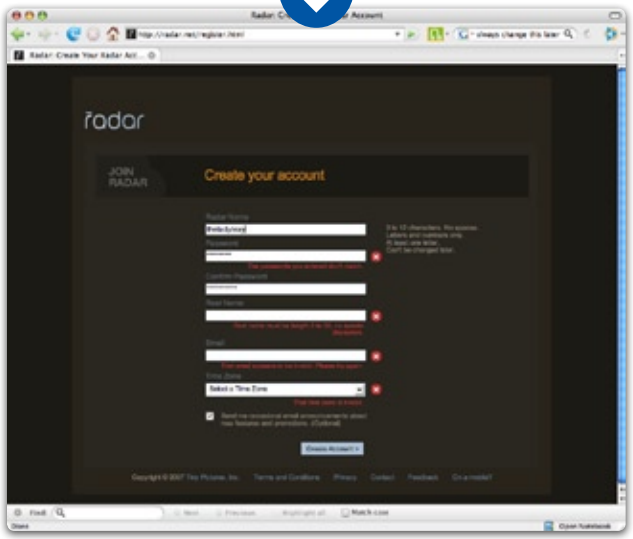
- When a field receives focus, provide instructions in a reserved area of the page. When a field loses focus, provide confirmation if it's ok or a message if it has errors.
- Use easily-distinguishable icons to denote different types of messages: Explanations, Confirmations and Errors.
- Also validate the entire page when the user clicks a terminal action, displaying a message at the top of the form directing the user to any remaining field-level errors.



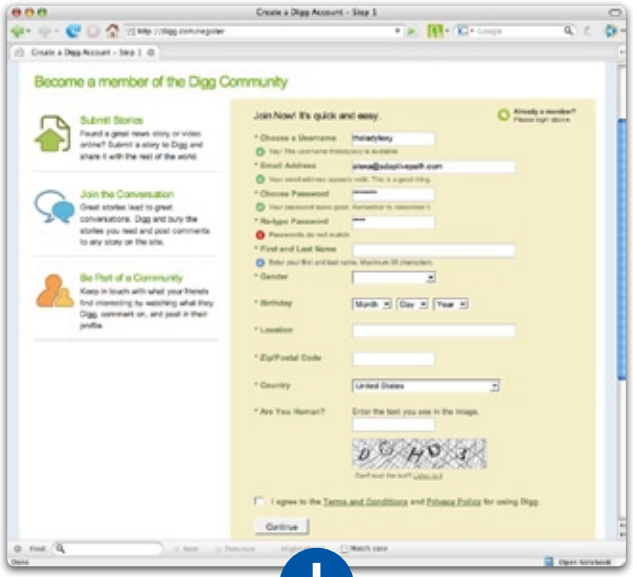
Digg employs field-level instruction, confirmation, and error marking in a consistent, elegant system. Errors and explanations are written in friendly, clear language. Page-level validation supplements field-level validation by checking for errors across fields (e.g., Date of Birth problems).

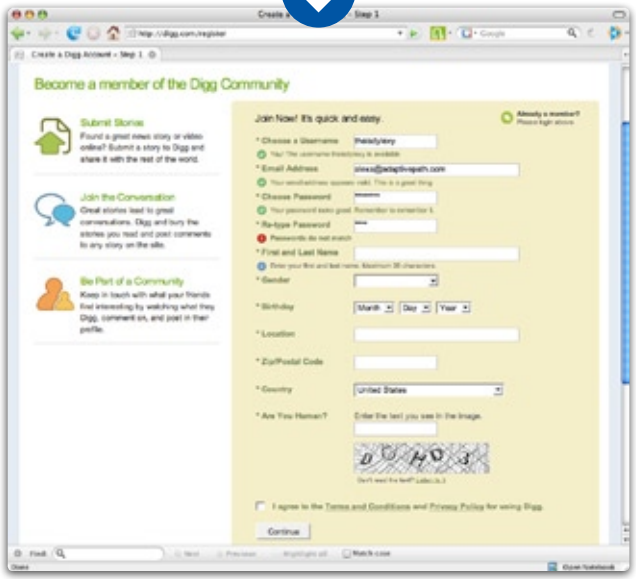
Examples



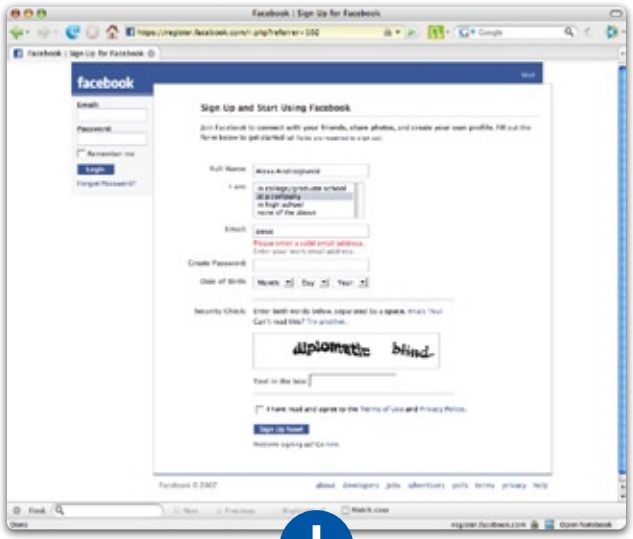


Radar





Digg



Facebook

Principle Three:

Don’t leave new users hanging.

Guidance of new users should not stop once they’ve registered. Dumping new users on an unfamiliar page with no clear calls to action may leave them baffled as to what they should do next. Instead, reward new users with a welcome message and implicit and explicit guidance as to what they can do next.

Don’t leave new users hanging.

3.1 Highlighted Areas

A module or section of a module is highlighted using a pale yellow tint.

Use to...

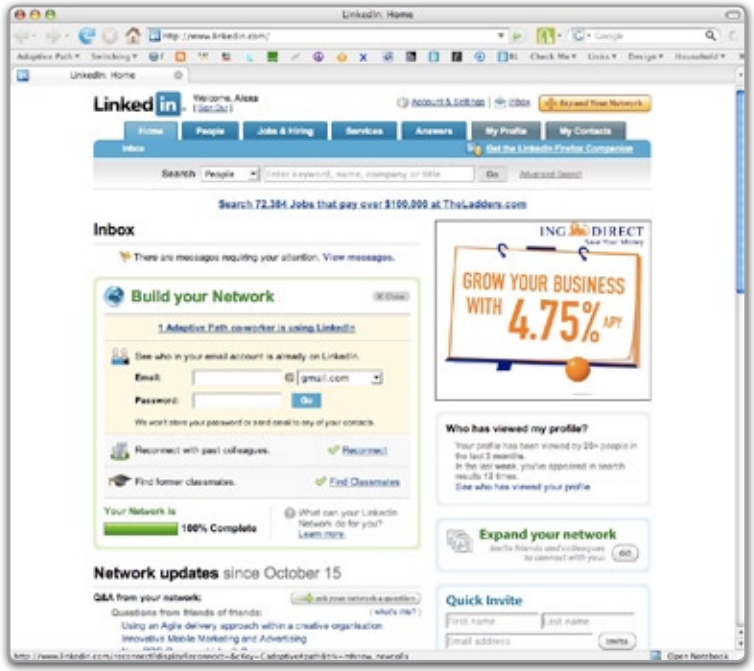
- Draw attention to a welcome message and/or recommended next actions.

Caveats

- Highlights are visually bothersome (which is why they’re effective) and should not be used excessively or when they can’t be gotten rid of.
- Highlights aren’t as effective on already-cluttered or busy pages.

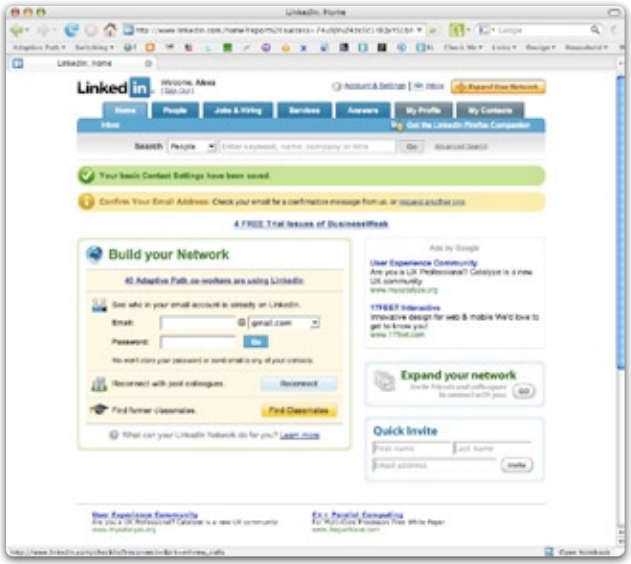
Design Guidelines...

- Create highlights that are salient enough to draw attention amidst other elements on a page.
- Provide a way (even if it’s an implied way) to remove a highlight—such as by completing the highlighted task.

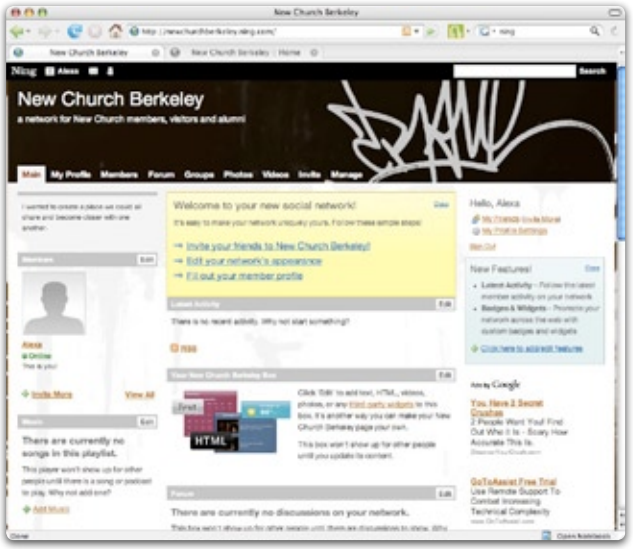


Linked In employs a welcome module containing highlighted action items. Once items are completed, the highlight fades and a checkmark appears next to the item.

Examples



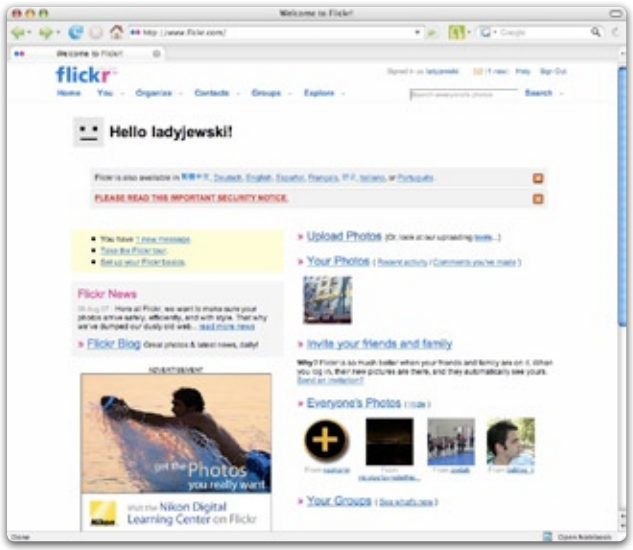
Linked In



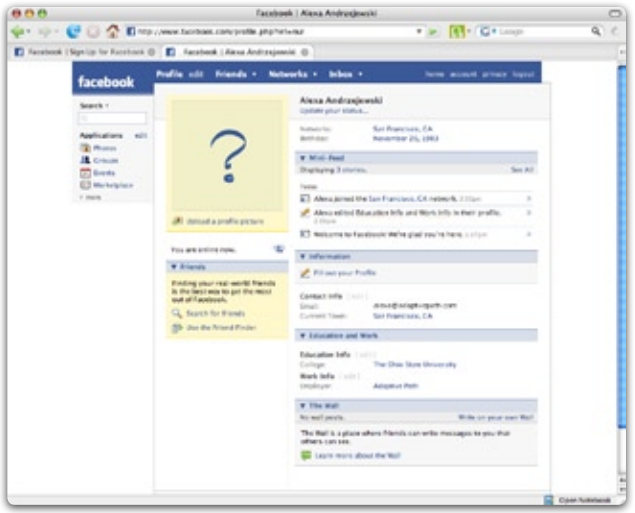
Ning

Pageflakes

MySpace



Flickr



Facebook

Don’t leave new users hanging.

3.2 Empty but Actionable Modules

A module that encourages the user to fill it in by its empty appearance and a contextual link allowing the user to take action.

Use to...

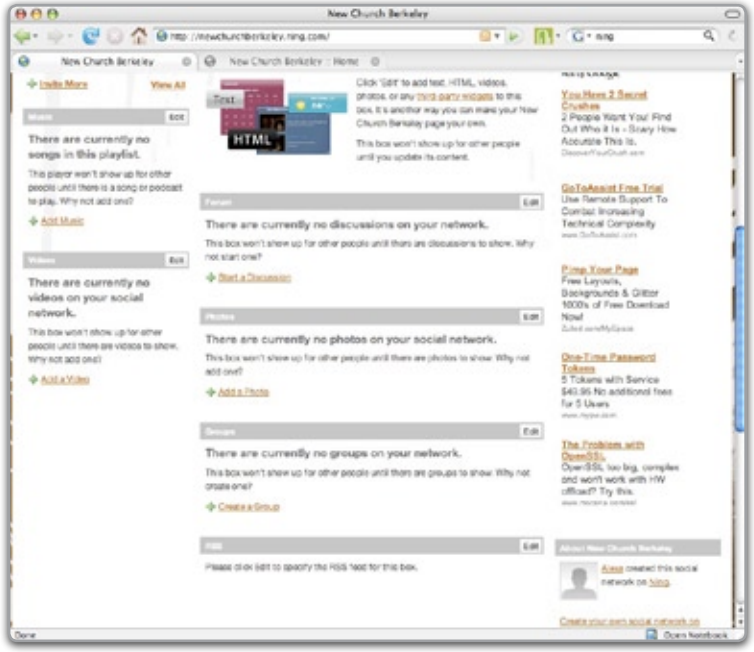
- Compel users to fill modules in. The sight of blank, empty boxes is inherently motivating.

Caveats

- A user may be unable to fill in a particular module at the moment or may never want to use it. Provide a way for these users to dismiss modules if desired.

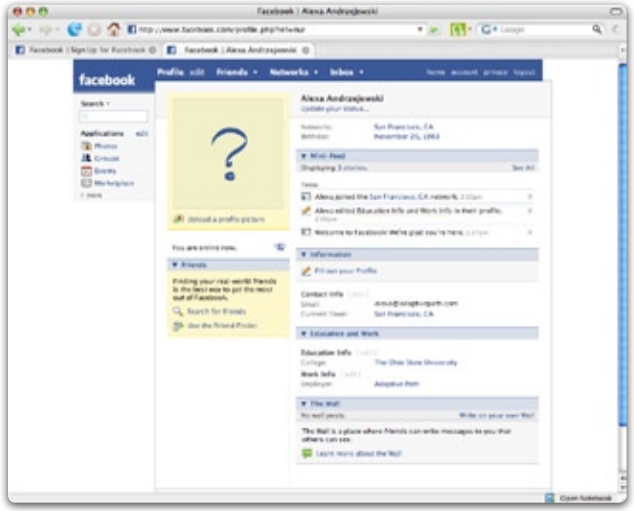
Design Guidelines...

- Within the module, take advantage of the empty space to explain what it is for and to equip the user to populate it.
- Use calls to action that are consistent and easy to spot across modules. Using links with icons can be an effective solution.

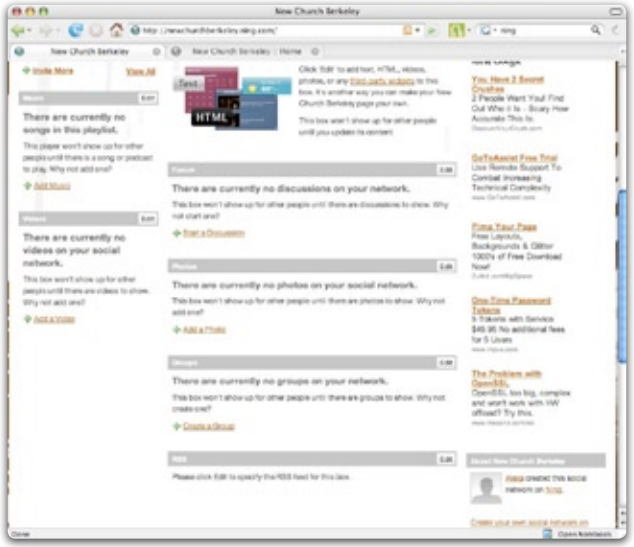


Ning pages, by default, are filled with empty modules that beckon the user’s attention. A message explains what needs to be done to populate the module, and a “plus” icon clearly denotes the calls to action.

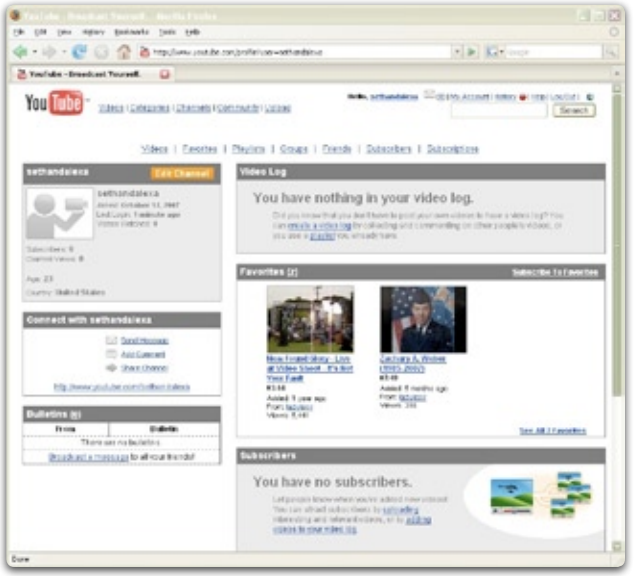
Examples



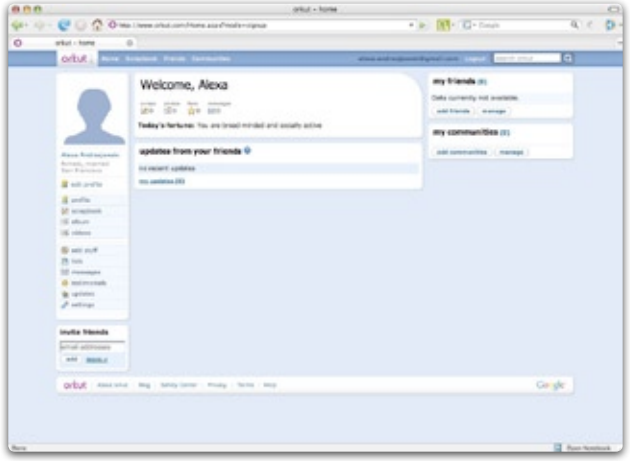
Facebook



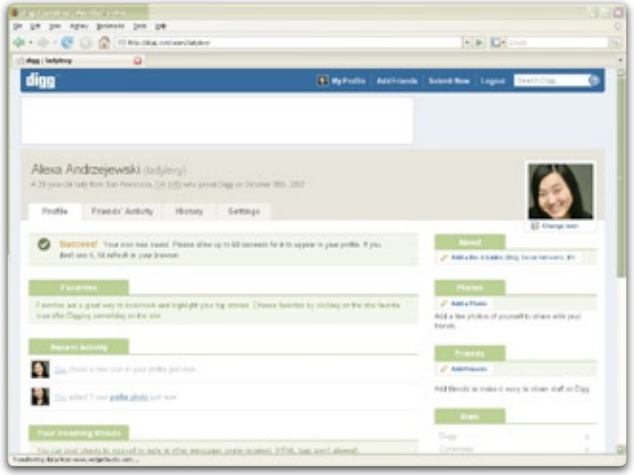
Ning



YouTube



Orkut



Digg

MySpace

Don’t leave new users hanging.

3.3 Actionable Welcome Page

A page that appears only after completion of initial setup and gives the user a choice of next actions to take.

Use to...

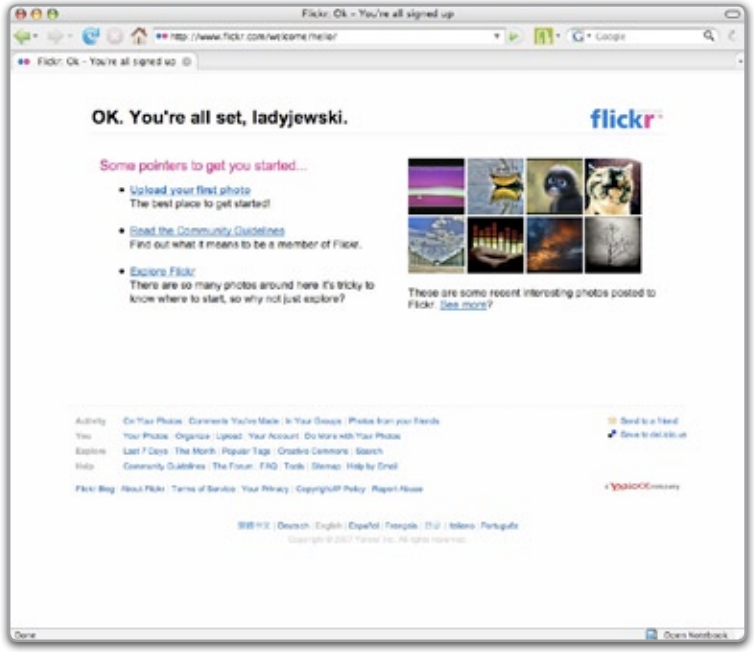
- Give the users a choice of suggested next steps upon registration.

Caveats

- Once the user leaves this page, it may be difficult to get back. Keep in mind that it’s not a dashboard, it’s a launching point from which users will probably choose only one path.

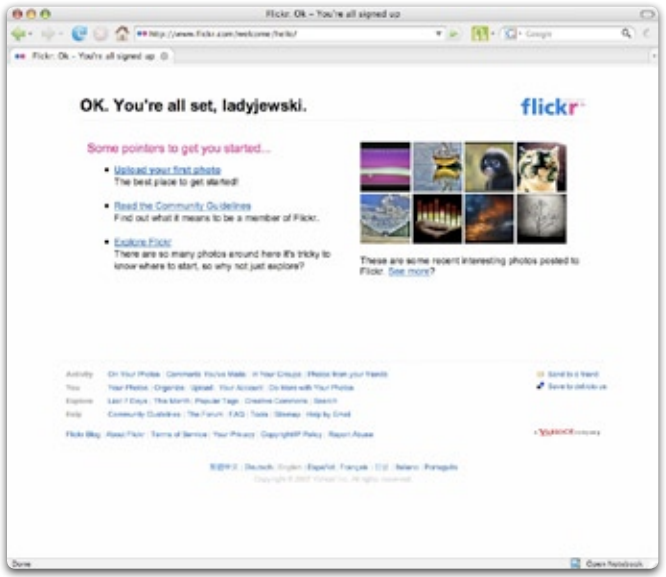
Design Guidelines...

- Welcome messages should be friendly but don’t need to be personal letters. Write only what users will realistically read.
- Provide a limited number (3-5) of easily-clickable options.
- Describe the options, don’t just list links.



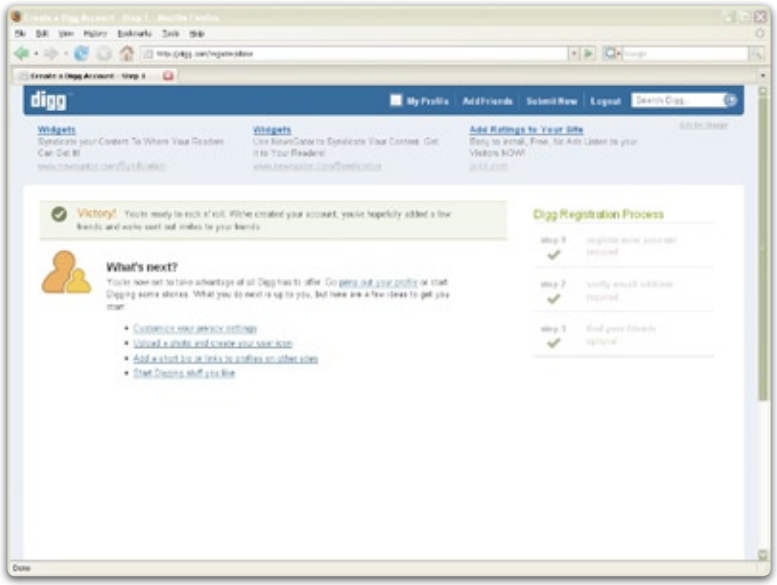
Upon completing Sign Up, Flickr gives the user a simple choice of three next steps with brief descriptions.

Examples

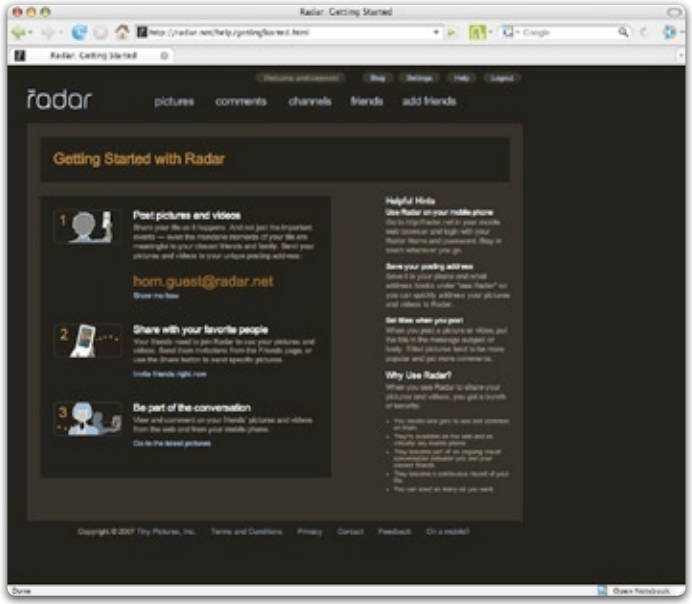


Flickr

Tumblr



Digg



Radar

Don’t leave new users hanging.

3.4 Actionable Welcome Module

A module that appears on the user’s dashboard upon initial login or until the user has sufficiently ramped up. It may include a checklist or visual indication of progress.

Use to...

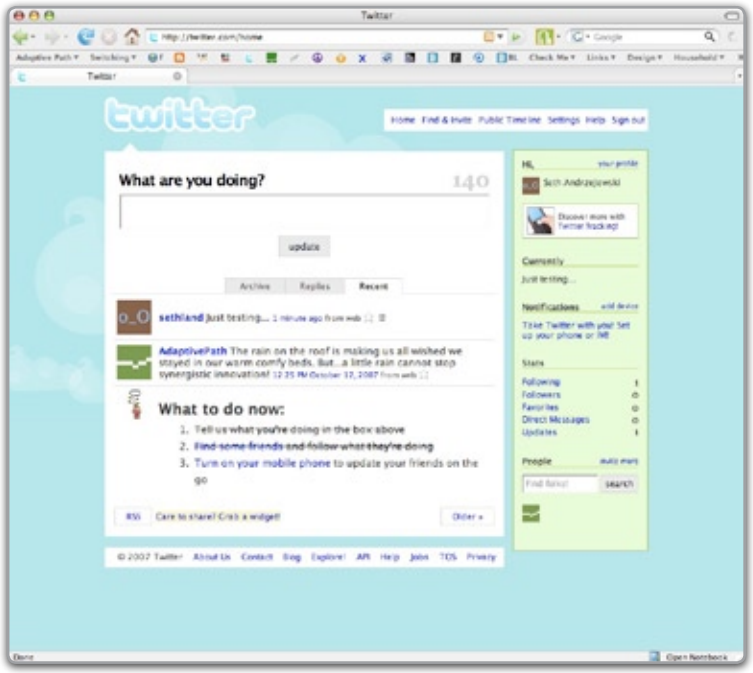
- Get the user to their main dashboard quickly while still providing a greeting and direction.
- Provide a persistent starting point for establishing one’s profile.

Caveats

- The welcome may be lost if the user’s dashboard is busy. Ensure that it stands out adequately.

Design Guidelines...

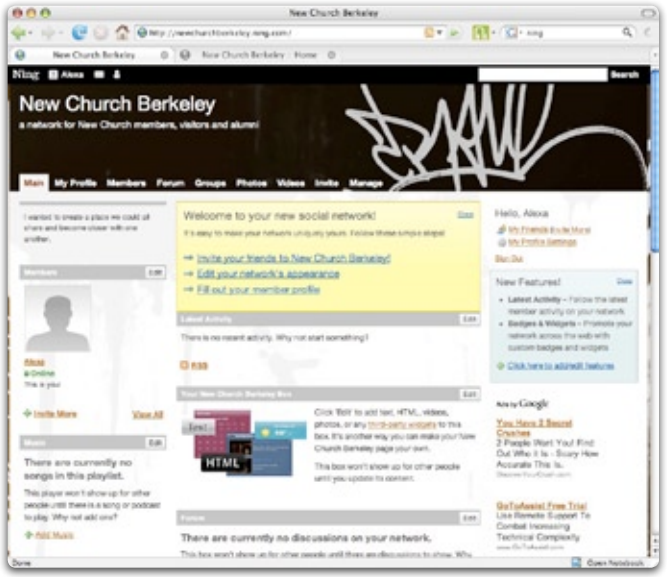
- Give the user a way to dismiss the welcome message, either explicitly (a close icon) or implicitly (by completing all of the tasks listed).
- Welcome messages should give the user direction as to what to do next.
- Provide a limited number (3-5) of easily-clickable options, or even place the first step of each option (such as a search field) in the module itself.
- Checking off items as they are completed or otherwise indicating progress can encourage the user to complete all of the tasks required to establish a solid membership.
- Place and design the welcome message to be easily spotted by a new user.



Twitter’s welcome message takes advantage of the otherwise blank space where the user’s feed will eventually be displayed. It displays a checklist of three next steps, which are crossed out as they are completed. Once all of the steps have been completed, the message disappears.

Examples

Xanga

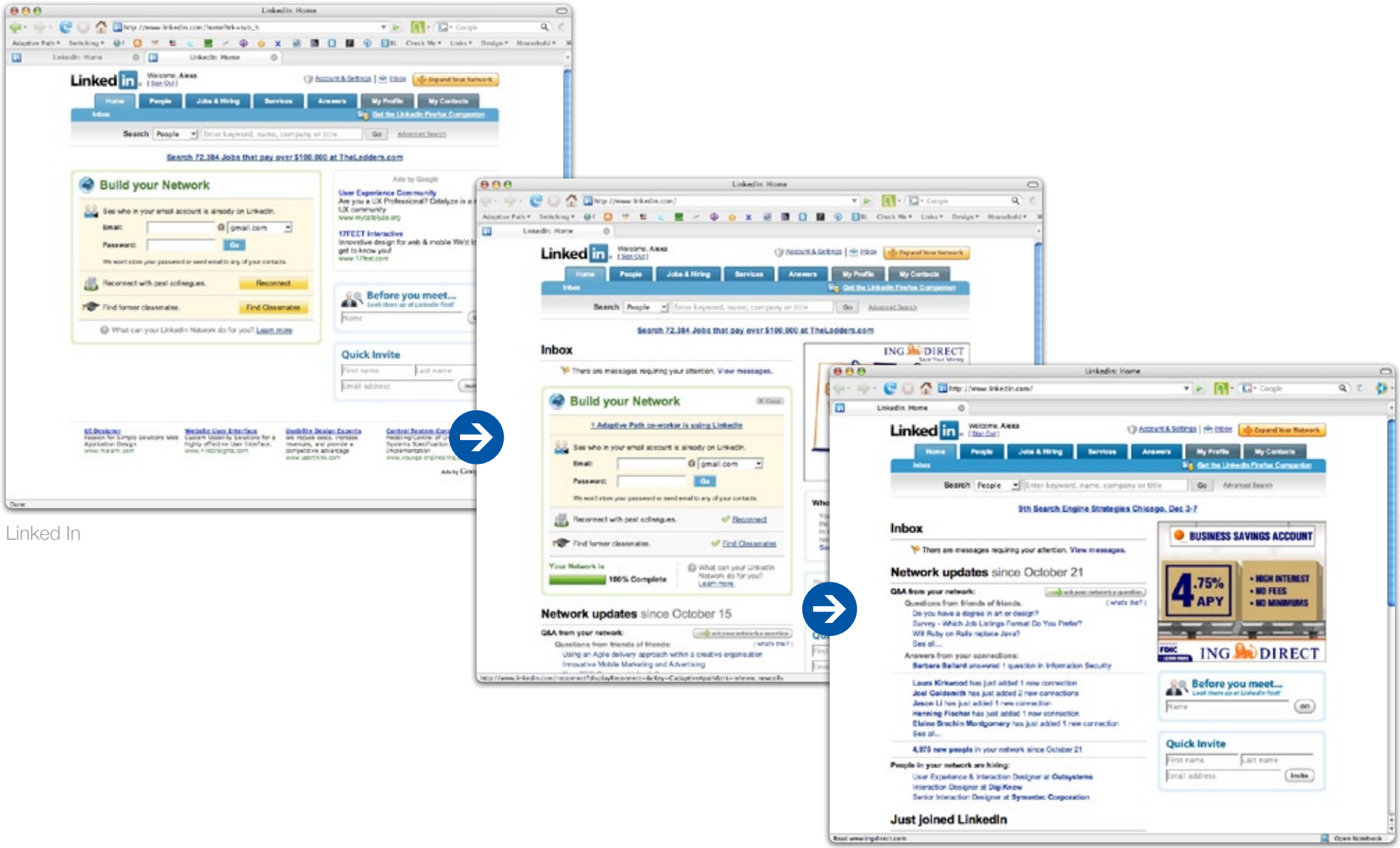


Ning

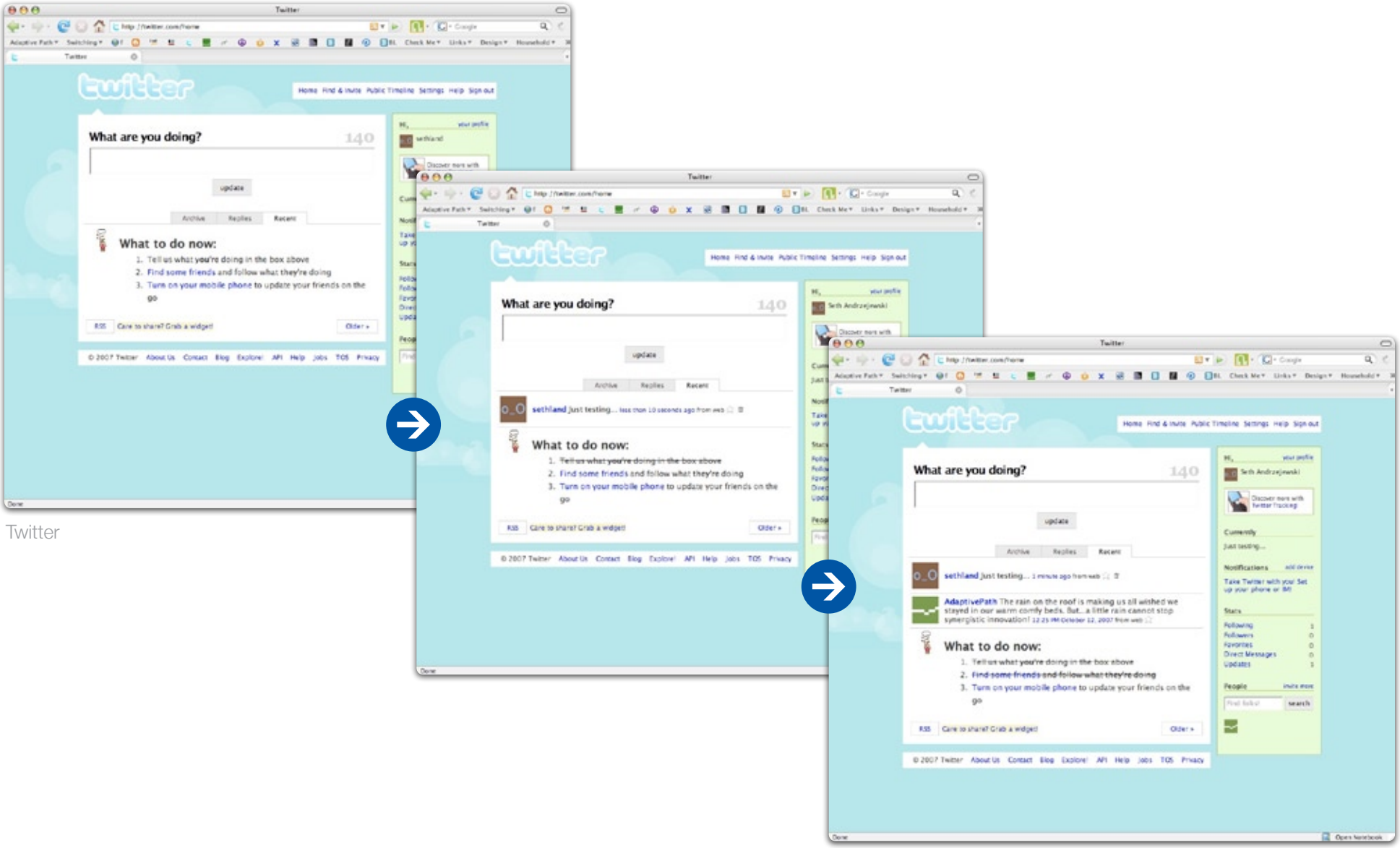
Pageflakes

Facebook

Examples: Actionable Modules With Checklists



Linked In


Twitter
What are you doing?
140
update
What to do now:
1. Tell us what you're doing in the box above
2. Find some friends and follow what they're doing
3. Turn on your mobile phone to update your friends on the go

Twitter

Don’t leave new users hanging.

3.5 Callouts

Contextually-relevant messages pointing out specific features in a timely manner.

Use to...

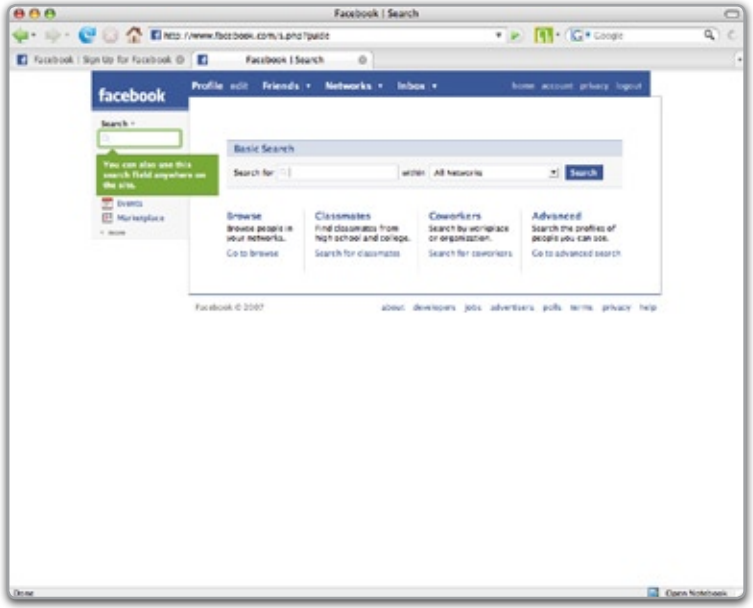
- Accelerate the learning of key features that might take some exploration to discover on one’s own.
- Point out features in a timely manner.
- Explain how tasks accessed through a welcome message shortcut can be repeated in the future.

Caveats

- Callouts could be perceived as annoyances.

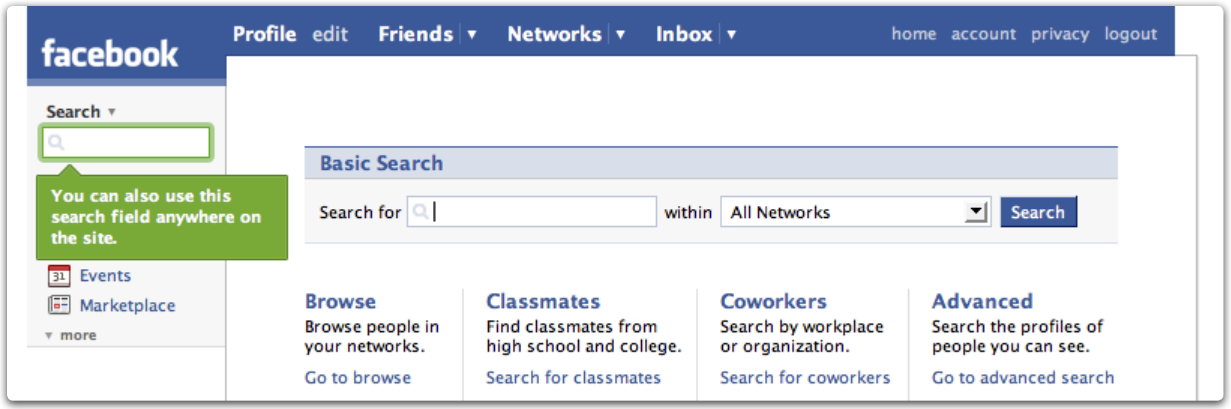
Design Guidelines...

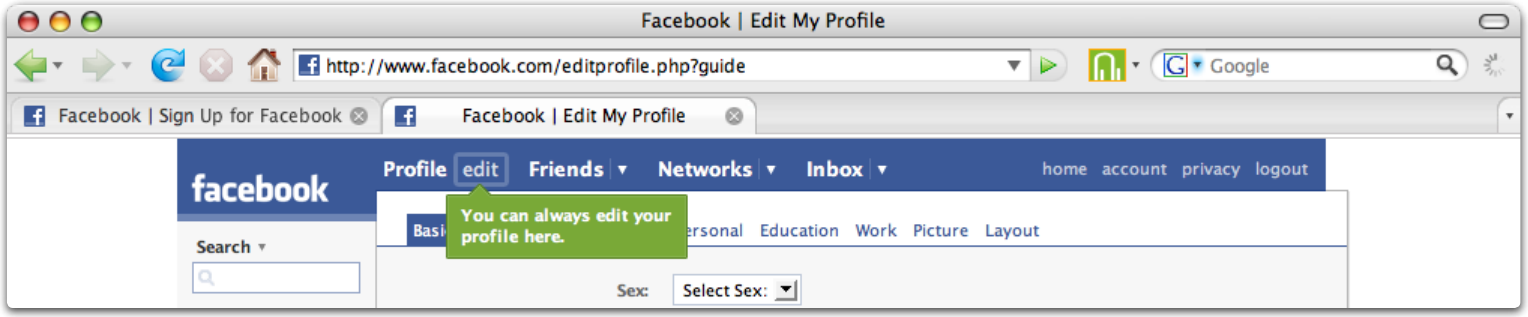
- Callouts should be out of the way and not impede the user’s actions.
- Ensure that callouts are relevant to the user’s task at hand.



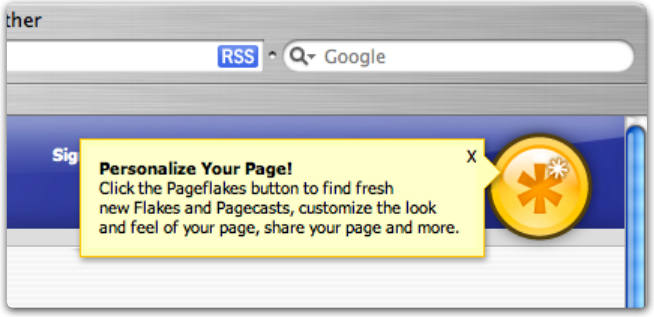
Facebook uses callouts to point out how to repeat tasks in the future and to point out features the user might not have discovered.

Examples





Facebook



Pageflakes

Don’t leave new users hanging.

3.6 Trailblazing

A trail of highlights guiding the user through initial ramp-up. Once the user has completed a highlighted item, that highlight disappears and a new highlight appears until the user has added sufficient detail to their profile.

Use to...

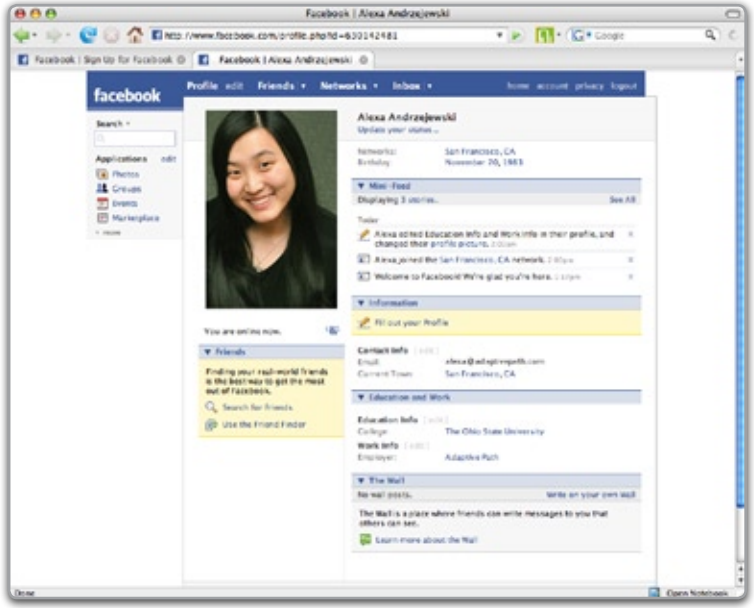
- Suggest next steps to the user in a logical, sequential manner while still providing them with choices.
- Give the user only one or two things to do at a time.

Caveats

- A user may not want to complete the recommended steps.

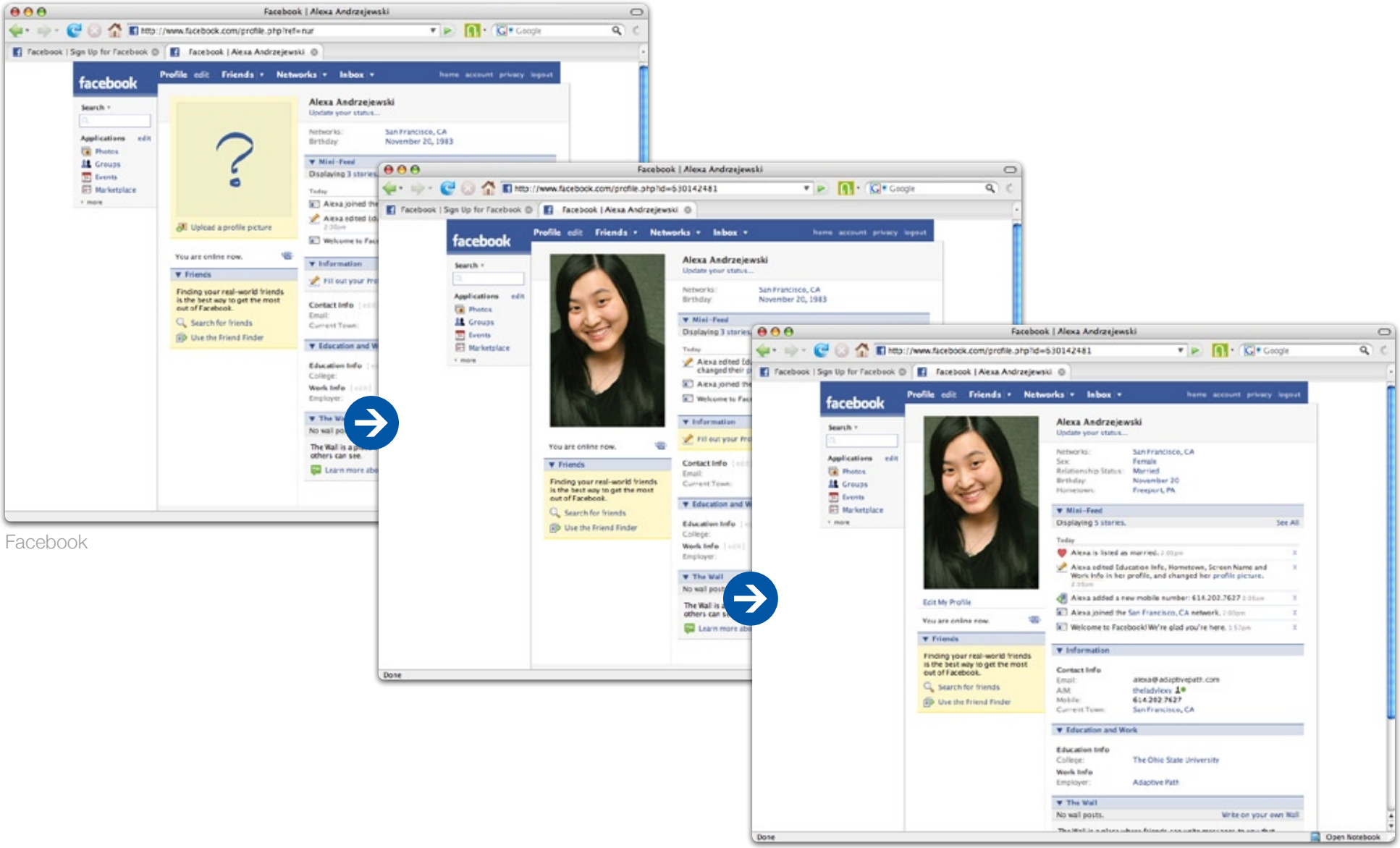
Design Guidelines...

- Highlight the appropriate module without changing it in any other way.
- Remove highlights once the task has been completed adequately.
- Remove highlights if the task has not been completed after several logins.
- Ensure that it’s clear to the user how they can act on the highlighted area, otherwise they may not know what to do.



Facebook welcomes new users and progressively guides you through next steps until your profile is sufficiently-established.

Examples



Facebook

HSIA/JAMES
TONG/DANIEL
HUANG/LOU
HUA/CHARLS

Principle Four:

Accelerate initial connection-making.

Building an adequate social network is one of the greatest barriers facing users of a new community. Without friends, community-based services lose much of their value. Thus, helping the user to quickly find and add friends en masse is essential to retaining users.

Accelerate initial connection-making.

4.1 Search for friends already on network

Allowing the user to find friends already on the network during the setup process based on manually-entered or automatically-generated search criteria.

Use to...

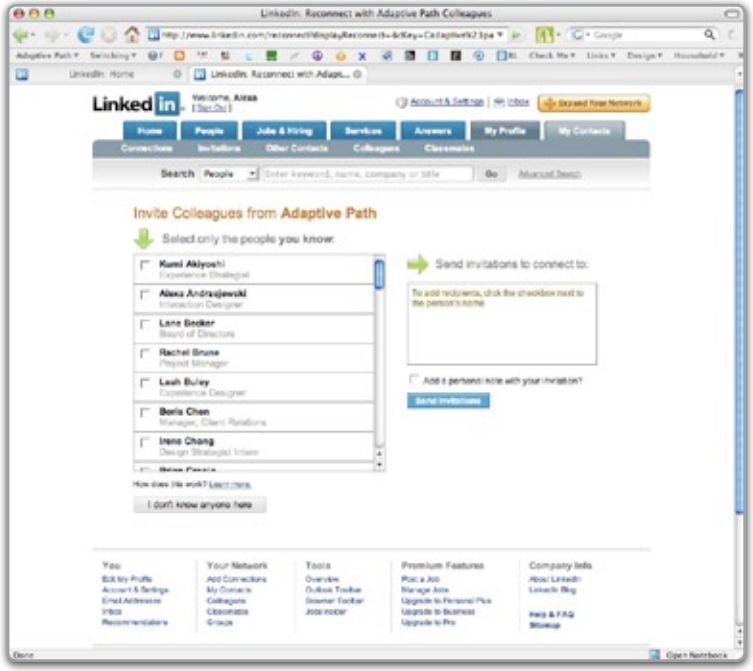
- Quickly populate a user's friend list without having to import external data.
- Provide a shortcut to finding people you may already know.

Caveats

- Having a search and results screen in the middle of a sign-up wizard may be jarring.

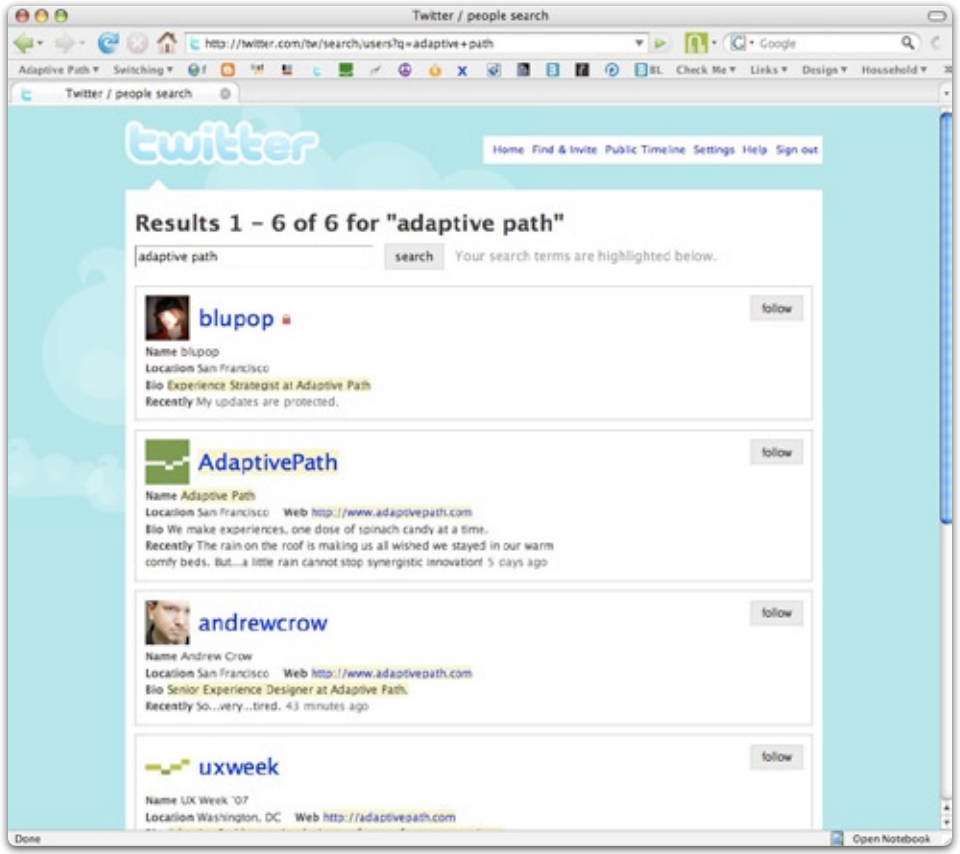
Design Guidelines...

- Limit the amount of information required to conduct a meaningful search.
- Automatically generate search results if possible based on details the user has already given—such as their workplace and location.

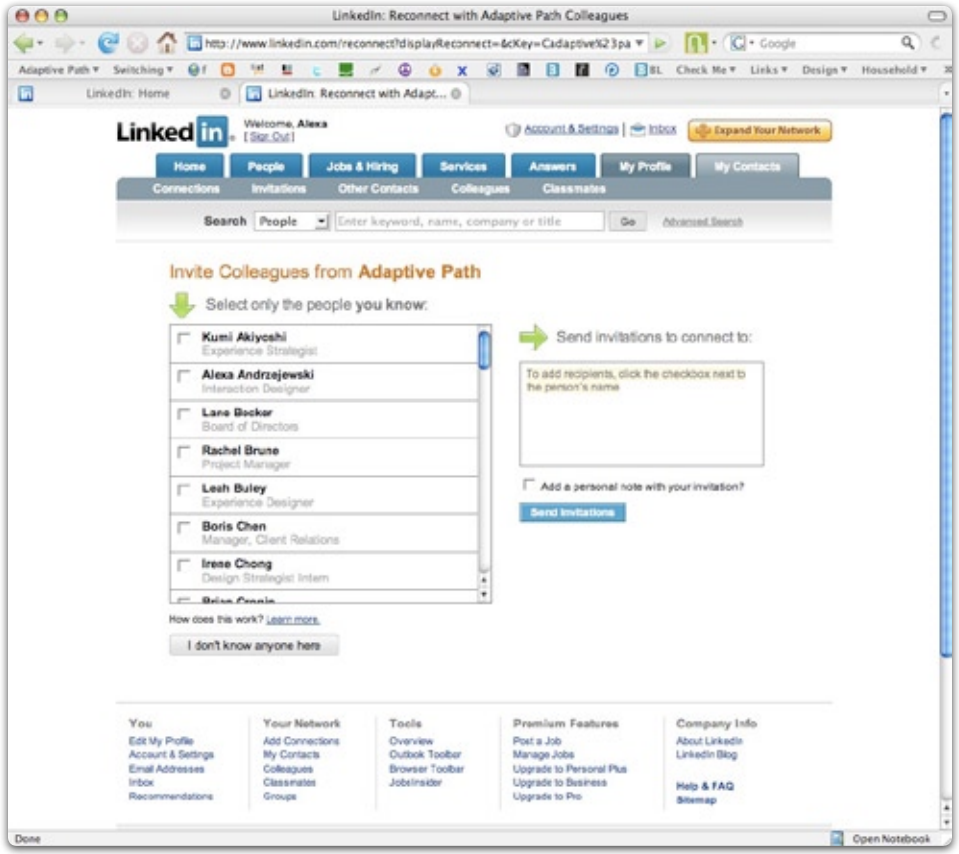


Linked In shows a list of people you may know that are already on Linked In, based on your workplace, as part of the sign up process.

Examples



Twitter



Linked In

Accelerate initial connection-making.

4.2 Send invites to anyone by email

Allowing the user to invite one or more friends by entering their email addresses.

Use to...

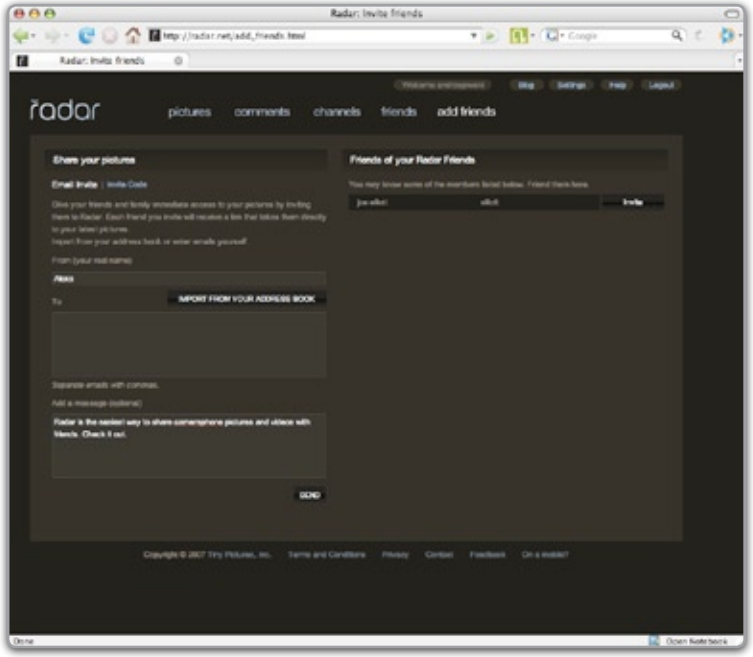
- Solicit the viral promotion of a service to people who may not yet have joined.
- Give users an way to invite friends who are not already on the network.

Caveats

- Sending invites does not tell you whether or not those friends are already members. (In fact, the invite from MySpace is an invitation to join, regardless of whether the person being emailed has already joined or not).
- Even if the system could search to determine whether the email addresses entered match existing members', some members may have used different email addresses for MySpace than the user is aware of.
- It assumes that users know friends' email addresses off the top of their heads or are willing to look them up and paste them in.
- Promotion of invites alone assumes that most of the users' friends are not already using the service.

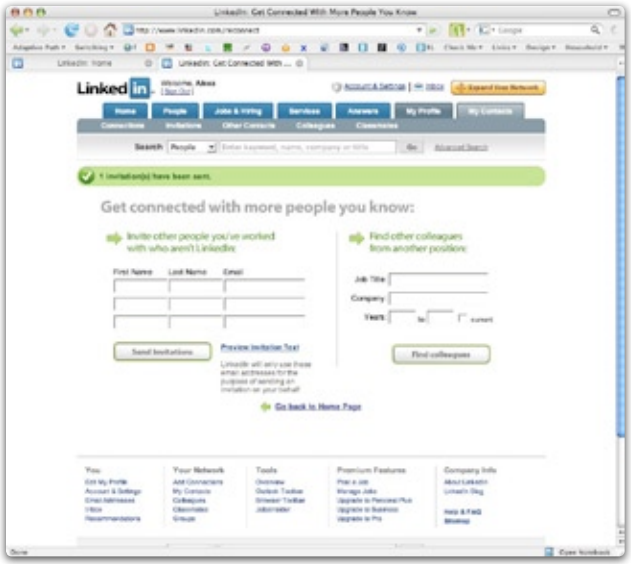
Design Guidelines...

- Keep it simple. Consider whether it's necessary to type a friend's name, or whether their email address would suffice.
- Provide a default invitation message that can be customized by the user, and/or allow the user to add a custom message.
- Provide direction in the invitation email for how existing members can respond.

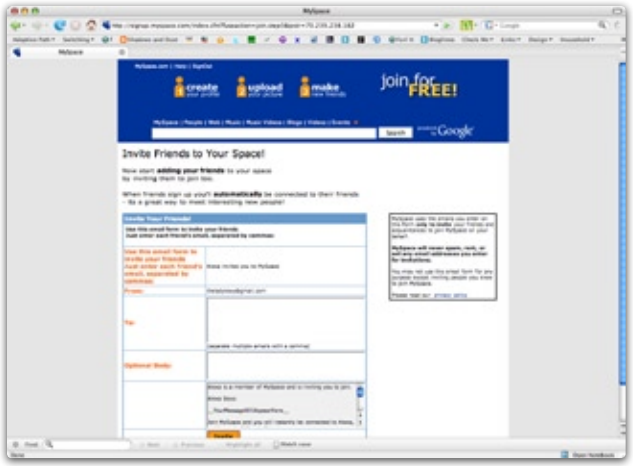


Radar allows you to either enter addresses or import contacts from an external address book. The invites generated include images taken by the user if available. It still sends invites to members who are already on Radar, but clicking the invite does provide clear direction for existing members: "Already a member? Login and friend..." option.

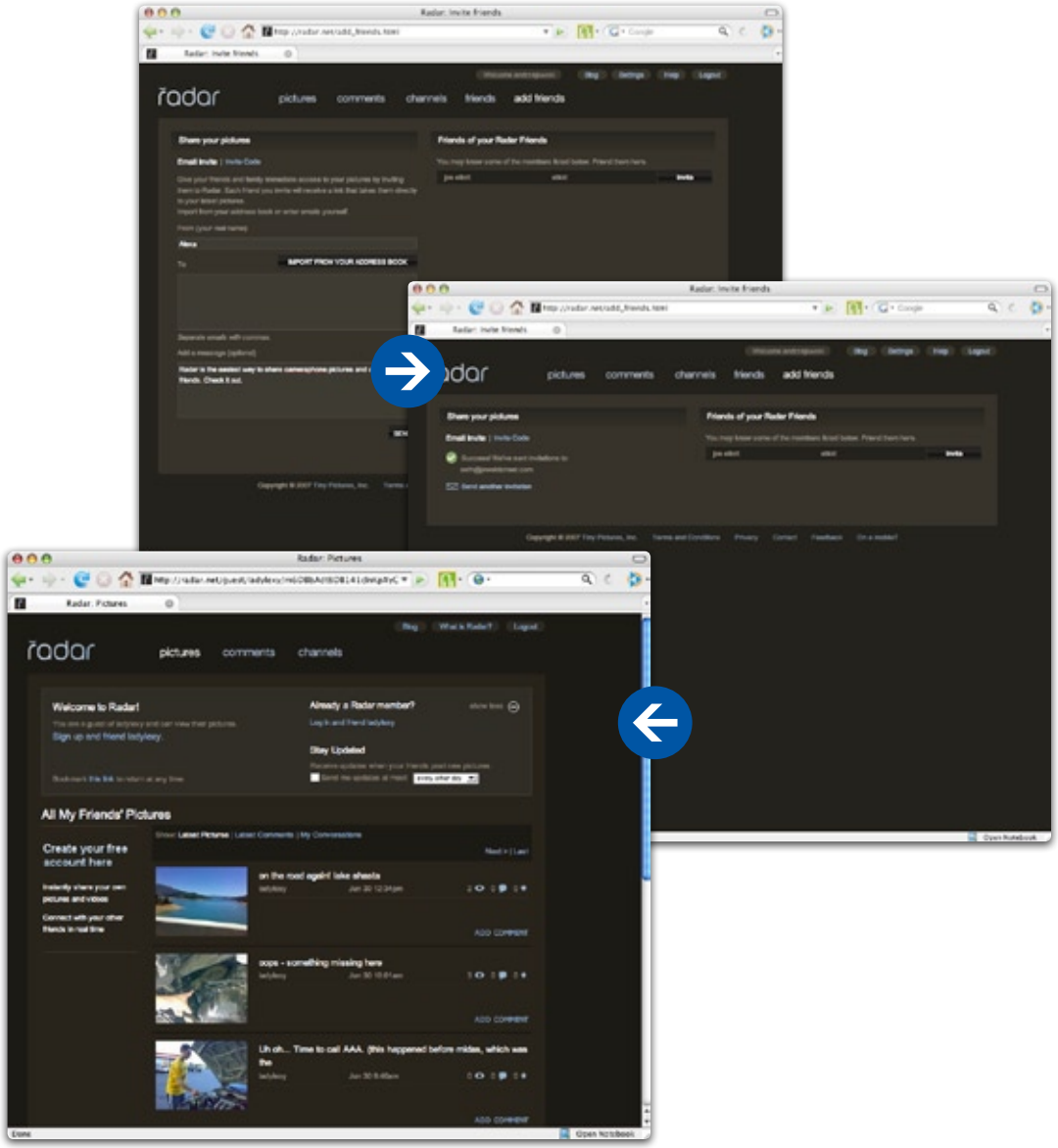
Examples



Linked In



MySpace



Radar

Accelerate initial connection-making.

4.3 Import Contacts

Allowing the user to conduct a bulk search for friends already on the network and to send invites to those who are not by importing external address books.

Use to...

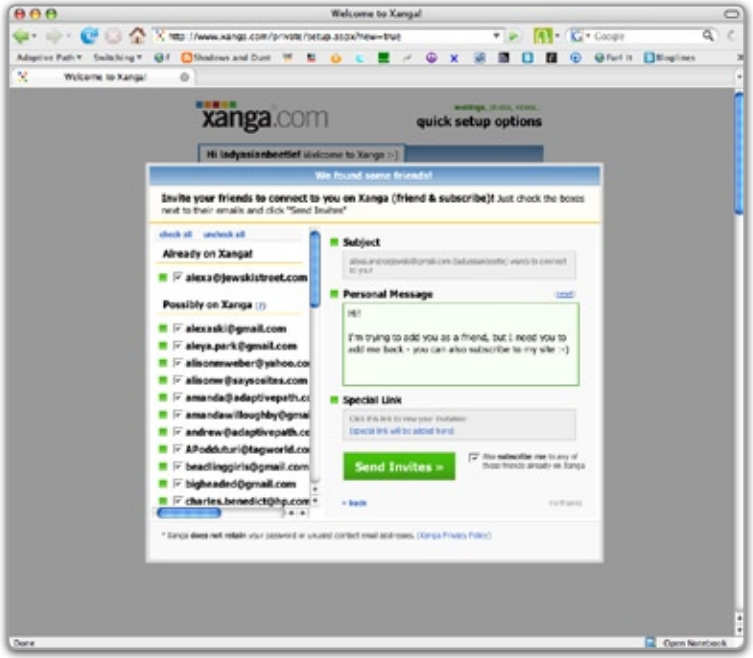
- Help the user find many contacts that they most likely know (vs. search which may bring back many people that the user doesn't know).
- Reduce the need to type in multiple queries or email addresses to quickly find friends.

Caveats

- Users may feel uncomfortable (and rightfully so, given the prevalence of identity theft) giving out their login information for external sites. The perceived benefit must be extremely great or the perceived risk extremely low.
- It assumes that users 1) have webmail accounts and 2) keep their address books up to date. Many users will not fit this description.

Design Guidelines...

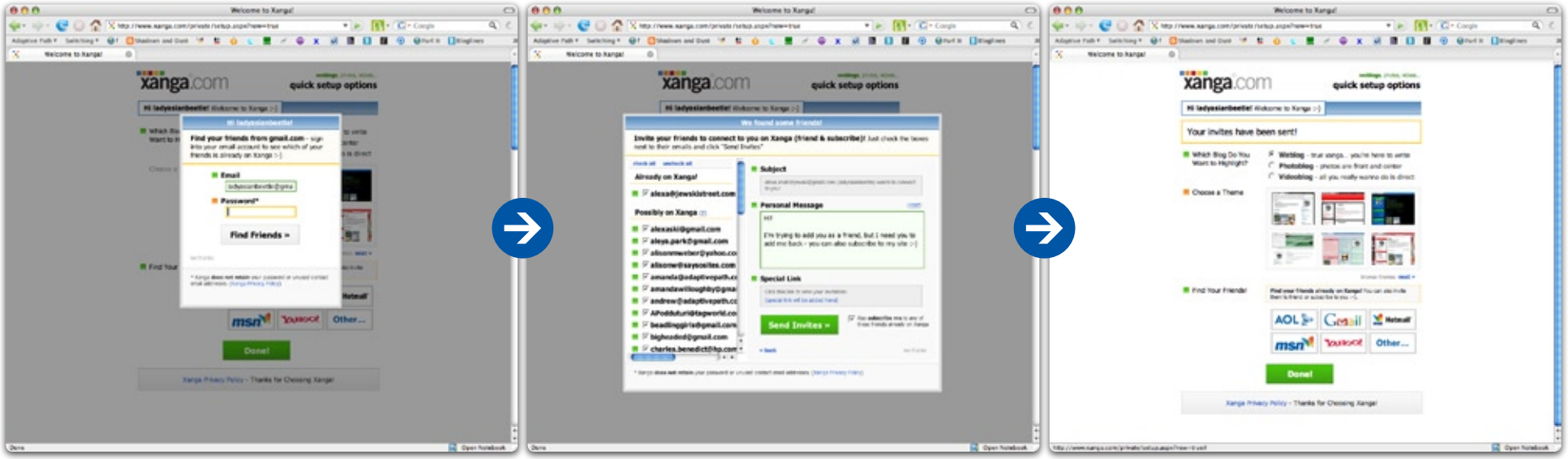
- Provide an alternative means of ramping up the friend list for users who do not want to or can't use the import system.
- Allow the user to import contacts from multiple email addresses/screen names in either a serial (one at a time) or all-at-once fashion. Ideally, allow user to enter login credentials for multiple services in one screen and bring back the consolidated results from all services.
- Make it easy to select the right set of friends. Provide Select All and Deselect all options.
- Show the email address or screen name that was used to find a person.
- Separate, visually or onto separate pages, friends to add and friends to invite.
- Make privacy information prominent. Include a link to a privacy policy.
- Provide a way to back out at all times.
- Give POP mail users a way to import contacts from popular mail applications.
- Consider integrating with an existing service, such as Plaxo.



Xanga allows users to select a service, enter their login credentials, and see results for both friends to add and friends to invite in the same screen. Users can repeat the process for other services until they click "Done."

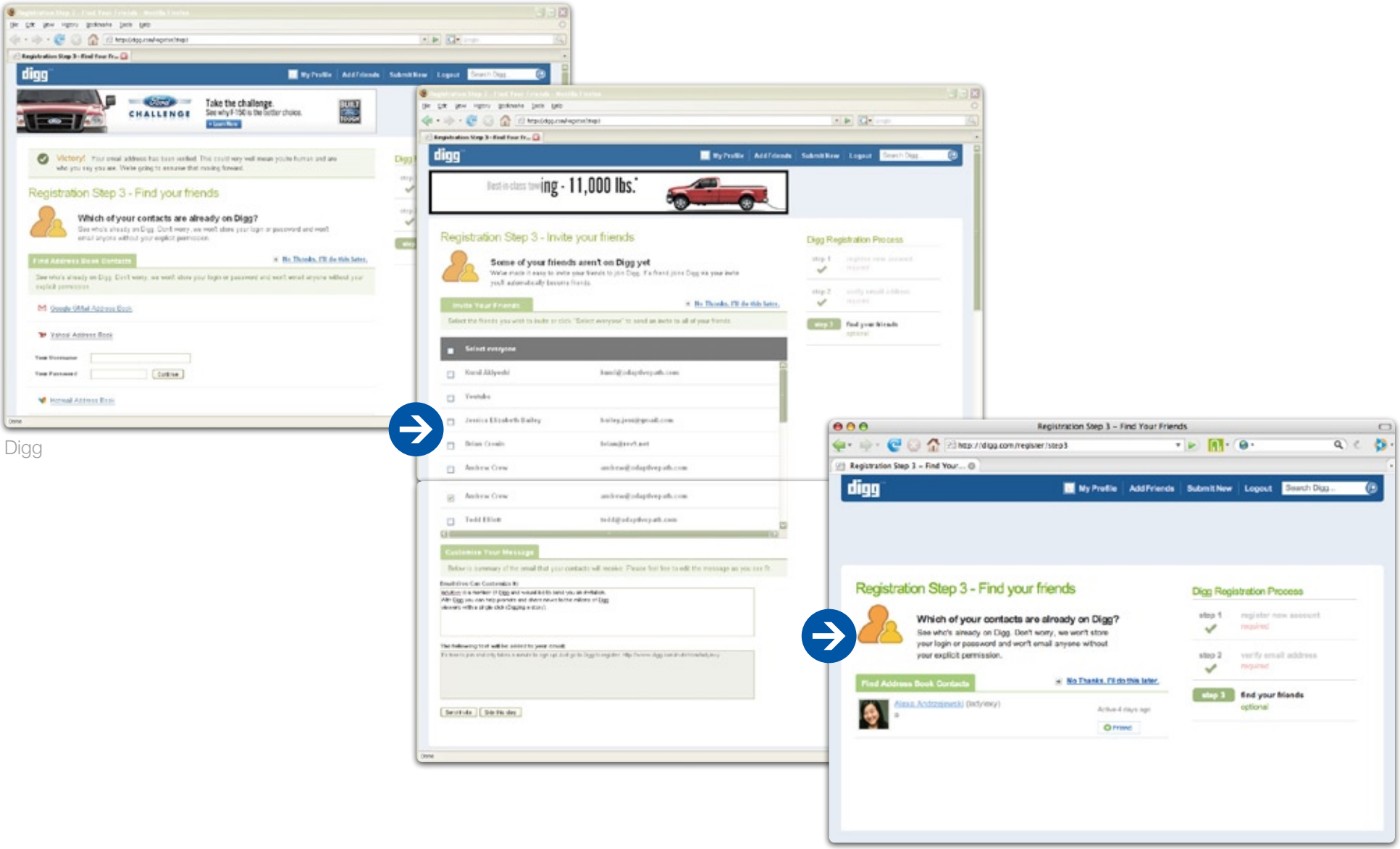
Examples

Radar (powered by Plaxo)

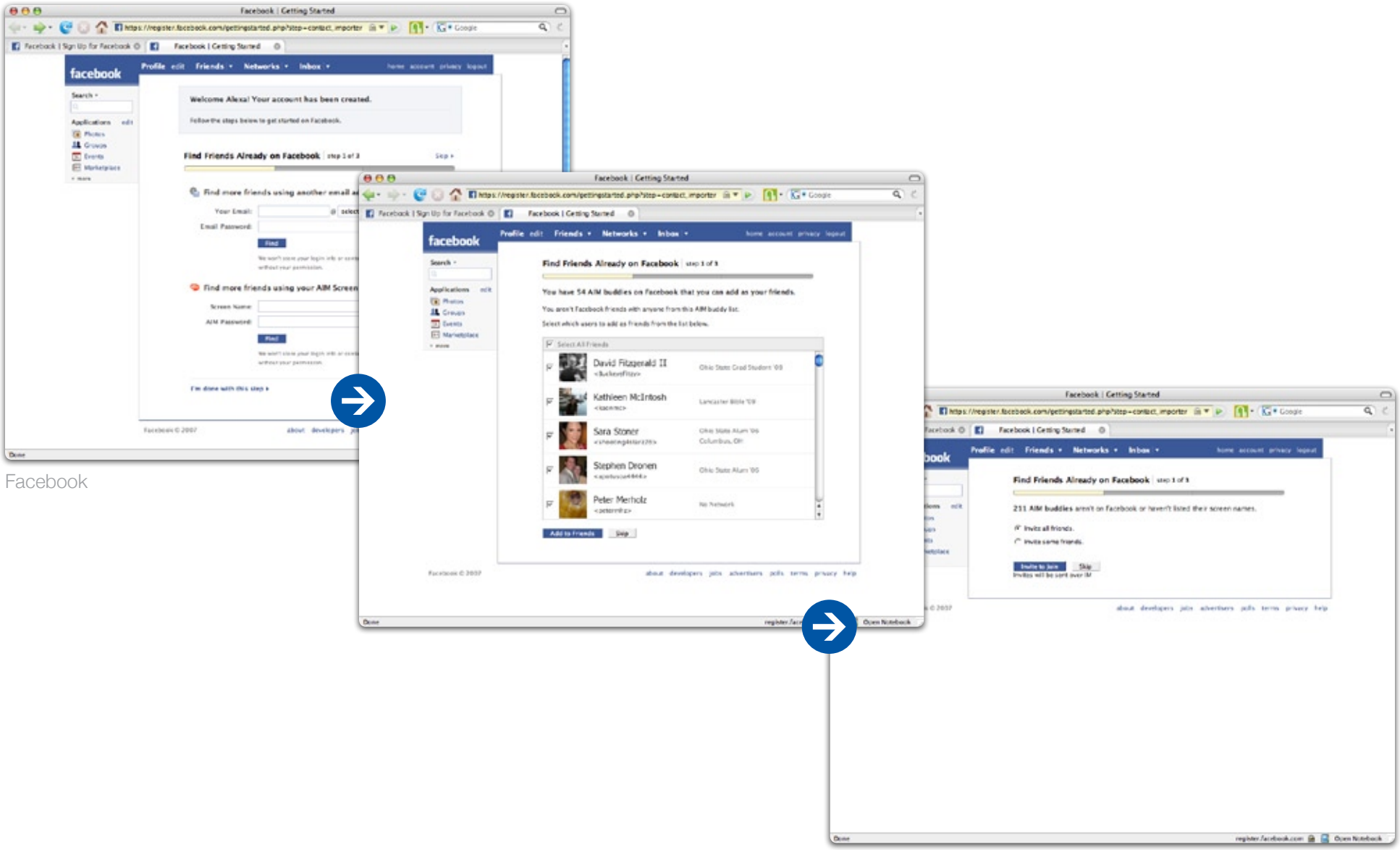


Xanga

Examples



Digg


Facebook | Getting Started
facebook
Welcome Alexa! Your account has been created.
Find Friends Already on Facebook
Find more friends using another email
Find more friends using your AIM Screen
Facebook | Getting Started
facebook
Find Friends Already on Facebook
You have 54 AIM buddies on Facebook that you can add as your friends.
David Fitzgerald II
Kathleen McIntosh
Sara Stoner
Stephen Dronen
Peter Merholz
Add to Friends
Skip
Facebook | Getting Started
Find Friends Already on Facebook
211 AIM buddies aren't on Facebook or haven't listed their screen names.
Invite all friends.
Invite some friends.
Invite to Join
Skip

Facebook

Research conducted by Alexa Andrzejewski for Adaptive Path Inc. in December 2007

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adaptive path