FUR-EVER YOURS

Animal shelter website focusing on pet adoption flow

STEPHANIE YOO  |  September 2021
The product

Fur-ever Yours is a non-existent animal shelter. The focus of this project was to create a responsive website, focusing on the pet adoption flow. The website would provide various information that a non-profit rescue would want to portray to the users. Having focused on the adoption flow, Fur-ever Yours suggests pet matches and search filters for the user to easily find their next pet.

Project duration

September 2021
The goal
Create a responsive website that allows users to intuitively find any adoption related information. Users should also be able to search for specific pets by filters, as well as apply and schedule appointments online.

The problem
Pet adopters often find themselves confused with the pet adoption process, which deters reaching the goal. Adopters would also like be to able to find a pet matching their lifestyle with greater certainty and be able to apply for and set up appointments ahead of time.
PROJECT OVERVIEW

My role
UX designer designing a responsive website for Fur-ever Yours from conception to delivery.

Responsibilities
User research, conducting interviews, paper and digital wireframing, low and high-fidelity prototyping, conducting usability studies, accounting for accessibility, and iterating on designs.
UNDERSTANDING THE USER

User research
Personas
Problem statements
User journey maps
The research began, as it usually does, with the question: who is the user? In this case, the user was fairly simple to identify; a person looking to adopt a pet or find resources related to companion animals. From there, I proceeded to explore questions, such as: what are the goals of the user? What are their challenges? How would I make their experience better?

In order to answer some of these questions, I surveyed current and future pet owners, who would be the target audience for the website. From the interviews, empathy maps and personas were created to embody the users’ key challenges and needs. The personas provided an understanding of the need for easier pet searching and matching, along with the need to be able to submit applications and schedule in-person meetings online.

In addition to the surveys, a competitive audit was conducted, exploring the wide range of animal rescue and breeder sites. The audit helped identify the key components that make up a rescue site and their functions.
USER RESEARCH: PAIN POINTS

1. Confusing Adoption Process
   The adoption process is different for each institution and can cause confusion. Users should be able to intuitively find all of the relevant information.

2. Pet Search & Matching
   Each user has a different set of characteristics or attributes they are looking for in a new pet. There needs to be an easy way for the user to find a match based on their specific needs.

3. Scheduling Appointments
   Due to COVID-19, many shelters restrict the number of people that can be in their space at the same time. Users need to be able to conveniently schedule a date and a time to go meet their potential new pet in person.
Problem statement

Peter Nunez is a father of two adolescent children and one dog, who needs to be able to filter their pet search based on various personality and physical traits, because they want to find a new pet that can fit well with their children and existing dog.
Peter Nunez’s goal is to search for the best matching pet based on personality, activity level, sociability, and other traits. With this in mind, Peter’s journey would focus on browsing through the available pets and reading their biographies before proceeding with the adoption.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>Visit adoption website</th>
<th>Browse the available pets</th>
<th>Review their favorite candidate</th>
<th>Return to the website another day</th>
<th>Start the adoption process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK LIST</td>
<td>Read about the shelter. Look through the dogs. Search for an active, friendly type.</td>
<td>Scroll through available pages. Adjust any filters to review additional options.</td>
<td>Read specific information regarding the animal. Noted it may not be a good match at this time.</td>
<td>Revisit the website. Browse for available dogs. Review a specific dog’s bio, medical information, personality details. Request to meet the dog.</td>
<td>Visit the shelter. Meet the pet. Fill out adoption paperwork. Pay fees. Take them home!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEELING ADJECTIVE</td>
<td>Inquisitive. Optimistic: they will find a match for them. Confused by layout and how to find information.</td>
<td>Surprised at the lack of choices at the current time.</td>
<td>Sad that this initial search didn’t result in a good option.</td>
<td>Satisfied having found a possible option this time. Excited to take the family to meet them in person.</td>
<td>Relieved at having found a good match. Happy. Looking forward to the new life together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES</td>
<td>Add clear, easy-to-register pages for digesting all of the information.</td>
<td>Allow multiple filter options for search optimization.</td>
<td>Option to email specific pet to themselves. New information on when or how often new animals are added to the website.</td>
<td>Provide information on how to arrange a meeting with the family and existing dog. Provide a date range for expected meeting availability.</td>
<td>Option to fill out paperwork online to keep on file.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problem statement
Alena Weng is a meticulous and busy entrepreneur, who needs to be able to set up an appointment online to meet the potential cat, because they want to make sure the cat is available at the time their schedule allows.
Alena’s user journey is a bit different in that she isn’t as focused on specific characteristics, but rather making sure the pet she chooses is available to meet in person when her schedule allows. To do this, she would be looking to apply online and set up an appointment, if possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>Browse the available pets for adoption</th>
<th>Choose a pet</th>
<th>Start the adoption process</th>
<th>Visit the shelter &amp; take new pet home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| TASK LIST | • Review shelter information  
• Browse by animal  
• Sort animals by age  
• Look for how-to regarding adoption | • Click or scroll through the pages of animals  
• Select one to see in depth  
• Read animal information and biography | • Click “Adopt me” to start the adoption process  
• Look for any step-by-step guide on how the adoption works | • Travel to shelter  
• Wait and meet the chosen candidate  
• Spend time with them and decide to proceed with the adoption |
| FEELING ADJECTIVE | • Eager to look at all the adorable animals  
• Sad at seeing how many are without homes | • Optimistic on finding a pet she likes  
• Overwhelmed at all of the possibilities | • Excited to see the pet in person  
• Trusting that the website gave the right information | • Nervous about bringing home a new life  
• Curious how they will act at the new home  
• Excited to have a new friend for life |
| IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES | • Have a page dedicated to information on adoption process & any common FAQs | • Provide comparison option for side-by-side information | • Allow paperwork to be submitted online  
• Add appointment option to schedule a meeting  
• Send email with adoption process insights and appointment confirmation | • Provide list of required supplies prior to visit  
• Send clear instructions on how to proceed once at the shelter |
STARTING THE DESIGN

- Paper wireframes
- Digital wireframes
- Low-fidelity prototype
- Usability studies
Starting with the homepage, I wrote down a list of items that I wanted to portray to the user upfront. This included a hero image, a navigation method, the logo, and most importantly, information and images related to the adoption. The frame that I pursued married all of those components neatly, with a top navigation bar, a large hero image containing the logo, and step-by-step directional cards related to the adoption process. A footer was also added to the page. This process was conducted to the remaining pages that needed development.
The hero image would be used to tell Fur-ever Yours’ main story. It could be changed to promote events or vary by season. The different sections are padded with negative space to ensure the information they portray can be digested in small portions. Upon scrolling down on the homepage, adoption steps will be laid out with top level information to lead the user to the necessary pages.

Top navigation bar includes a modified logo, as well as the website categories.

Large hero image/video take up most of the user’s screen when they enter the website. The logo and a brief message would be reinforced on top of the image.

One of the features developed to help the adopter is a pet matching quiz. It is displayed on the homepage, so the user cannot miss it.

The adoption steps, linking to their corresponding pages are clearly displayed.

The footer reinforces Fur-ever Yours’ logo, contact info, as well as providing a sitemap for accessibility.
To keep with the responsiveness of the website, additional wireframes were laid out in mobile screen sizes. The right reflects two pages: homepage and Adoption page. Images and text were scaled down to fit better in a mobile format, as well as revising the alignment of some elements to better suit the scrolling experience.

The hero image was scaled to keep general landscape proportions, but fit better on the mobile screen.

The “mission” objects were scaled into blocks and eliminated text to explore pop up animation.

The top navigation bars were changed to the hamburger menu.

A few instances of the content would be shown, with a “learn more” button to navigate the user to the relevant page.

The footer was stacked vertically, from its previous horizontal alignment to better fit the mobile screen.
A sitemap was laid out to identify the necessary categories of the website. From there I focused on designing the “Adopt” pages which would be the most relevant for the user’s pet adoption flow.
The yellow arrows show the pet adoption flow that the user would be able to take. This journey begins from the homepage and leads the users to the adoption "how to"s. The top navigation bar allows the user to enter the process from different points. Each subpage of the Adoption category also links to the other pages, to help propel the user to the end goal.

Low-fidelity prototype link
USABILITY STUDY: PARAMETERS

Study type: Unmoderated usability research study

Location: United States, remote (Each participant will complete the study in their own home)

Participants: Participants are current or future pet owners, consisting of three males, four females between the ages of 20 and 60

Length: Each session lasted 10 to 15 minutes, based on a list of prompts
Using sticky notes, the user’s observations and comments were grouped for easier interpretation. The three groupings were: general website flow, task related observations, and tone.
Users were generally happy with the clean and friendly layout of the website and the pet adoption flow. There are a couple tweaks necessary to help guide all of the users, consisting of better explanations and prompts, revised search filter functions, and visual indications leading to the application end goal.

<table>
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<th>Finding</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top navigation bar is intuitive and used often by visitors</td>
<td>Pet matching quiz is not a common activity on most rescue websites and may require additional explanation or prompts for users to partake in it</td>
<td>Search filters caused confusion and will need revision to allow for multiple selections and better visual cues</td>
<td>Some users had difficulty finding or submitting the application from the pet’s bio page. A better indication of the application button will be necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFINING THE DESIGN

Design specifications
Mockups
High-fidelity prototype
Accessibility
The main colors chosen to represent the brand were a dark blue, a bright yellow, and two shades of green. The colors were chosen to embody a sense of nature, while presenting classic and friendly tones. The typography and component shapes utilized rounded elements to help support the friendly tones as well.

Design specs can be found here
The main change to the adoptable animal page is in the search filter. The previous filter did not allow for multiple options to be selected. The update created checkboxes that help the user select as many options as they would like, and added "Reset" & "Done" buttons with colors that stand out, so the user is able to better finish their selection. Unnecessary text below the main header was also eliminated for a cleaner look.
A few changes were made to the layout of the pet’s bio page. The “Back” button was eliminated, as most users function with the browser’s back button, but a clickable link of “View Available Pets” was left at the top, should the need arise. A bright, bold button was added to the center of the page below the animal’s photos and basic information, as to lead the user to the application, which was previously hidden below the end of the biography.
The homepage shows mini-views of what the website has to offer, starting with the company's story, the adoption process, and other resources. The user is able to click on the top navigation bar for all of the information related to the adoption process. This includes step-by-step instructions on how the process works, the pet matching quiz which leads them to suggested pets and the pet bios, the pet search, application and appointments, and finally a frequently asked questions page. From the pet matching quiz or search pages, the user is able to select on a pet of their choosing. Upon reading the bio, there is an application button which leads the user right to an online form that can be submitted. At this point, they can choose to request an appointment to secure a timeslot that works best for them.

High-fidelity prototype link
HI-FIDELITY PROTOTYPE: MOBILE

The layout was adapted from the desktop layouts to provide a better experience for the mobile user. Some of the changes for this include allowing left and right scrollable options for certain cards, scaling the image sizes to better fit, and changing the alignment of buttons. The top bar was revised to include a hamburger menu on the left, a centered logo, and the cart icon.

High-fidelity prototype link
ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Color**
The colors used abide by the color contrast accessibility guidelines to ensure all users can easily view the content and buttons necessary to navigate the app.

2. **Size**
The font and component sizes are large enough for clear visibility, and can be scaled larger as needed.

3. **Heading Hierarchy**
The hierarchy of the headings allow screen readers to navigate the page in sequential order and assist the user stay organized in the navigation flow.
GOING FORWARD

Takeaways

Next steps
The responsive website for Fur-ever Yours is a convenient and insightful method for any persons looking to adopt pets. The website and its adaptive screen sizes show a clean, thoughtful, and friendly design that guide the user to a successful adoption goal. Reducing the challenges that users often face in the pet adoption process leads to more successful adoptions, thereby declining the number of homeless animals!

One quote from peer feedback:
“This website is as cute as the critters on them! It laid everything out in order and made the search so easy!”

Given the project’s focus on responsive design, I learned the importance of being able to adapt to multiple screen sizes. Depending on the format that the user is utilizing, their interactions with the screen and buttons vary, leading to a different user experience. Adapting to these different motions, sizes, and animations help create a hassle-free flow for the visitor and aid in a pleasant overall experience.
**NEXT STEPS**

1. **Usability Study**
   Conduct another round of usability studies with a wider range of participants to confirm the pet adoption flow is working as intended.

2. **User Research**
   Conduct additional user research to determine any additional areas of need, such as the donation platform or SWAG shop.

3. **Accessibility**
   Further include accessibility factors, such as navigation order annotations, additional language considerations, and adding labels to the interactive UI elements on the web page.
Thank you for your time reviewing my work on Fur-ever Yours responsive website!

For additional information, to see my other works, or to get in touch, my information is provided below.

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Thank you!