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Helping vinspired transform the notion of youth volunteering

vinspired.com is a youth volunteering website with the mission to inspire a new generation of 16-to-25 year olds to help others by doing more of the things they already enjoy. vinspired wished to understand more about how young people are interacting with communities and brands through digital media, and how it could use its online presence to change attitudes and behaviours. A key question was whether vinspired should itself become an online community for young people to share their volunteering experiences and so motivate others.

In-home ethnographic research to explore real behaviours

We recruited 12 young people reflecting a range of social backgrounds and academic achievement. We had them talk about and show us the online communities and brands they valued in their daily lives, and how they interacted online with the communities they felt part of. We explored their aims and ambitions, and their interests and pastimes. We also discussed their attitudes towards volunteering and the role a website could play in making it relevant to them.

Young people *will* act on opportunities that match their aims and interests

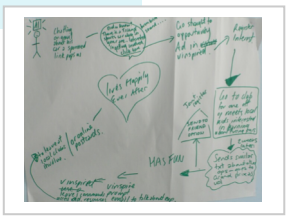
We were surprised at just how interested in volunteering young people were when opportunities fitted their aims and interests. For example, one participant who wanted to become a DJ would love to help out at a community radio station – but didn't consider this as volunteering. While people won't go out looking to volunteer they will respond to relevant opportunities that are brought to their attention, whether to pursue an interest or help them start a career. Embedding a relevant message in the context of young people's daily lives can encourage them to consider volunteering and visit vinspired.com to search for opportunities.

Google and Facebook were valued more highly than overtly-youth brands

Google and Facebook were the brands most central to our participants' online lives. They valued them above more overtly-youth brands like Nike. They made a distinction between social networking sites like Facebook and community-of-interest sites like MTV forums where people interact with strangers about matters of shared interest. They don't want vinspired to become another social networking site but they would like the opportunity to read and post comments on specific volunteering opportunities – like on a community-of-interest site.

Ideation workshop to translate insights into actions, features and functions

Following the research we facilitated ideation activities with vinspired to leverage the insights and identify relevant opportunities for marketing and site development. We made use of personas, scenarios and an understanding of the key trigger factors to generate ideas that would meet the needs of young people with differing motivations and reasons for becoming interested in volunteering.



What vinspired had to say about our research and ideation process

"*new experience* thought about what we were asking. I'm confident that thanks to new experience's input the website we've just launched is going to better meet users' needs." *Martin Curley, web development manager, vinspired*

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