

# UXD740 Assignment 2 (Contextualisation)

In this essay, I'll provide a brief overview of my research findings, explain how they have informed my software concept, and offer some considerations for further iteration.

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## Key Interpretations

My research evidenced a pattern in the tech industry where communication between remote team members is hindered by instant messaging (IM) platforms. I felt my most humanly significant<sup>1</sup> finding was that the interviewees found it difficult to interpret the tone of incoming messages and communicate their desired tone in outgoing messages. This pattern seemed to be most prevalent in young professionals, i.e. those who were earliest in their careers. They reported particular anxiety around interpreting and communicating tone.

Interestingly, most of my interviewees regarded video calling as a more appropriate medium of communication than instant messaging. Video call seemed to be preferred for the ability to see non-verbal communications. They relied on their communication partners' cues (expressions, body language, and the like) to gauge how they were being interpreted. They could then reframe what they were saying 'on the fly' to more accurately communicate tone and content.

By comparison, not having this 'real-time' feedback over text comms left individuals second guessing their messages. Several interviewees reported spending excessive time reading (and re-reading) their messages before sending them, slowing the communication process.

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<sup>1</sup> Here I echo Rowan and Reason's (1981) comment on their preference for qualitative (over quantitative) research in human inquiry; "*Orthodox research produces results which are statistically significant but humanly insignificant; in human inquiry it is much better to be deeply interesting than accurately Boring*". I think this passage eloquently captures my rationale for applying a qualitative research method in assignment 1.

# Concept Introduction

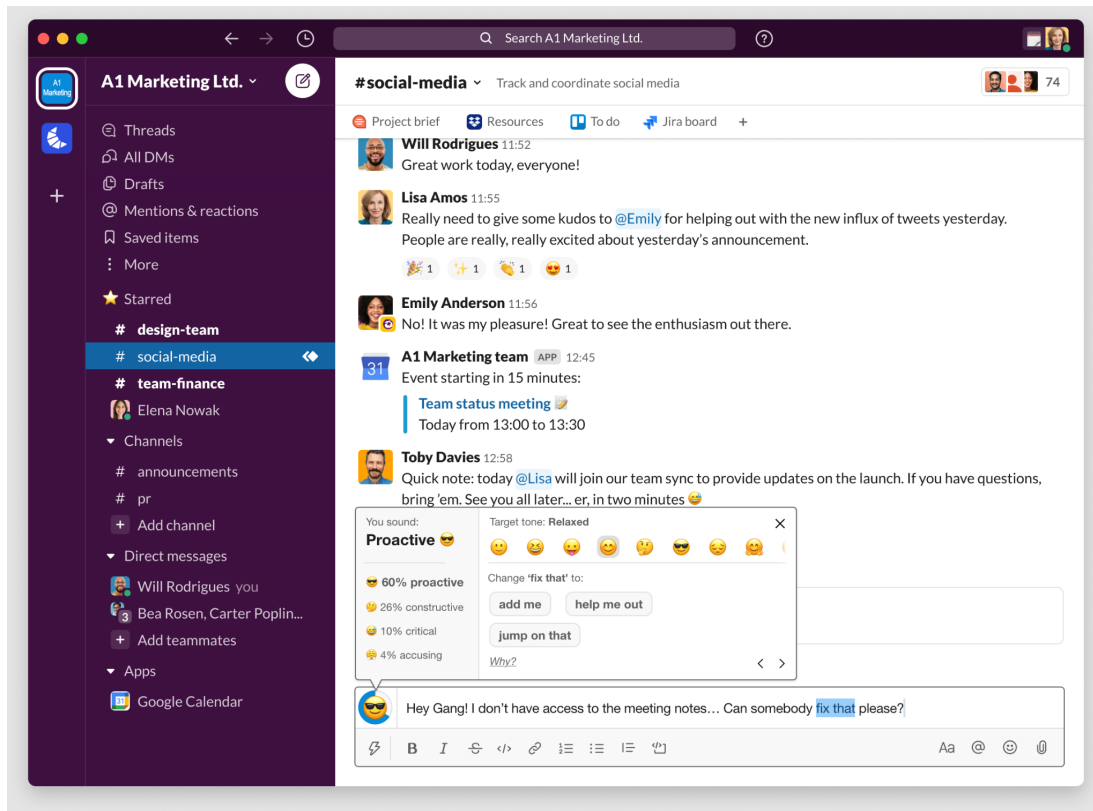
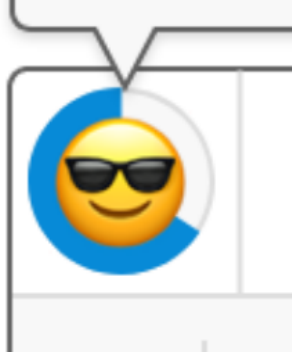


Figure 1: A screenshot of my UXD740 prototype.

My intention behind this concept is to give those young professionals a means of gauging how their tone might be perceived as they write their message. To communicate my idea, I have used a screenshot from Slack's media kit (2020)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> I have used images from Slack's media kit and recreated Slack's styling simply to provide context for my prototype. I imagine that, as a third-party tool, my concept could be integrated with any IM platform, and the UI styling would be customized accordingly.



*Figure 2: A close-up of my 'at a glance' tone indicator.*

I have used emoji-based visual indicators, seen in figure 2, to give users 'at a glance' feedback on their tone. I have done this to give users confidence in the tone of their writing. I hope that this would empower them to moderate their time spent on proof reading messages, improving the flow of their discussions.

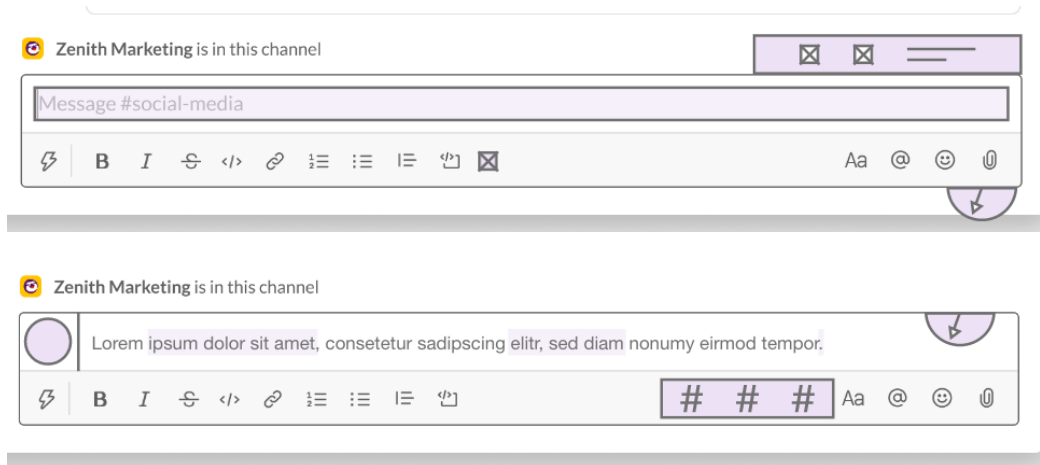
It should be noted that I have used emojis to represent tones as I interpret them in this iteration. In GDD750, I will carry out a card sorting usability test to pair emojis and tones without the influence of my own assumptions (Sherwin, 2018).

My concept would leverage machine learning to suggest changes based on the user's desired tone. If everyone in a team had access to such a tool, messages with ambiguous tone would become more sporadic. In turn, I would expect that anxiety around the tone of messages, incoming or outgoing, would be reduced.

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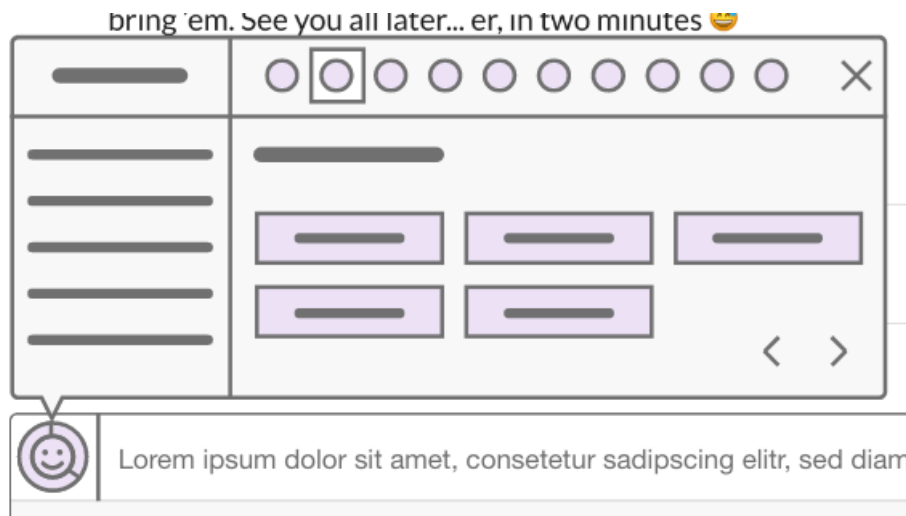
## Product Feasibility

Early in my ideation process, I explored the idea of designing a standalone instant messaging platform. Given the enormity of the products such a solution would need to compete with, I quickly moved on from this idea.



*Figure 3: screenshots of my wireframing process, where I explored positioning for my UI over Slack's MacOS client.*

Drawing inspiration from Tenor's GIF keyboard, I instead moved forward with the idea of a third-party service that would integrate with users' workspaces— Slack, Discord, MS Teams, and the like. I explored various ways of overlaying my concept interface onto these platforms in my early wireframing phase, as seen in figure 3.



*Figure 4: an early wireframe of the concept I carried into the prototyping phase.*

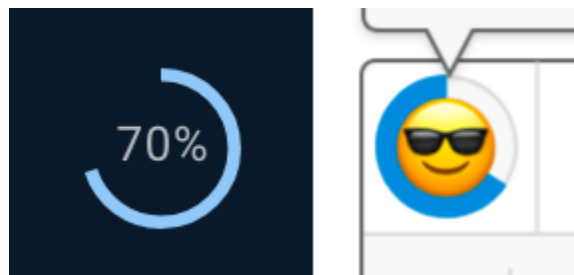
My objective here was to find a position that didn't obscure the rest of the interface, and would be suitable for any messaging client. I believe that embedding my UI in the edge of the input field (seen in figure 4) has achieved this.

In a real-world setting, my product would be an API; my prototype is intended to show a 'best practice' application of the API on Slack. If I continue with this concept in GDD750, I plan to complete a more in-depth comparator analysis on Tenor to understand how they have facilitated their widespread integration with other products.

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## Final Reflections

If the current iteration of my prototype was released as a functional product, I don't believe that it would fulfill its intended purpose. The unique selling point of my concept is rapid feedback on written tone from inside the users' digital workspace. The indicator that I have designed to provide this feedback is inspired by MUI's circular progress indicators.



*Figure 5: A side-by-side comparison of MUI's circular progress indicator (with label) and my 'at a glance' tone indicator.*

The problem here is that the progress indicator in combination with an emoji could be confusing. For example, if a user wrote a message that sounded "70% irritated", the progress indicator would appear 70% full. If that user edited their message to be "40% friendly", the bar would then appear 40% full. This might suggest to the user that they are further from their desired tone, despite their edits bringing them closer to their goal.

In its current state, the 'at a glance' tone indicator is counterintuitive. In my next iteration I will need to reconsider my use of percentages and circular progress indicators.

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**Figure 2:** A close-up of my 'at a glance' tone indicator.

**Figure 3:** screenshots of my wireframing process, where I explored positioning for my UI over Slack's MacOS client.

**Figure 4:** an early wireframe of the concept I carried into the prototyping phase.

**Figure 5:** A side-by-side comparison of MUI's circular progress indicator (with label) and my 'at a glance' tone indicator.

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## References

MUI. 'Circular, Linear progress React Components'. Available at: <https://mui.com/components/progress/> [accessed 10/01/2022].

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