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6.813 HW2: Heuristic Evaluation – MealMates
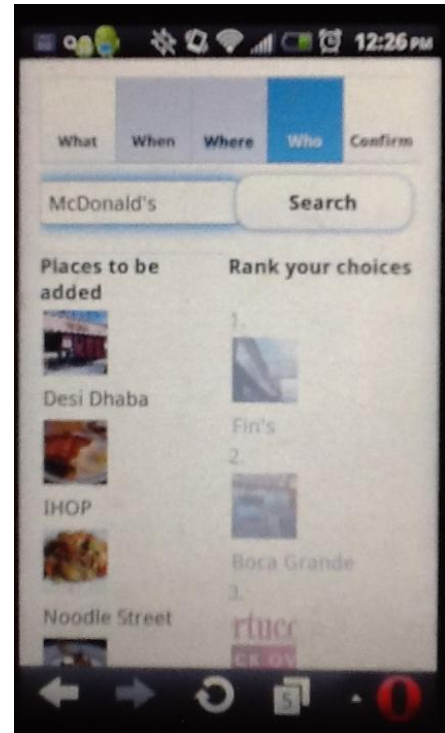
The Good

1. Tabs for creating a new meal.
   Severity: good
   Heuristic: Visible navigation, User control and freedom
   The 'What, When, Where, Who, Confirm' tabs are a great way to allow flexible navigation through the screens. A couple potential improvements would be to make them a bit smaller (they're using a lot of extra space at the top), and to provide some sort of feedback that the information is saved when the user goes between tabs. *The tabs don't work sometimes – I can't seem to get to the 'Confirm' screen, and the tabs sometimes turn grey but don't actually respond to clicking on them. (problem shown on the right)

2. Clean design with good use of white space.
   Severity: good
   Heuristic: Aesthetic and minimalist design
   The design is simple and very learnable. Nice choice of fonts and colors.

3. 'Hi, Justin!' at the top of the home screen provides good feedback that the user is logged in to his own account.
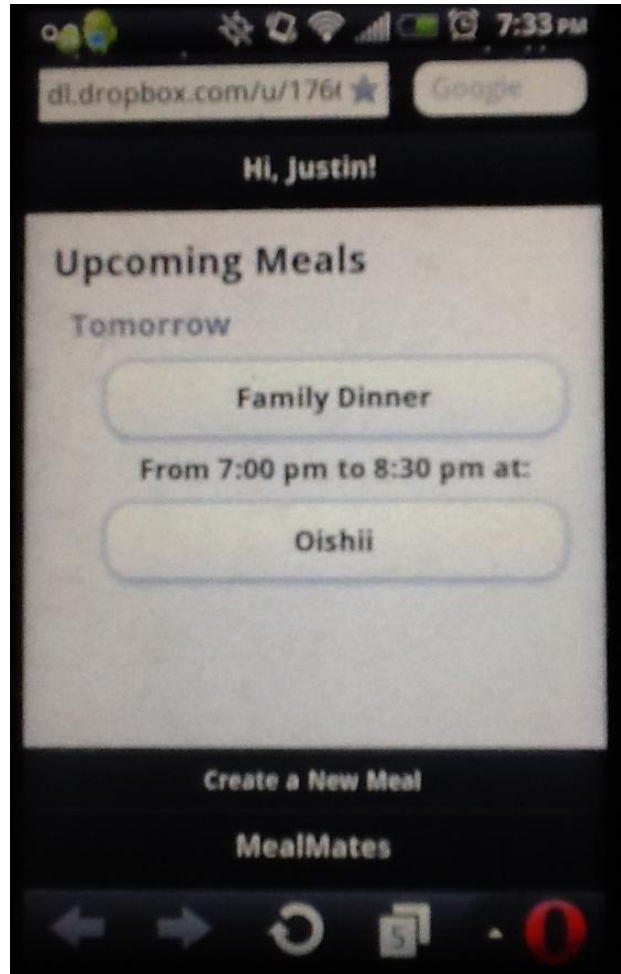   Severity: good
   Heuristic: Feedback
   I assume there might be more account options, kind of like how Gmail does it.

The Bad

Home screen:

4. 'Create a New Meal' button doesn't look like a button.
   Severity: cosmetic
   Heuristic: Consistency and standards
   The button blends in with the black bar on the bottom, such that it's not immediately obvious that it's a button.

5. 'Create a New Meal' button is not in the most visible/accessible location.
   Severity: minor
   Heuristic: Efficiency
   I'm guessing that creating a new meal will be one of the most used buttons. If so, it might make more sense to put it near the top of the screen.

6. Black bar at the bottom is unnecessary.
   Severity: cosmetic
   Heuristic: Aesthetic and minimalist design
   The bottom black bar takes up valuable screen space that could be used to present more information. Putting the title 'MealMates' at the top of the screen makes it more noticeable and more consistent with other applications. I don't see a problem with putting both 'MealMates' and 'Hi, Justin' in the top bar.

7. Time of meal on home page seems out of place.
   Severity: minor
   Heuristic: Efficiency, Consistency
   The time of the meal is sandwiched between the name and location of the meal. The grouping of information would be more consistent if the time were displayed right next to the day ('Tomorrow'), or above the meal information. This problem would become more apparent if more than one meal were to be displayed on the screen, in which case organizing them like a schedule/calendar would provide efficiency in finding information and external consistency with other applications.

8. Naming a meal is an unfamiliar concept.
   Severity: minor – major?
   Heuristic: Matching the real world

The application seems to address the problem of spontaneous, casual meals among friends/family/coworkers. In general, people don't associate any name or title with such meals, but rather the people and place. I understand that you're trying to identify the meal, but it seems awkward. A better solution might be perhaps to show just the time, people, and place of the meal.

9. 'Upcoming Meals' is unnecessary.
Severity: cosmetic
Heuristic: Aesthetic and minimalist design
Since right now there's nothing else on the home screen, the 'Upcoming Meals' title is just stating the obvious. It's not a big deal because there's plenty of white space, but if there were to be more meals listed on the home screen (maybe with icons of people too), screen space would become more valuable.

Creating a New Meal

10. Drag-and-drop is inefficient.
Severity: major
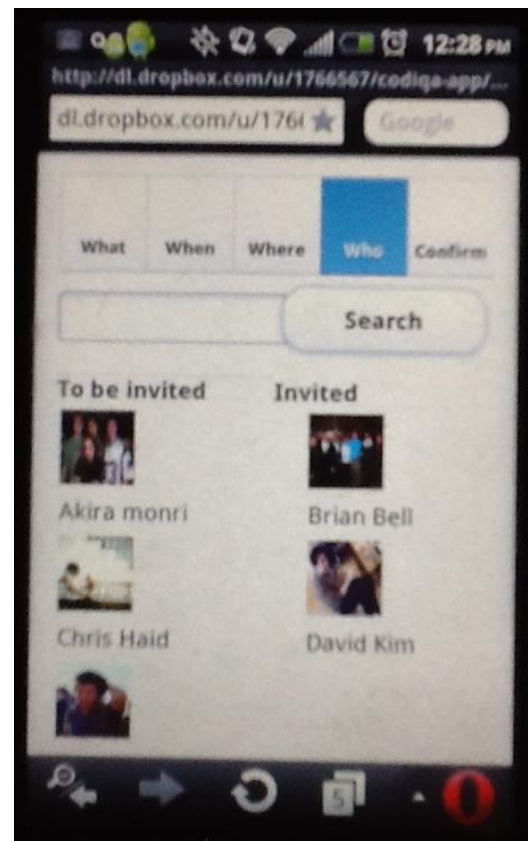Heuristic: Flexibility and efficiency
I like the idea of direct manipulation here, but dragging each person/place across the screen takes time, and the drag-and-drop is laggy. For me, the drag-and-drop doesn't really add to the user experience. I would prefer a checkbox-like interface, where a simple click moves the icon to the other side. You could even animate the icon moving to the other side to add more feedback.

11. Can't scroll in the drag-and-drop interfaces.
Severity: catastrophic
Heuristic: Visibility
Another consequence of the drag-and-drop interface is that it's impossible to tell whether the user wants to drag an icon or scroll through the list. Only a few of the icons are visible on the screen at a time. Another way to increase visibility may be to re-think the layout such that more icons can fit on the screen.
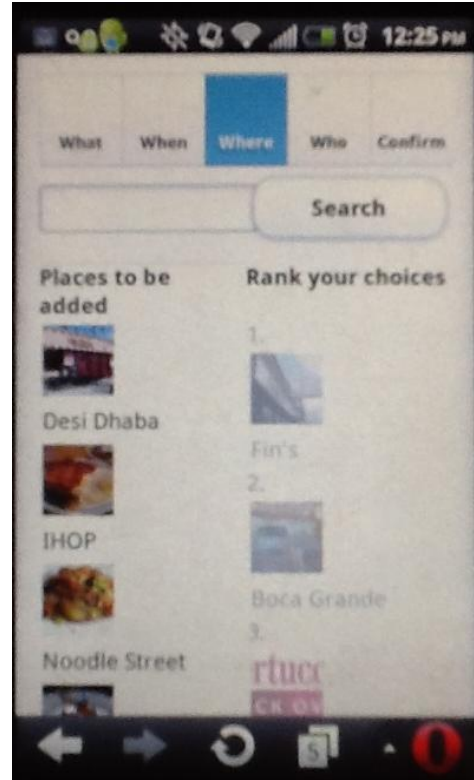
12. Ranked locations are disabled.
    Severity: catastrophic
    Heuristic: User control and freedom (safety)
    It is difficult to drag the icons over to a specific
    rank number, because the numbers are so small.
    The user could easily make a mistake, or change
    his/her mind. The user should be able to re-rank
    the locations within the ranked list on the right
    side of the screen, as well as remove locations
    from the ranked list.

13. Drop-down calendar is hidden behind input field
    and keyboard.
    Severity: major
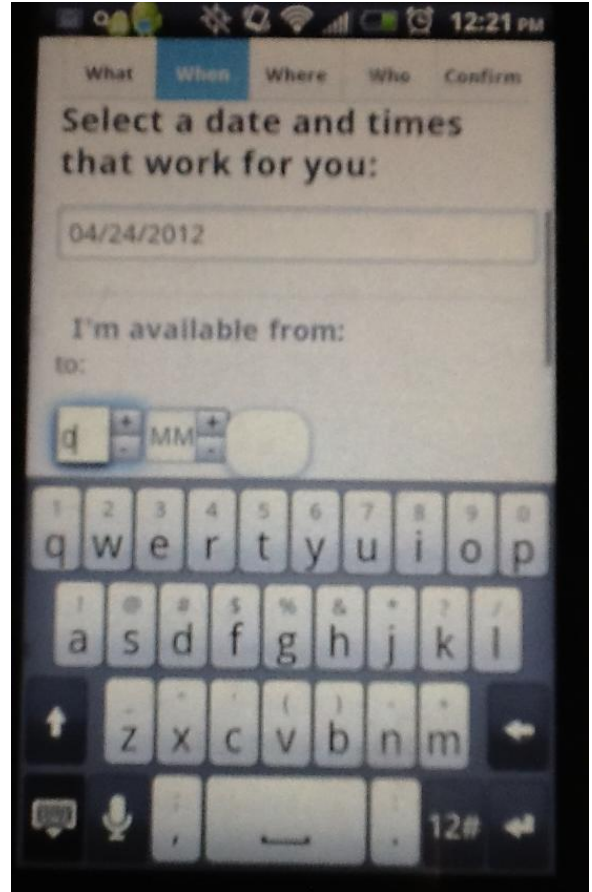   Heuristic: Visibility
    Self-explanatory.

14. Time selection is difficult to use.
    Severity: major
    Heuristic: Efficiency, Consistency, Safety
    Firstly, I have small fingers, and the +/-
    buttons are still far too small to be usable. The
    time selection box makes the keyboard pop
    up, which is an acceptable but somewhat
    inefficient way to enter in a time. It's very
    easy to make mistakes on a keyboard, and it
    takes multiple clicks just to get to be able to
    enter in numbers. I would suggest looking at
    other time selection methods, such as a
    scroller (which seems to be the most common
    method in other mobile interfaces – shown
    below).

15. Layout breaks down when screen is horizontal.
    Severity: major
    Heuristic: Visibility
    The home page in
    particular has problems
    when the screen is
    oriented horizontally.
    Eliminating the black bar
    at the bottom would help
    solve this problem.