
Mika Ritter

Previously: michaelar@
UX Writer

Why I write

My old Moma mission statement was actually three words:
Make words count.

I've lived by that philosophy for the past 13 years, designing content for diverse user experiences, marketing, and game dialogue.

The thread running through all my work is **conversation**—a fundamental part of being human.

At Google, that meant being able to talk to anyone, anywhere, in a way that benefitted all.



My work at Google*

* Limited to what is live and public (Gmail) or from deprecated products (Currents)

* Other work by @michaelar may still be accessible to FTEs

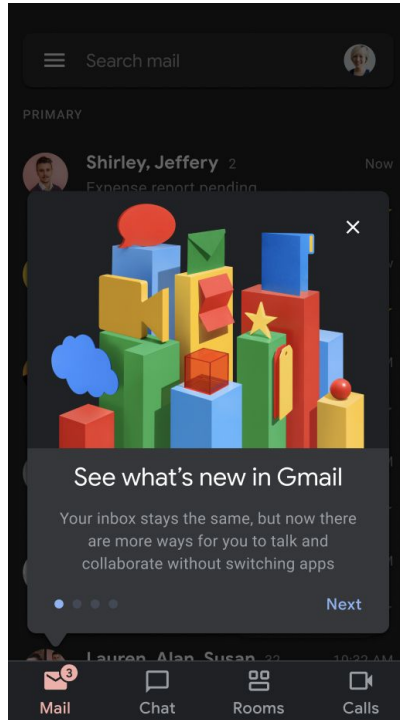
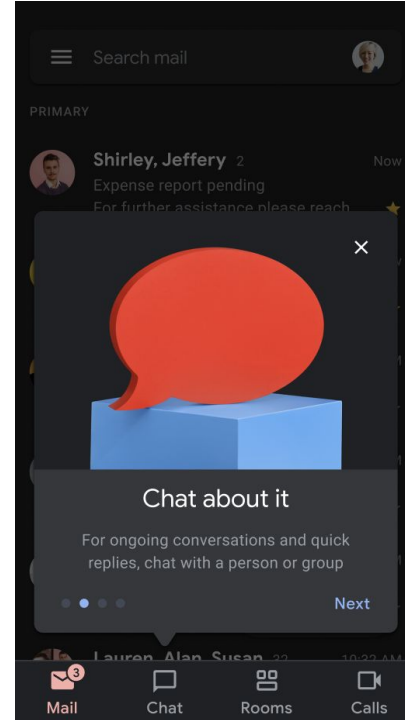
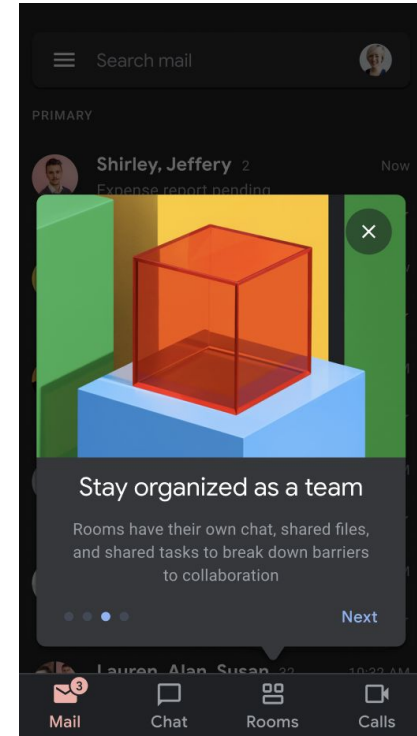
[Hub: the next generation of Gmail]

I owned UX writing for "**Hub**," a core part of developing Google Workspace that combined Gmail, Chat (direct messages + spaces with embedded tasks/editors tools), G Suite Search and Assistant, 3rd party integrated apps, Meet (with jimgroves@), and Currents. I also supported the "Lattice" horizontal team, comprised of VisD, UXR, and UXE.

My coverage extended across Hub's 7 pillars, working alongside **17+ designers** and **10 researchers** at any given time, in addition to PM and Eng requests.

Updated onboarding

I wrote the splash screen onboarding text for Gmail (Hub), which combined UXW tactics with a little marketing sizzle.



Navigation and naming

I advocated for verb-oriented navigation labels to give Gmail a more dynamic feel; less like a storage box and more a place to work together.

But, the process of naming the collaborative “spaces” was tricky.

Summary

Rooms

Universal term, supports our MVP use case, physical nature lends itself to metaphors. But limiting in scope, confusing in navigation. Good for [related actions](#).

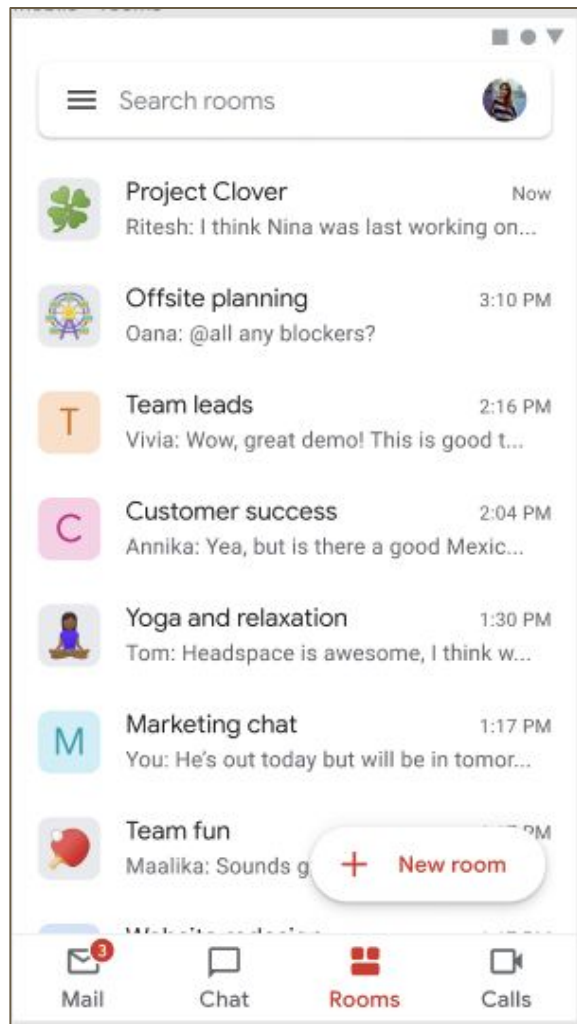
- Rooms are the concept we use today. They're familiar as places that people gather, and the connotation of limited physical size will steer people toward the MVP use case of 10-15 people on a team. Because they're a universal, physical object (of sorts), related metaphors (text and imagery) are easier to find.
- Rooms don't speak to our expansion of functionality, partly because a “chatroom” is exactly that. The same idea of room dimensions that works for MVP doesn't play well with the Discovery pillar, where thousands of people may be “in a room.” Placing Chat and Rooms side by side on mobile, in particular, is confusing; chat is a part of these units, but not the *primary* purpose—which is collaboration. (Note: predicated on my strong suggestion that the Chat tab be called Chat, not People.)

Groups

Universal and well-understood term, social and collaborative. But somewhat limiting in scope, may provide a very bad MVP experience. Good for [related actions](#).

Other initiatives

- **Standalone Chat** (new strings and maintenance)
- **3rd party app** submission to the G Suite Marketplace; user discovery, installation, and uninstallation
- **Chat history**: From supremely confusing to just mildly confusing; also, read receipts
- **Presence indication**: Do not disturb, activity, and status text
- **Flows** for task creation, spam reporting, and more
- **"Meet everywhere"** initiative
- Migrating users from classic Hangouts to **Hangouts Chat**
- Next 2020 **Hub video**



[Currents and Google+]

Creating guidelines

Currents UX/UI writing guide

The guidelines for Google+/Connect/Currents needed to be comprehensive, but also flexible enough to support changing product strategies.

One challenge was ensuring existing language supported, or at least didn't contradict, those changes in direction. Elements had to be regularly added and removed with the addition of a "hybrid" content mode and then shutdown of consumer Google+. We also didn't get brand or marketing direction until January 2019.



Key constructs

<h4>Streams</h4> <p><i>Streams are essentially content feeds set up by a user's organization, and operate on a set of saved search parameters.</i></p> <p>The user can't control the search query for the stream or turn it on/off. The user also can't post directly into a stream.</p> <p><i>Streams also refers to the method of content delivery.</i></p> <p>Clicking into a stream allows you to see a title and description.</p> <p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Refer to the home stream as just <i>Home</i> in the UISay <i>create a stream</i>	<h4>STREAMS</h4> <div> All posts 99+</div> <div> Apps leadership</div> <p>Can be found: Main navigation, inside the stream itself, onboarding</p> <p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Capitalize the word <i>streams</i>Refer to them as <i>custom streams</i> or <i>admin custom streams</i>Say <i>add a stream</i>
<h4>Tags</h4> <p>Tags (or hashtags) help users find content based on keywords. Most often, tags are user-generated and grow in usage as other people discover them.</p> <p>Currents uses several classifications for tags: popular, trending, and following.</p> <p>Popular tags have a fairly complex algorithm, but are essentially tags with a lot of usage over a longer period of time.</p> <p>Trending tags have a sharp uptick in usage over a short period of time (typically a week).</p>	<div> Home</div> <div> Tags</div> <div> #dooglers 135 posts</div> <p>Found in: Main navigation, posts, post box, right rail (trending tags), management tools, onboarding, email notifications</p>

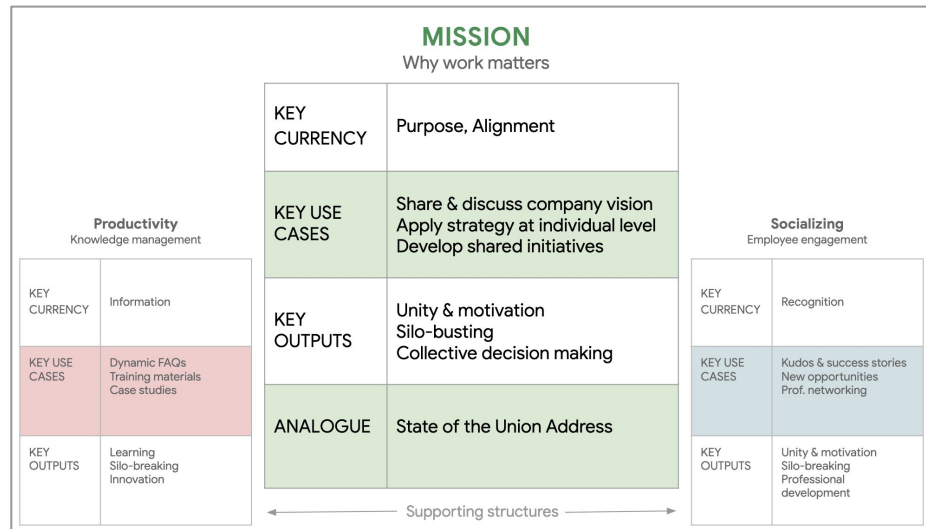
Product positioning

A vision for Currents

Currents didn't have branding or marketing help until Jan 2019. We needed a point of view before then.

When researcher giuliamazza@ approached me with the idea to create a vision deck, I happily teamed up with her.

Later, our work was drawn upon to create official marketing assets.



Better onboarding

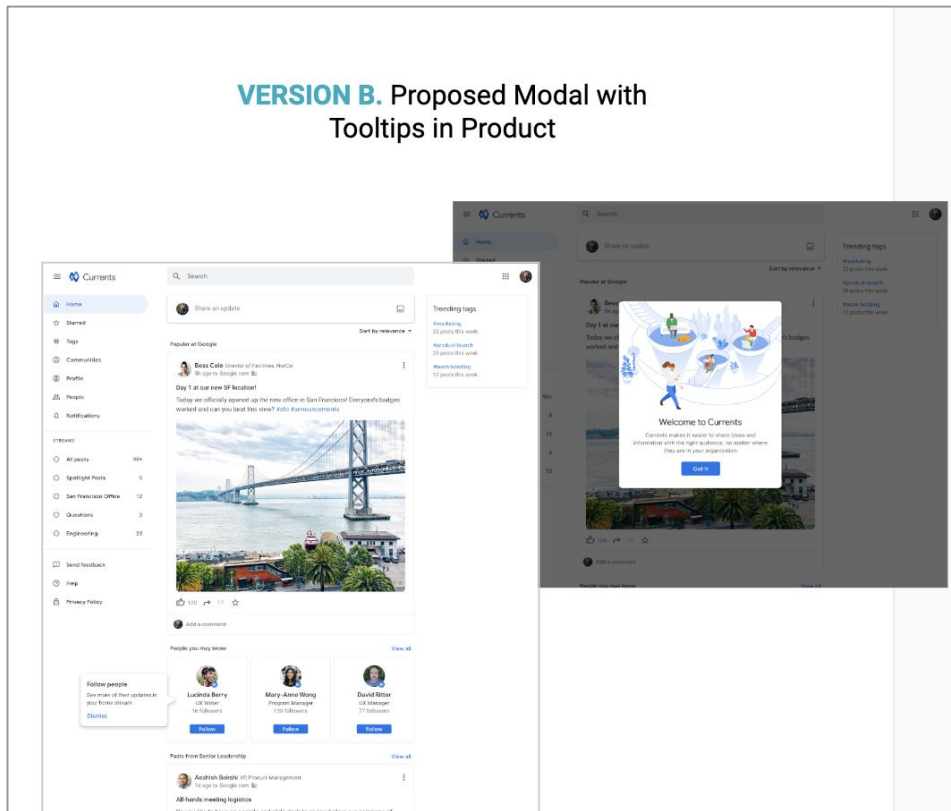
We can rebuild it

Currents onboarding consisted of a welcome email and a 3-screen warm welcome.

Users didn't know what to expect from the product, yet were asked to choose people and tags to follow before they could try it out.

UXD ohu@ and I proposed new onboarding with a new welcome email, a splash screen with a single-sentence value, and in-product tooltips.

Our contextual and progressive onboarding was preferred by 80% of test participants.



[Full deck]

Product lifecycle

Shutting down Google+

How do you tell 4 billion people that Google+ is going away, when many don't even know what Google+ is? You do it with grace and sensitivity.*

I owned product comms for the shutdown of consumer Google+, which included months of emails, banners, posts, and FAQs. Everything had to go through dozens of stakeholders, including at the S/VP level.

It also required me to track four separate workstreams (consumer, enterprise, developer, and internal). Google+ was integrated with most Google products for 8 years.



*Grace and sensitivity

Some of my 20% projects

Duplex

Duplex was/is Google's automated calling service announced at I/O 2019. The initial scope for this 20% project was to provide writing support for reservation experiences made through the Assistant. (For example, making a restaurant reservation or haircut appointment.)

Hangouts Chat

I took on the Chat team's UXW needs when their full-time writer, before it was integrated with Hub-Gmail. Projects included admin console changes, classic client deprecation, Dynamite PWA, Chat in Gmail onboarding, and weekly ad hoc requests.

The Scribble Team

"Scribbles" were/are the blog posts that launched with Google Doodles. As an editor, I guided 20+ volunteer writers, helping to keep them on topic, on brand, and still having fun.

Social Good

Way back in 2016, I was the UXW for iterations of the donation history portal. My job was to transform data pulled straight from the API into jargon-free writing, putting the most important info first and encouraging additional charitable giving.

Life before Google

Be advised: Pre-2016 content and design ahead.
Sorry, UXD-friends!

Allrecipes

Allrecipes | Seattle, WA
September 2013 – April 2016
Sr. UI Writer (UX)

- UX writing for a complete redesign of the Allrecipes site
- UX writing for *Allrecipes Dinner Spinner* iOS and Android
- Created the Allrecipes UI writing style guide
- Drove engagement through playful email and social media campaigns
- Wrote supplemental material for branded cookware, Cooking School, video spots, and in-app purchases
- Used prototyping tools and helped develop usability study scripts



Allrecipes: Language updates to improve sign-up rates

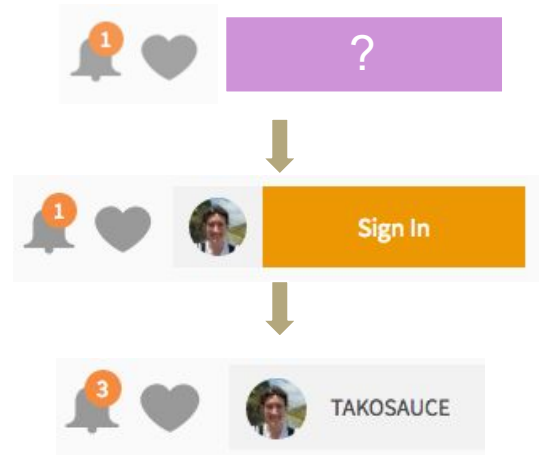
Proposal: Test Registration CTAs in the Top Nav

What we're testing: Within the top nav, which registration CTA does the best with anonymous users? (Desktop only, for now)

Assumptions: Any boost to the percentage of anonymous users starting the registration process is welcome, provided it doesn't cannibalize discoverability of sign-in for registered users. We know the percentage of users registering through the nav is very low compared to the save-a-recipe path.

Objectives:

- 1) Compare registration start and registration completion numbers for three different variants among anonymous users.
- 2) Monitor feedback to ensure (cookieless) registered users are able to find sign-in.



Sign-up language variants

Sign up or Sign in

Why: Simple, straight-forward, predictable. Registered users get it.

Concerns: Lukewarm. Doesn't provide any indication you'll get something in return for signing up. "Sign up" alone is often associated with a subscription or payment.

Create a profile

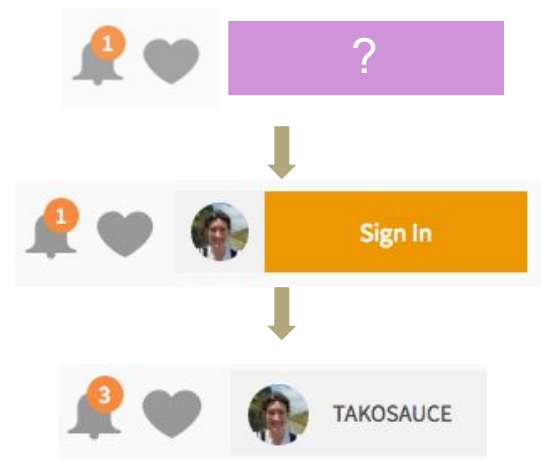
Why: "Profile" is consistent with other navigation, and is more welcoming than "sign up." It implies a personalized experience in exchange for signing up.

Concerns: May confuse cookieless registered users (create vs. sign in). May sound more tedious at the outset than "Sign up."

Join Allrecipes

Why: Friendly, emphasizes community, straight-forward, legacy.

Concerns: Connotations of "join" include paying for membership and expected participation.



Allrecipes: Language updates to improve sign-up rates

Join Allrecipes

Allrecipes uses the recipes you save and cooks you follow to suggest great content for you. Join for free!



Facebook



Google

OR

Sign up with email

Already a member? [Sign in.](#)

Tiffany and I tested changing Allrecipes' registration flow to favor signing up over signing in. We saw a 25% lift in registration starts by simplifying the UI and defaulting to the version on the left for anon users.

Words: Mika Ritter
Design: Tiffany Jessup
Concept: Both

Sign in with social.

New and existing Allrecipes users.



Facebook



Google

Sign in with email.

Existing Allrecipes users.

Email

Password



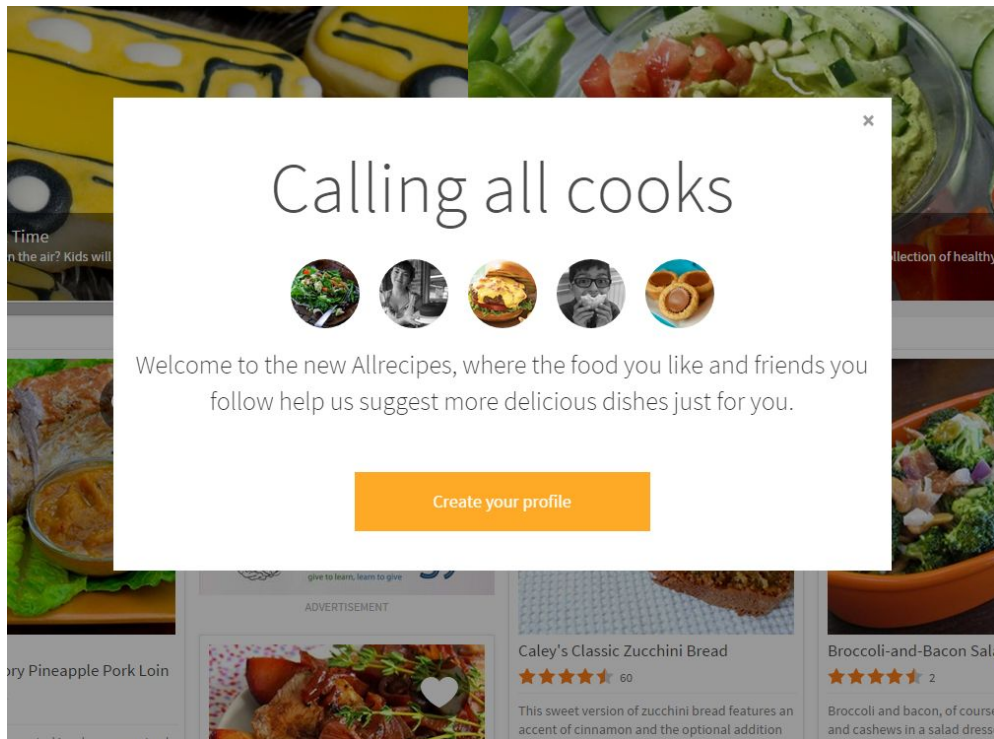
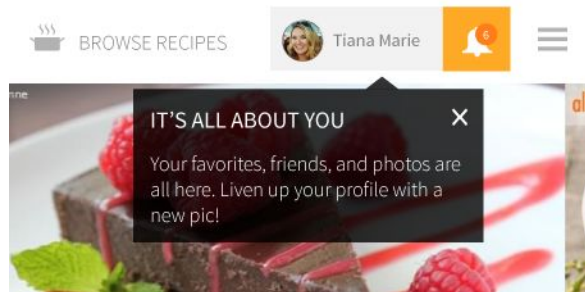
Remember me

[Forgot password?](#)

Sign In

New to Allrecipes? [Join for free!](#)

Overlays and Education



Copywriting and A/B testing: Breakfast Email Campaign

allrecipes.com

the SCOOP >>



Say yes to breakfast!

Share your breakfast or brunch on Instagram and tag it #MyAllrecipesContest for a chance to win!

[Check out the competition](#)



Breakfast Pinspiration

Follow our breakfast board on Pinterest for what's new, popular, and just irresistible. Warning: There may be cinnamon buns.

[Breakfast Pinspiration](#)

Who doesn't love pancakes?

Check out these creative ways to change up your stack of flapjacks.

[Pancake possibilities](#)



Breakfast in a blender

Always running late? Smoothies are easy to make, healthy, and (phew) they travel really well.

[Fun smoothie recipes](#)

Overnight Blueberry French Toast

One of Allrecipes' most popular breakfast dishes. Bright, fresh blueberries paired with rich cream cheese...and prep time is only 15 minutes!

[See how to make it](#)



Version	Subject Line	Sent	Opens	Open Rate	Clicks	CTR
C	Best. Breakfast. Ever.	4,171,500	1,146,006	27.47%	203,609	17.77%

Nintendo

Nintendo of America | Redmond, WA
May 2012 – April 2013
Associate Localization Writer

- Associate localization writer for *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* and *Style Savvy: Trendsetters*
 - Re-characterized select animal personality types to align with U.S. cultural expectations. Revised or rewrote all the dialog for several archetypes and key characters.
 - Involved with post-localization gameplay and QA
- Collaborated with a team of writers, translators, and developers from all over the world



WildTangent

WildTangent, Inc. | Redmond, WA

March 2008 – May 2012

Sr. Marketing and Web Writer

- Creative Services group lead
 - Game descriptions, newsletters, promotions, landing pages, UI messages, etc.
 - Partnerships with HP, Acer, Toshiba, T-Mobile, and other OEMs
 - Contests, blog posts, print material
 - WT style guide
- Primary point of contact for joint WT/HP campaigns in Brazil
- Lead email planning, content authoring, and A/B testing
 - High-level performance analysis with email service provider
- Project manager for content localization (10 languages)
- Creative/script writer for *FATE: The Cursed King* and collateral material

