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Competitive Analysis

The following describes a competitive analysis of 5 products for a single feature of a hydration / water intake application. Though these are not all competitors in the traditional sense, they serve purposes that are similar enough to be leveraged and studied for their positive lessons and issues to avoid in designing our product.

Feature: Personalized recommendations tailored to the user (Matt Soave)

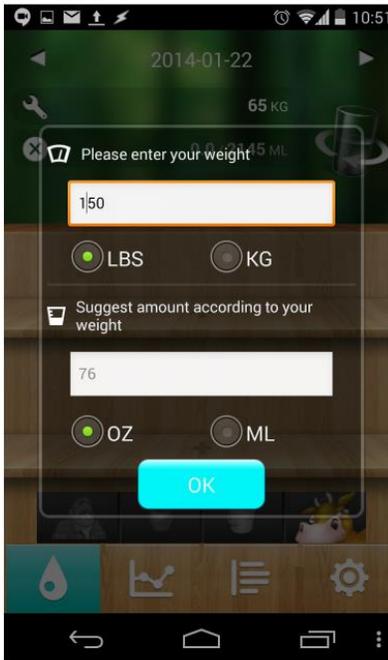
One of the primary features of the product we will be designing is a recommendation engine that provides guidance for the user's water-drinking habits based upon data that is unique to them.

We envision a first-time 'getting started' process that asks the user for information about themselves, such as their fitness level, their daily activity, and their climate – all factors that affect the amount of water individuals need to drink on a daily basis. We also envision that the app will gather more data about the user as they use the app in order to better understand their needs and tailor their recommendations accordingly.

We are interested in examining competitors that use compelling, interesting, or educational 'getting started' processes to make user recommendations.

Water Your Body (Android app)

Water Your Body is a simple water intake tracking application, making it more of a competitor than some of the other applications included here. Its simple goal is to show you how you are doing against a basic hydration goal as you input the number of water vessels you have drank.



Positive | Lessons to Learn

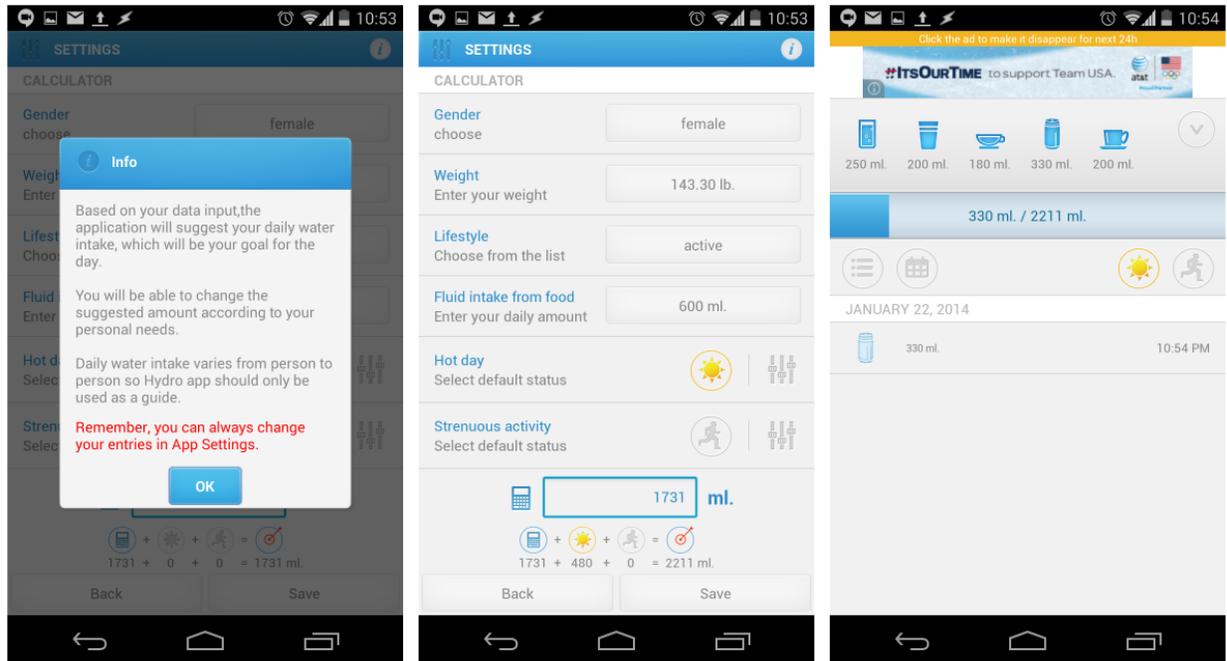
- The introduction process is simple, providing only a single field of entry. This means it's very quick to get to the application itself and begin tracking your water intake.
- The application lets you choose between different units, which is important for localization. This is important to keep in mind in order for the app to be more adoptable outside of the US.

Negative | Issues to Avoid

- The form is far too simple to capture all of the differing variables that influence water consumption. As a potential user, this makes me less likely to trust the app's effectiveness.

Hydro (Android app)

Hydro is another water intake tracking application, again making it more of a competitor. Its goal is similar to Water Your Body, but provides a more robust recommendation system.



Positive | Lessons to Learn

- The introductory process begins with an informative dialog box explaining why you would want to fill out the form accurately, i.e. that water intake goals vary from person to person based on a number of factors. The introductory text gives the user confidence that the recommendation is going to be based on factors that the app's developer has likely researched to some extent. It also prepares the user for the next screen.
- The form includes additional factors such as "hot day" and "strenuous activity," so it's clear that the goal is more tailored to the user's needs.
- The graphics at the bottom provide a simple visualization of how the water needs are calculated, i.e. by adding up the water needs associated with some of the variables. It's easy to see, for example, that hot weather requires more water.
- Upon finishing the setup, the home screen includes two buttons for quickly toggling "hot day" and "strenuous activity." That these controls are easily within reach is nice for the user since these factors are dynamic; rather than hiding these items in a settings menu, they are elevated to the home screen for easy access. We should keep in mind the things that change on a day to day basis and make them easy to change.

Negative | Issues to Avoid

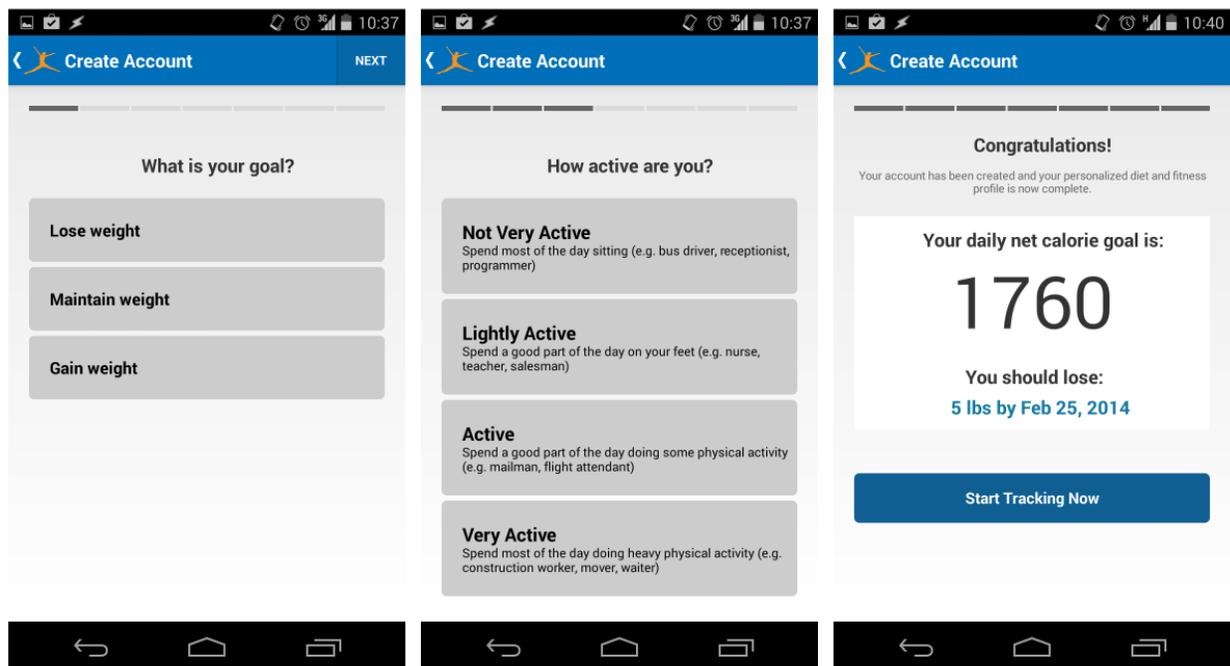
- "Fluid intake from food" is likely very difficult to quantify, and the user may feel unsure or even frustrated if they don't know what number to enter. It might be best to leave it out and instead remind users that the average person of their weight

typically intake X amount of water through their food, more as an educational piece than as a primary variable.

- The options for “hot day” and “strenuous activity” are nice, but it’s up to the user to figure out what effect that has on their water needs – the user must input a volume amount for each one, despite having no basis with which to calculate the volume each adds.

MyFitnessPal (Android app)

MyFitnessPal is an application that helps users attain weight-related goals by enabling them to keep track of their calorie intake on a daily basis. The application makes a recommendation for the number of calories that the user should aim to consume each day, a number derived from several factors that the user inputs when they register, such as their activity level, body size, and goal.



Positive | Lessons to Learn

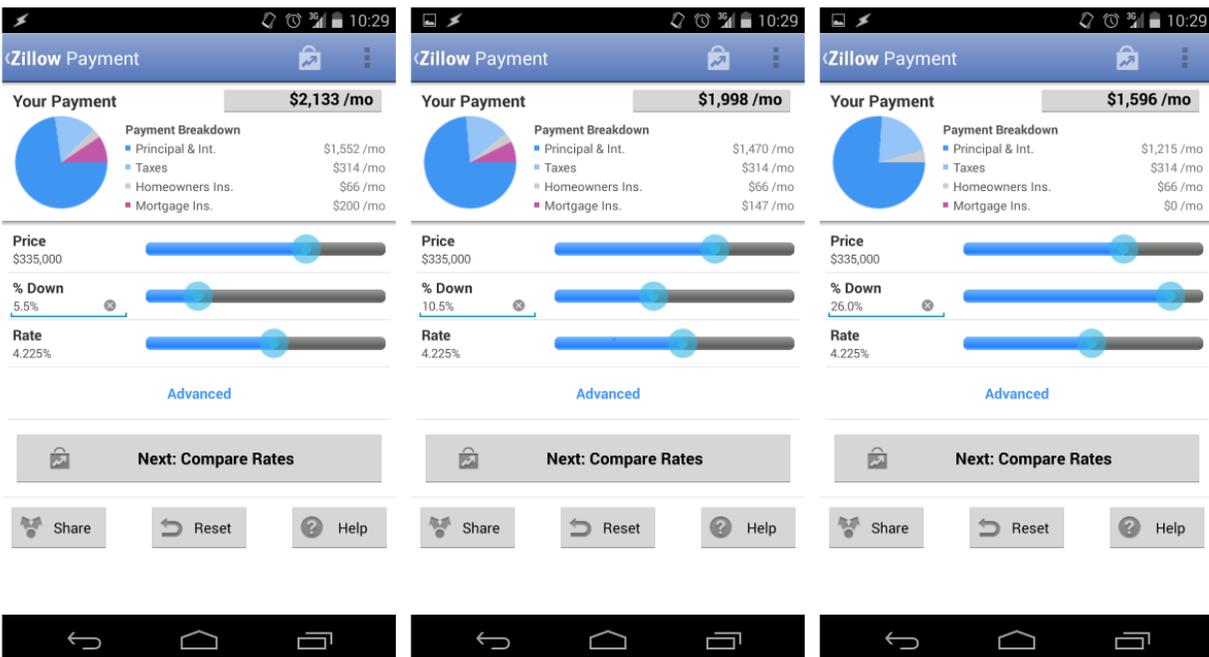
- The setup process used here is simple, asking just one or two related questions at a time, so that the user doesn’t feel overwhelmed. This also makes the start-up process user friendly and easy.
- The end of the process provides the user with a specific goal that they should try to meet and informs them what the result will be (“You should lose: 5lbs by Feb 25, 2014”). By relating the number to a real-world goal, the app better motivates the user.

Negative | Issues to Avoid

- Throughout the registration process, the user doesn't have any insight into how each piece of data affects their daily calorie goal. This is a missed opportunity for educating the user about the factors that affect their dietary needs; showing the estimated calorie target based upon the data the user has entered so far would be an easy way to educate users about how each answer affects their needs. In our product, we will want to make sure that we are helping the user understand how each piece of data affects the amount of water they need. This might involve simple explanatory text, or perhaps a volume of water that changes as the user drags a slider from side to side, providing a direct link between the factor and its effect.
- The app drops the user into the setup process without explaining why they should be interested in doing it (i.e., that it is going to tell them how many calories they should eat). We will want to make sure that our application provides a brief introduction so that the user doesn't just feel like they are taking a survey, but are instead contributing to something that will benefit them.

Zillow Mortgage Calculator and Rates (Android app)

The Zillow Mortgage Calculator and Rates application lets users adjust several factors to determine how much their monthly mortgage payment will be. Though the application is outside of the domain of personal health and fitness, its design lessons are still valuable in the sense that the app prescribes or predicts a value based upon data that is specifically applicable to you.



Positive | Lessons to Learn

- The mortgage calculator provides the opportunity to also provide more advanced factors, such as HOA dues, loan term, and property taxes. While the non-advanced inputs are likely the primary drivers behind the calculation, users who desire a more accurate estimation can choose to provide more data. Especially for users who are heavily interested in keeping data about themselves (the 'quantified self' culture), some individuals may desire these more precise controls. Again, it's also an opportunity for more education about hydration requirements. Overall, this approach offers the best of both worlds – users who want simplicity can get a good estimation without much effort, while detail-oriented users can take their time and get a more exact target.
- The graph and results update in real-time as the user makes changes to the form, showing the user precisely how each piece affects their monthly payment. This is valuable because it can serve as a powerful educational piece about how monthly payments are determined. Applied to our application, users might make other positive life choices based just upon the way their hydration needs change with each factor they input. For example, if a higher body weight has a clear effect on the amount of water they need, users might be encouraged to lose weight as well.

Negative | Issues to Avoid

- With all the data inputs on the same screen, it can be overwhelming and users may accidentally miss one or more of the inputs.
- The overall visual design is weak and unengaging. It doesn't feel like a professional app, and users may be less willing to use it or even download it in the first place (if they see screenshots in the app store). The lack of polish may also detract from the app's credibility.

CalorieKing (Web)

The CalorieKing website provides a very simple tool to estimate the number of calories you need to lose, maintain, or gain weight, depending upon your goal. The caloric range is calculated from height, weight, gender, and activity level. The process is simple, visually appealing, and quick.

CalorieKing™ Login

Products Tools Store Blog Help Members

How many calories should you eat?

Find out in two simple steps

1 About you

The amount of calories you should eat every day depends on a few things:

- Age, height and gender
- Daily activity level
- If you want to lose, maintain or gain weight

Your calorie needs depend on your lifestyle. Someone constantly chasing toddlers needs more fuel than an office worker.

Height: 6 ft 0 in

Weight: 175 lbs

Age: 30

Gender: Male

Go

2 What best describes your daily activity level?

NOT including exercise

136 to 183 lbs is your healthy weight range

Lose Maintain Gain

To lose weight you should eat **1650 to 1850** calories per day

This calorie target will allow you to lose weight at a healthy and sustainable rate of 1 to 2 lbs per week.

How do I count calories?

Share this page We don't share your details

Positive | Lessons to Learn

- The website is nicely branded and is very visually appealing. This provides credibility and likely enhances the user's perception of the service. We will want to make sure that we maintain a professional and polished appearance, while trying to align to brand goals that the client has identified (e.g. that the app should have a personality).
- The site's steps are progressive, and it uses transitions and animations to reveal the next section, which may be more engaging to users.
- The data input process is very simple. There are few variables, which makes it easy for the user to quickly get a calorie estimate.
- Rather than provide a specific number, the website provides a calorie range. While some users may desire a more precise, it may be nice to remind users that what really matters is improving your habits rather than fussing over hitting a precise number. CalorieKing likely doesn't want their users to worry about counting every single calorie, instead preferring that they make better choices that approximate their goal. Perhaps we could leverage this to show a specific water amount goal but combine this with target ranges that identify optimal, mediocre, and poor amounts.

- At the end of the page, there are recommendations for how to keep track of calories. CalorieKing uses this to sell their different products. We could consider introducing our different product options here, especially if we have multiple hardware pieces. Choosing a device could even be based upon data input as well.

Negative | Issues to Avoid

- There is not a lot of information about each factor and its effects on caloric needs.
- Its simplicity may also be a problem because it doesn't take all variables into account. This might result in a less accurate goal. However, the range they provide makes it clear that it's a rough estimate, and they are probably less interested in providing a specific number, as described above.
- Even though the form is short, the result is still not shown until the end. While the site provides a quick list of things that affect caloric needs, the goal does not update dynamically, which provides less feedback for the user.