

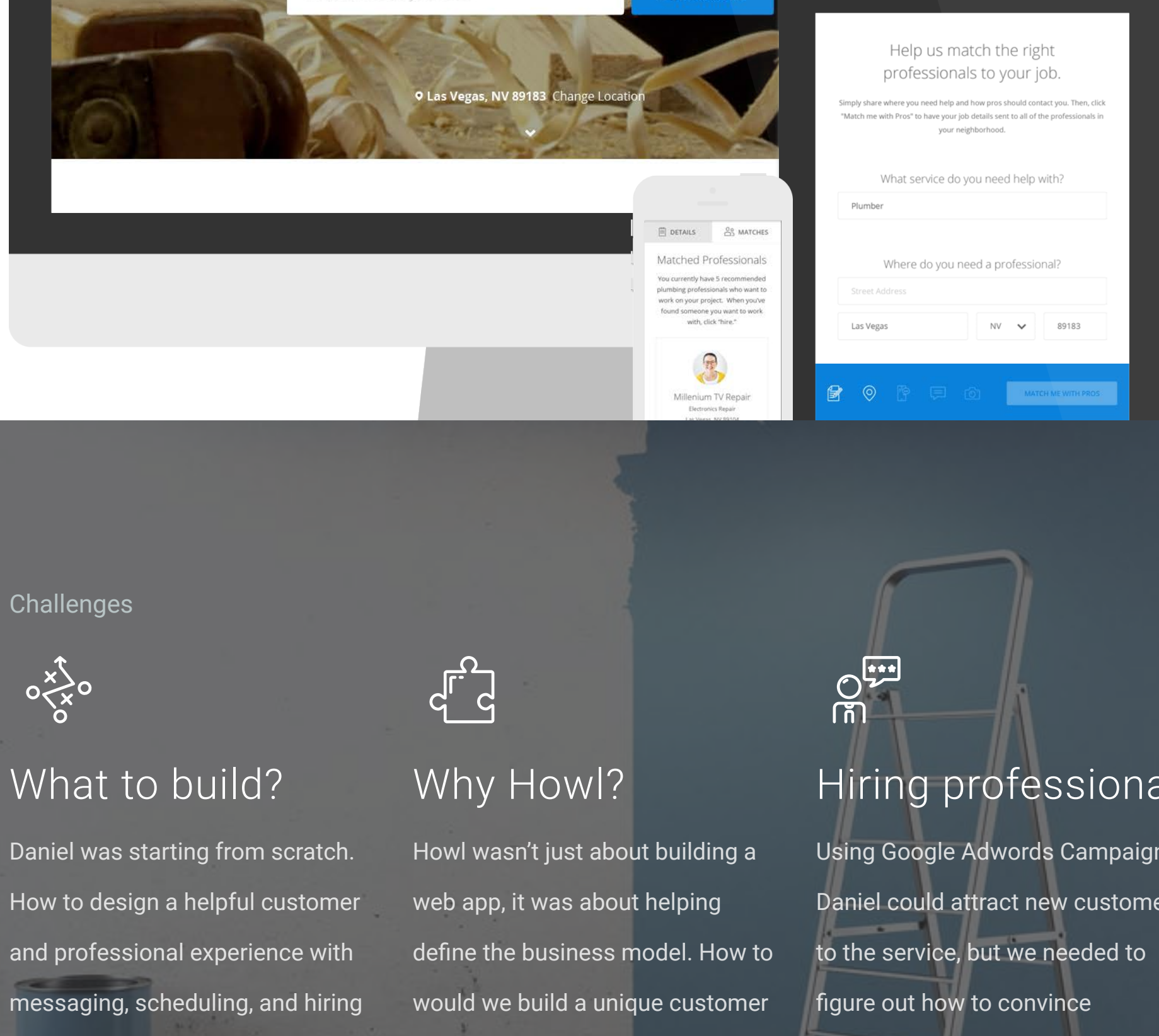
Howl

OCT 2015 - APRIL 2016 | TEAM: 1 PM, 2 DEVS, & ME | MY ROLE: PITCH TO DELIVERY & DESIGN

The client

Discover Howl

The client, Daniel, wanted to launch an online business that would streamline hiring repair and service professionals. For example, if your fridge stops working, how do you get it repaired within an hour to prevent the food from spoiling? Think thumbtack.com or angleslist.com with a better customer and professional experience.



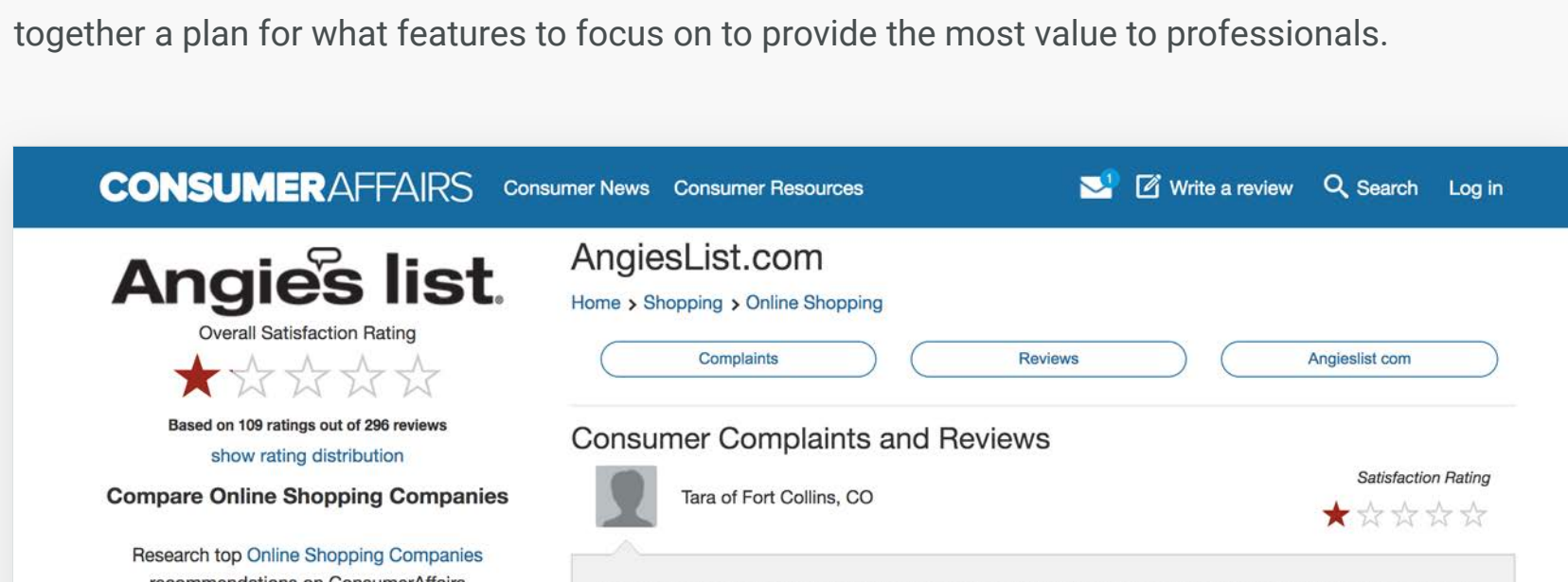
Challenges

- What to build?** Daniel was starting from scratch. How to design a helpful customer and professional experience with messaging, scheduling, and hiring while virtualing all the issues of building a virtual business?
- Why Howl?** Howl wasn't just about building a web app, it was about helping define the business model. How to would we build a unique customer experience and make Howl better than the competition?
- Hiring professionals** Using Google Adwords Campaigns, Daniel could attract new customers to the service, but we needed to figure out how to convince professionals to sign up and match with local clients in real-time.

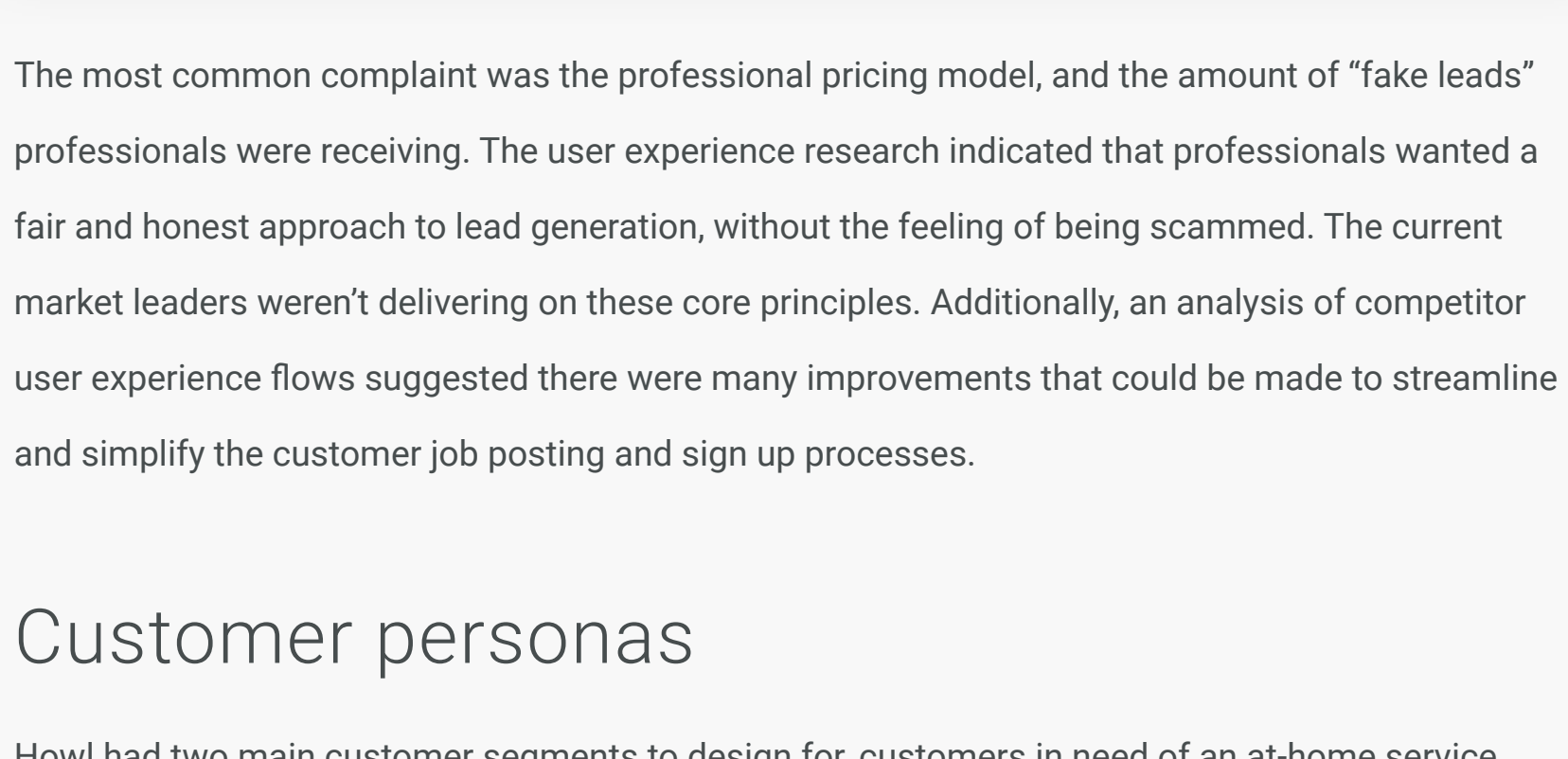
Research & planning

Designing a service business

After meeting with Daniel to discuss his business idea. There were a handful of businesses out there already offering at-home service professionals, like Yelp, Thumbtack, and Angie'sList. Daniel was confident these businesses weren't meeting the real needs of customers and taking advantage of the service professionals. My product manager (Chris) and I performed an industry and competitor analysis, in addition to researching customer reviews about each of these services. Fortunately, people love to post how unhappy they were about doing business with Thumbtack and Angie's List.



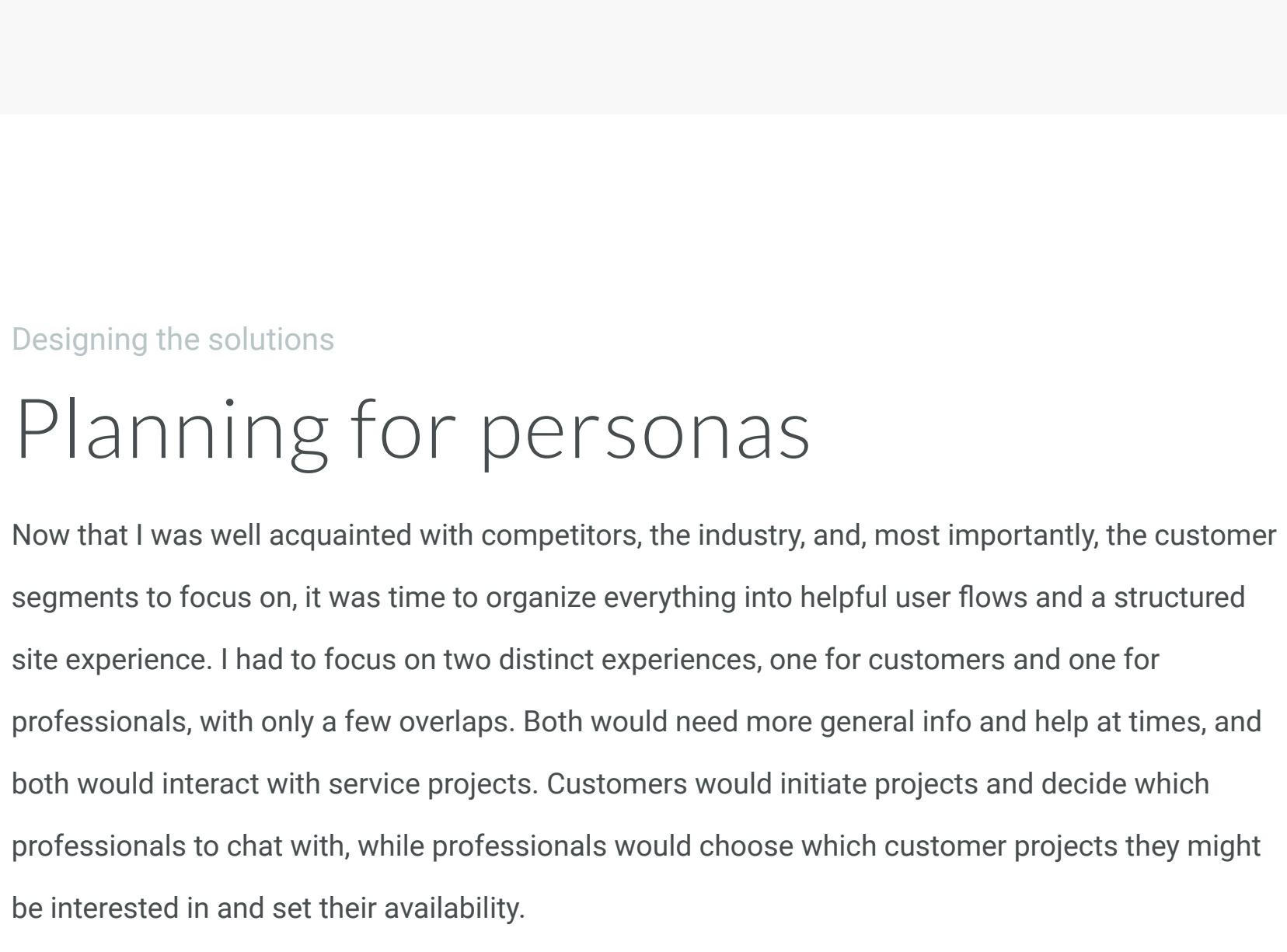
Using this publicly available data combined with feedback from real industry professionals, I put together a plan for what features to focus on to provide the most value to professionals.



The most common complaint was the professional pricing model, and the amount of "fake leads" professionals were receiving. The user experience research indicated that professionals wanted a fair and honest approach to lead generation, without the feeling of being scammed. The current market leaders weren't delivering on these core principles. Additionally, an analysis of competitor user experience flows suggested there were many improvements that could be made to streamline and simplify the customer job posting and sign up processes.

Customer personas

Howl had two main customer segments to design for, customers in need of an at-home service professionals, and service professionals looking to connect with more customers in their area.



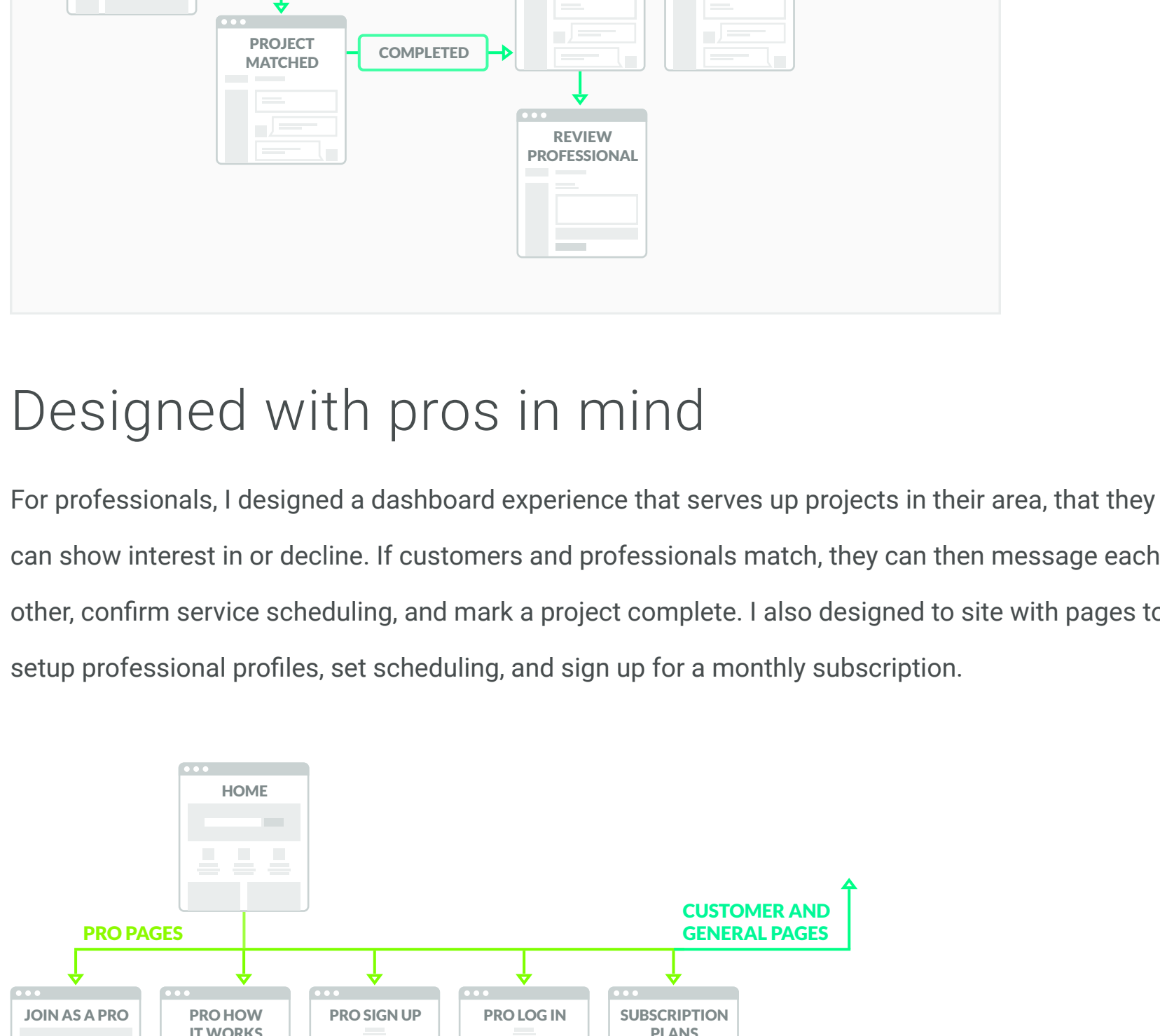
Designing the solutions

Planning for personas

Now that I was well acquainted with competitors, the industry, and, most importantly, the customer segments to focus on, it was time to organize everything into helpful user flows and a structured site experience. I had to focus on two distinct experiences, one for customers and one for professionals, with only a few overlaps. Both would need more general info and help at times, and both would interact with service projects. Customers would initiate projects and decide which professionals to chat with, while professionals would choose which customer projects they might be interested in and set their availability.

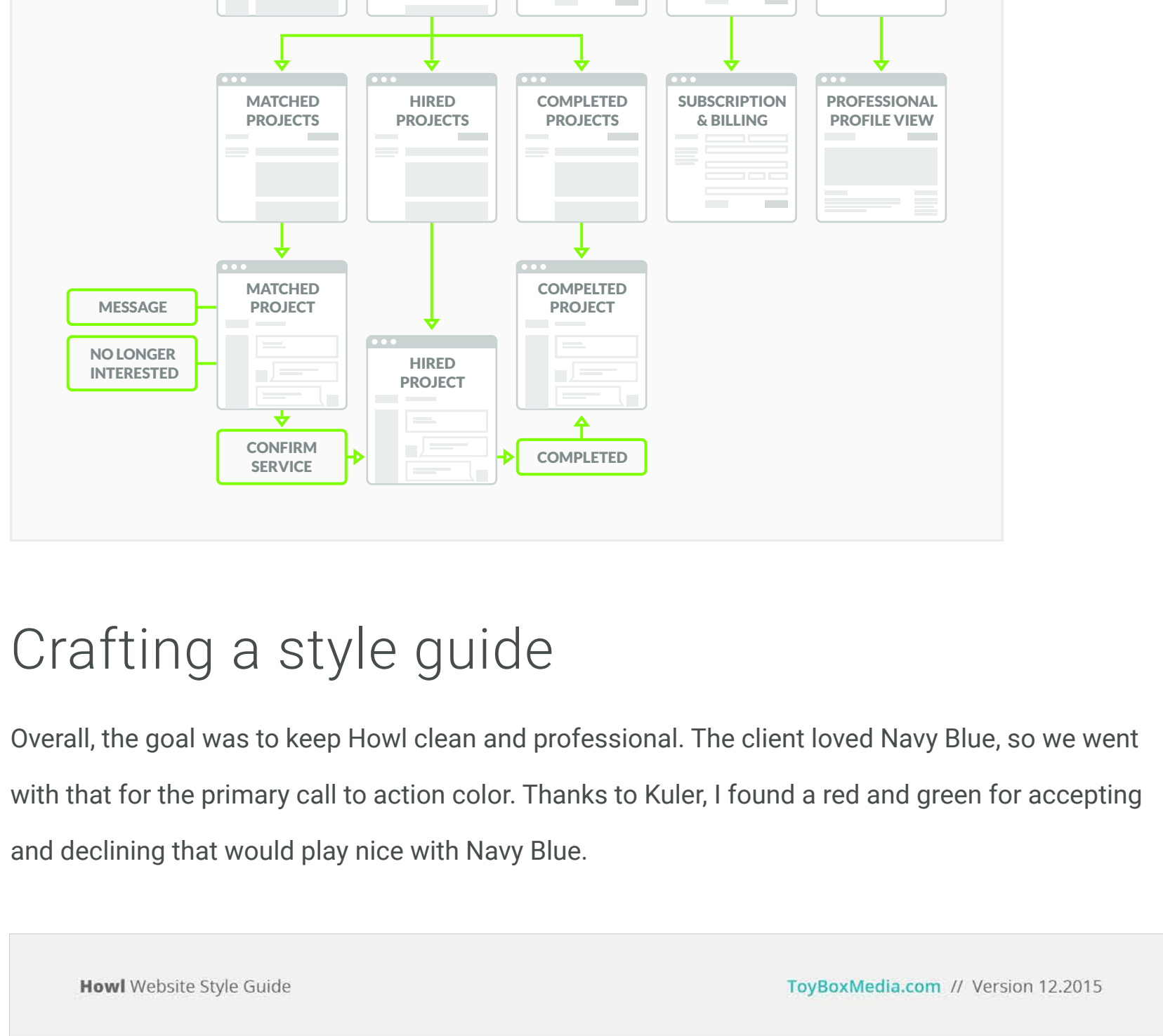
The customers

Without signing in, we wanted customers to be able to learn a little about how Howl works, posting new projects, and helpful articles. Once they post a project, and verify their email, they would have access to a dashboard experience to choose from professionals, message and schedule, mark projects complete, share reviews, and more.



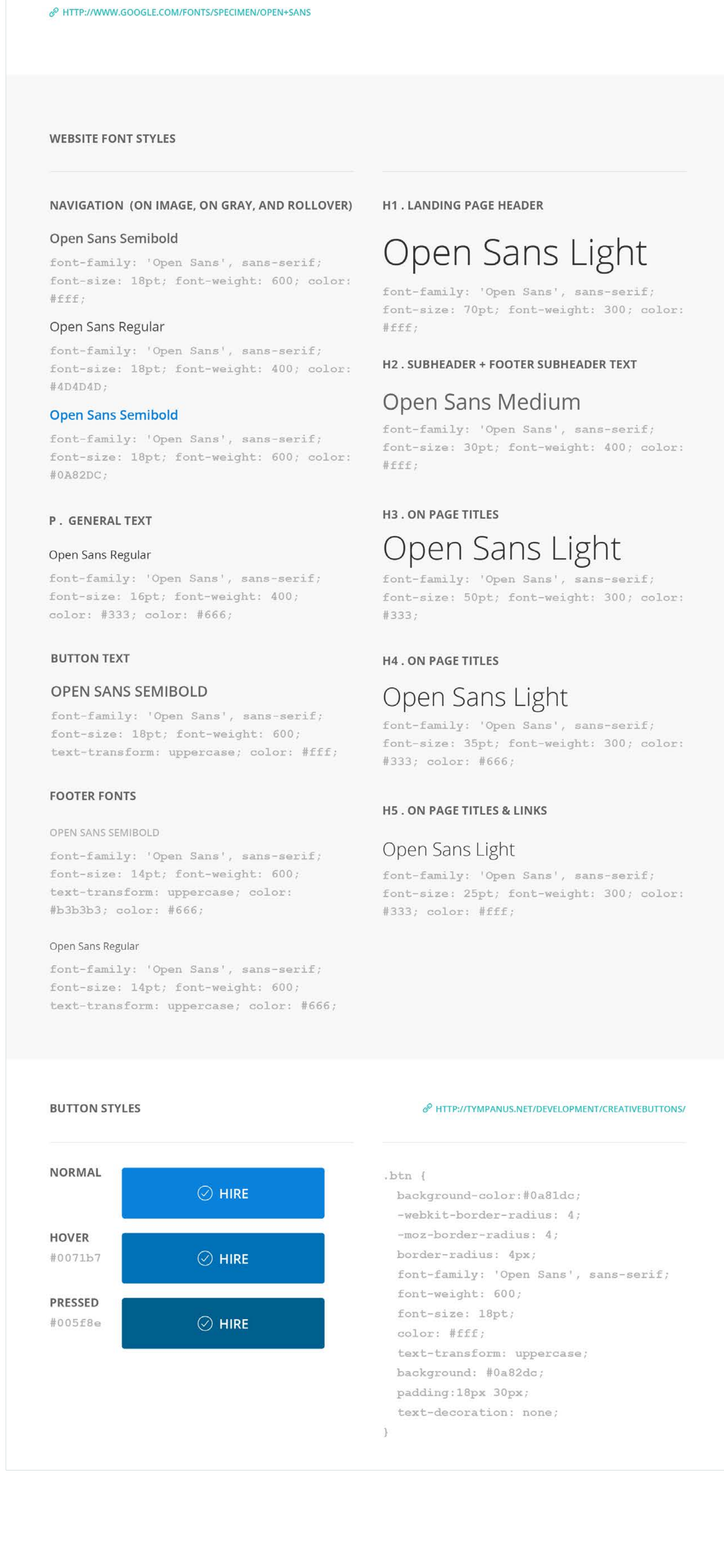
Designed with pros in mind

For professionals, I designed a dashboard experience that serves up projects in their area, that they can show interest in or decline. If customers and professionals match, they can then message each other, confirm service scheduling, and mark a project complete. I also designed to site with pages to setup professional profiles, set scheduling, and sign up for a monthly subscription.



Crafting a style guide

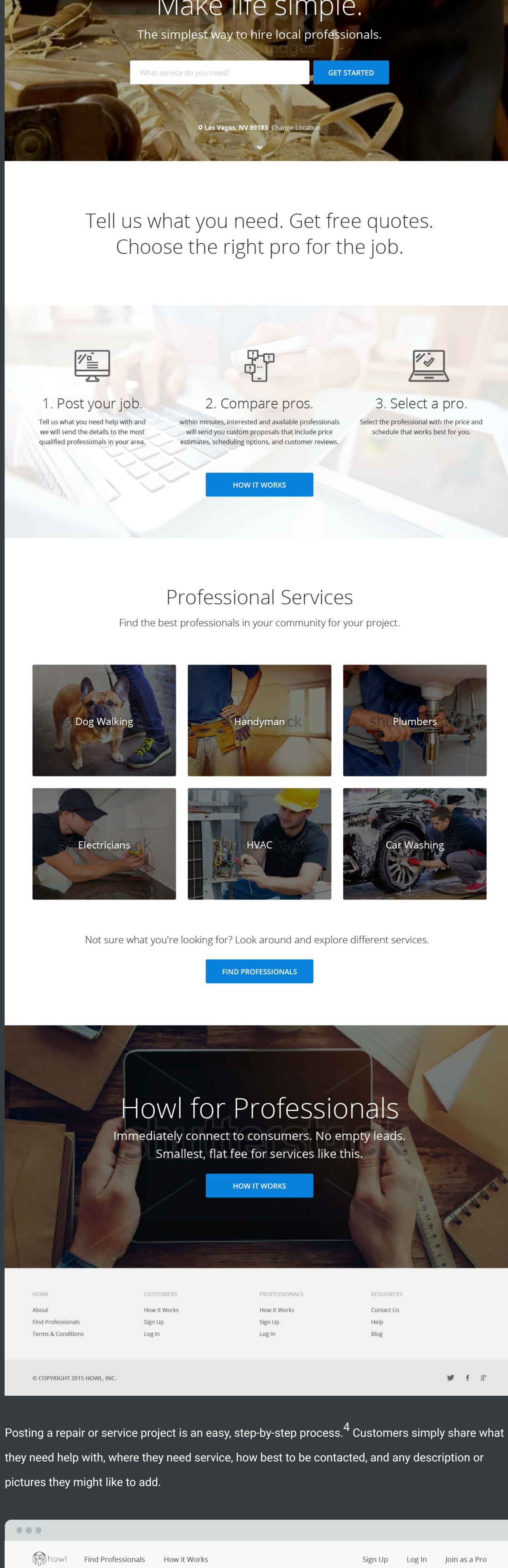
Overall, the goal was to keep Howl clean and professional. The client loved Navy Blue, so we went with that for the primary call to action color. Thanks to Kuler, I found a red and green for accepting and declining that would play nice with Navy Blue.



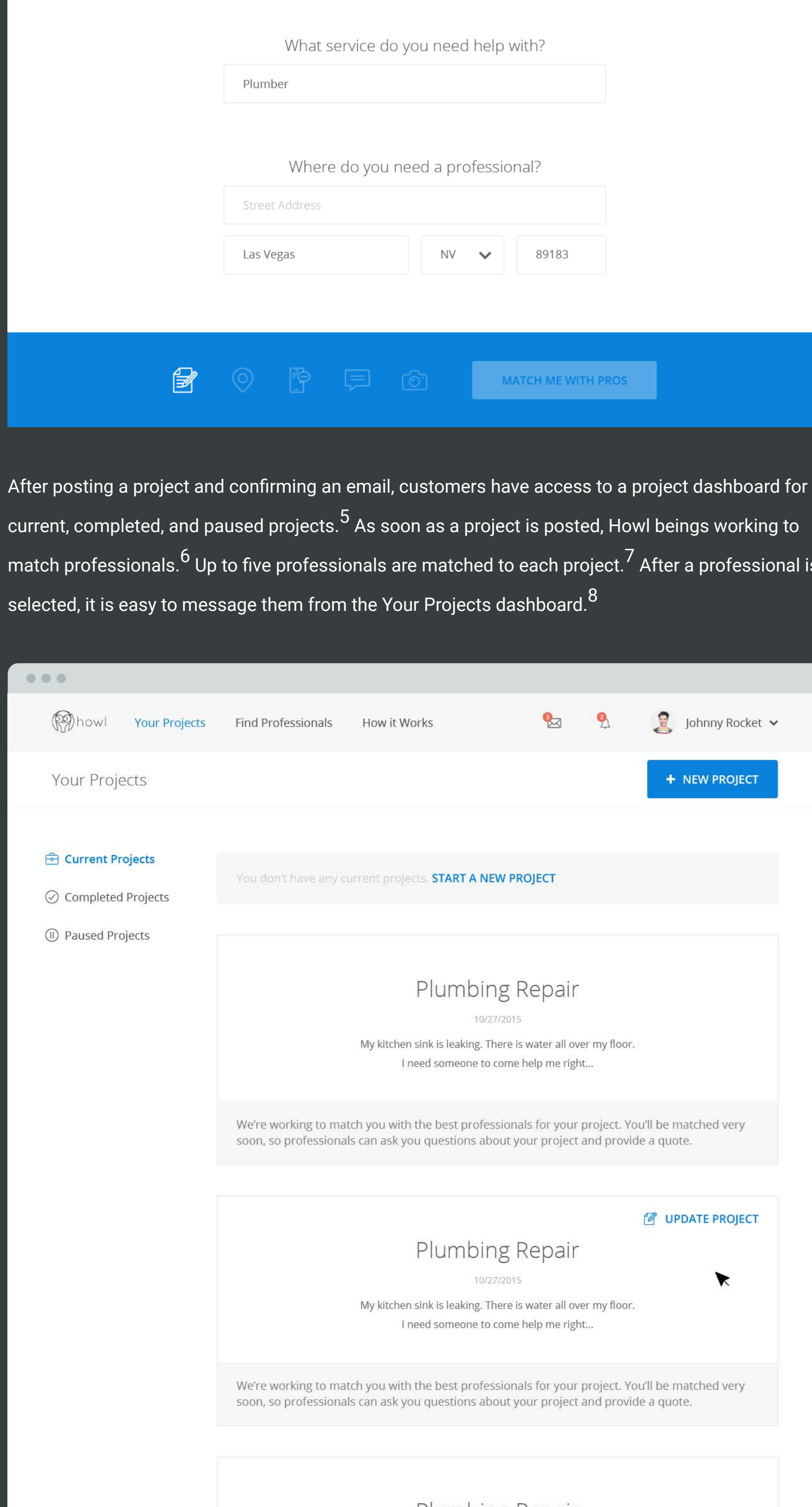
The website

Designed for matching

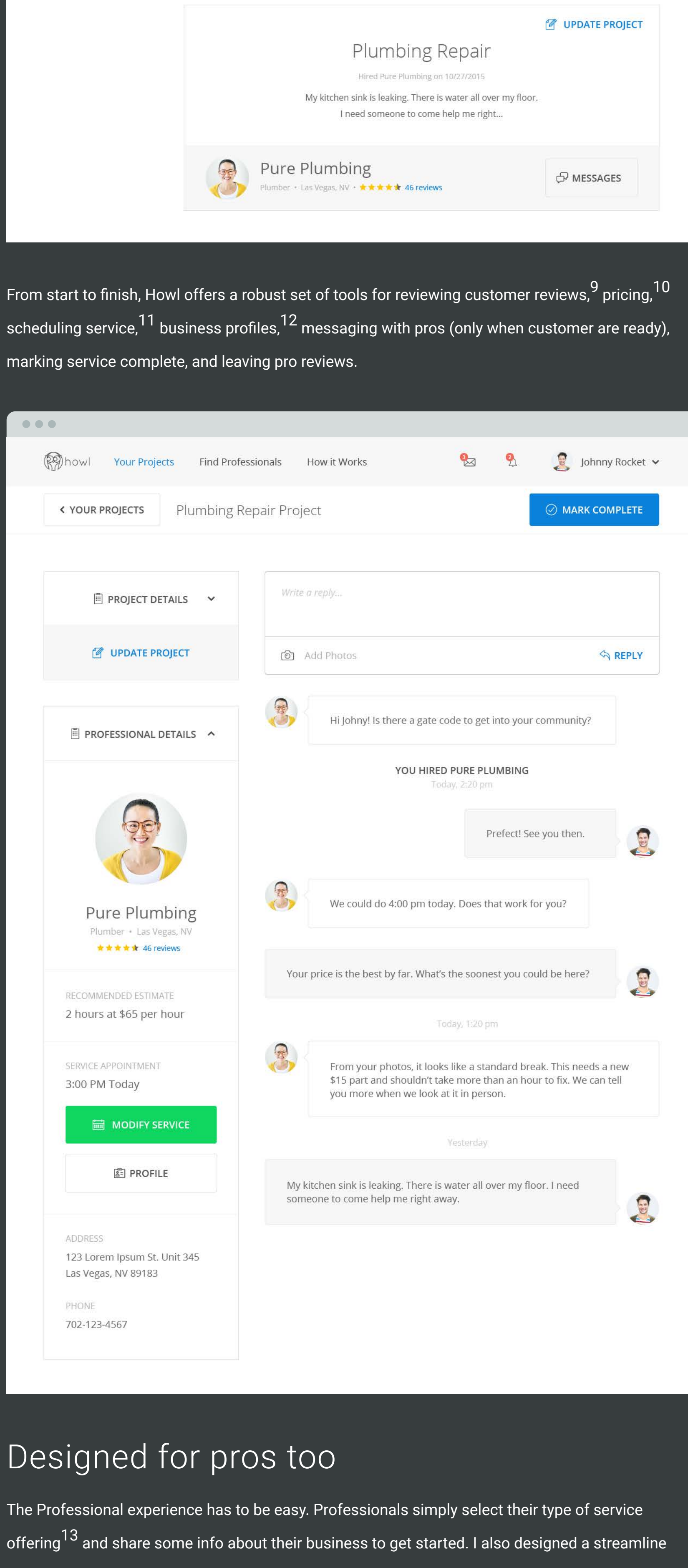
Weekly in person jam sessions with Daniel and Chris helped us sculpt a pretty amazing business model and user experience. I focused on features that allowed professionals to sign up for simple monthly plans, and customers to easily match with a handful of relevant professionals – without scamming or spamming. On the homepage, getting started is as easy as saying what service customers need¹ and pressing "get started," or browsing service categories.² For professionals, there's a whole section of the site dedicated to what it's like to join as a pro.³



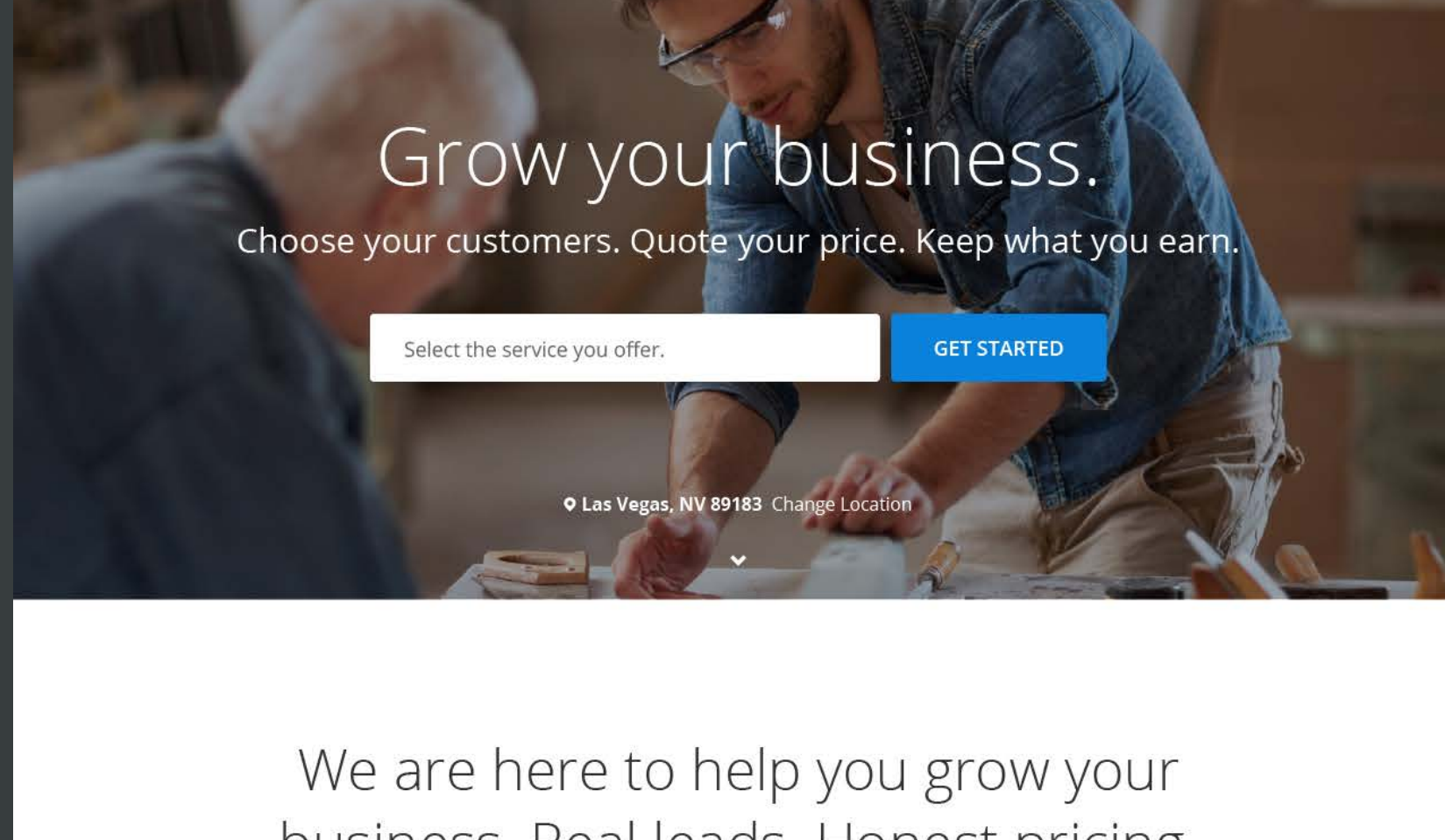
Posting a repair or service project is an easy, step-by-step process.⁴ Customers simply share what they need help with, where they need service, how best to be contacted, and any description or pictures they might like to add.



After posting a project and confirming an email, customers have access to a project dashboard for current, completed, and paused projects.⁵ As soon as a project is posted, Howl beings working to match professionals.⁶ Up to five professionals are matched to each project.⁷ After a professional is selected, it is easy to message them from the Your Projects dashboard.⁸

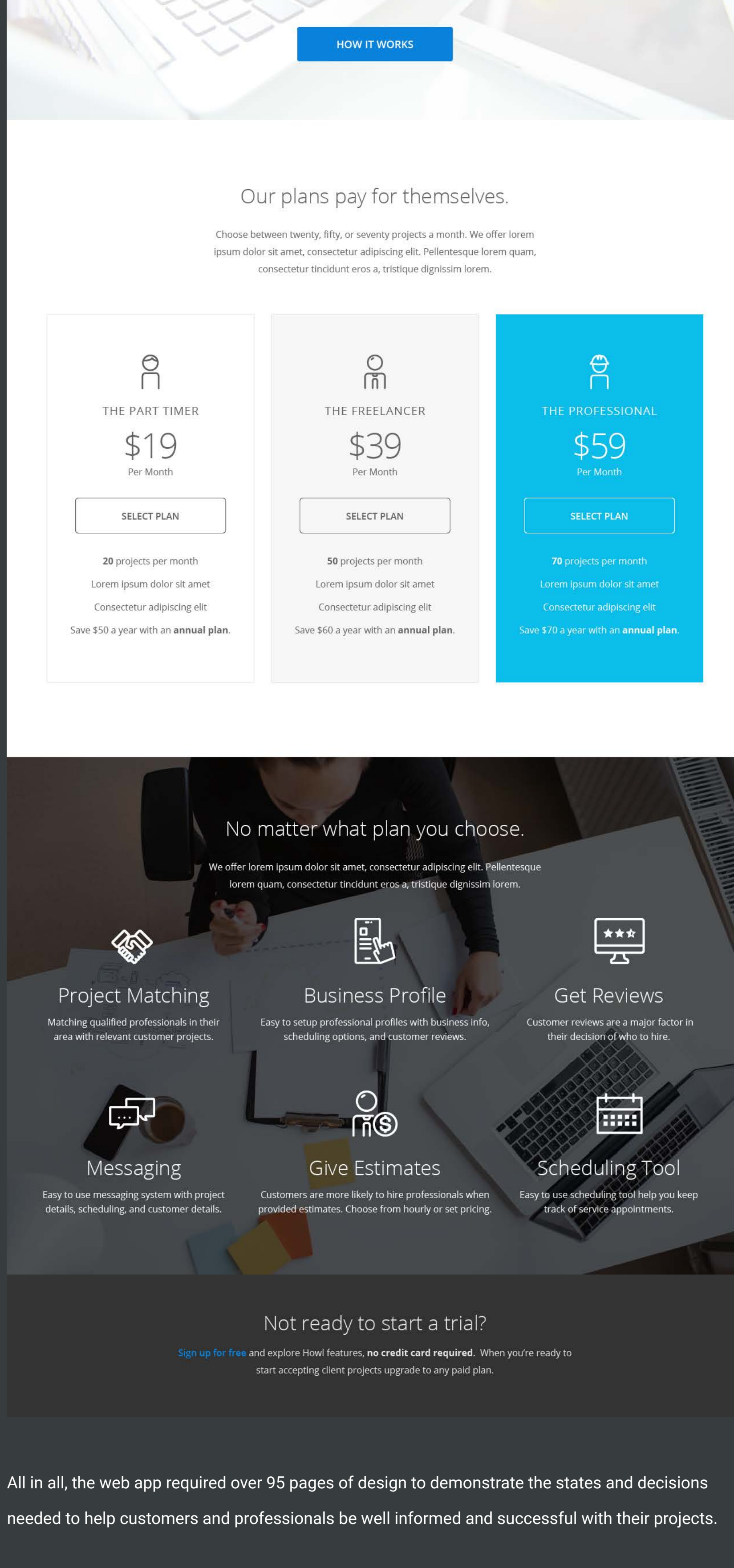


From start to finish, Howl offers a robust set of tools for reviewing customer reviews,⁹ pricing,¹⁰ scheduling service,¹¹ business profiles,¹² messaging with pros (only when customer are ready), marking service complete, and leaving pro reviews.

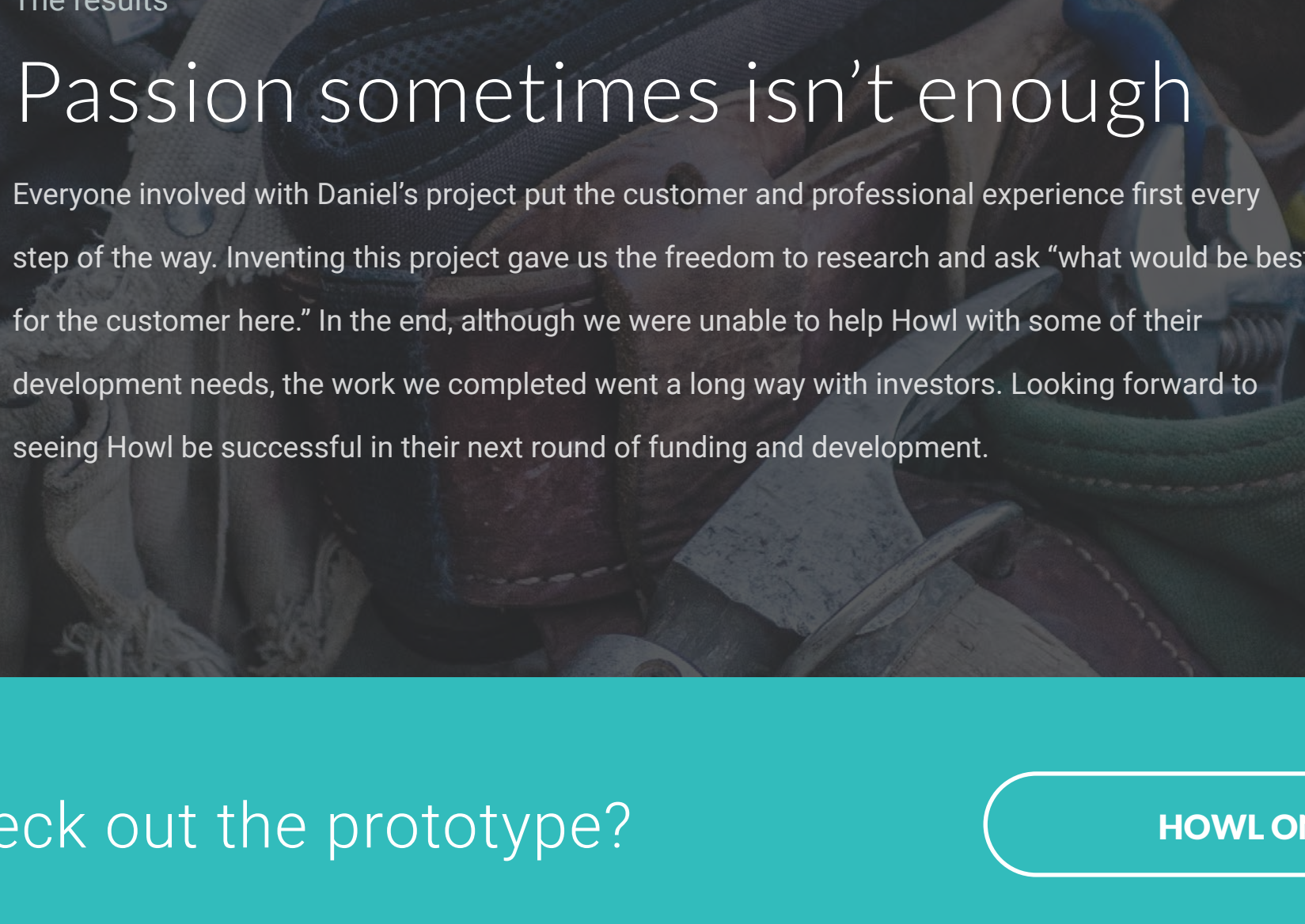


Designed for pros too

The Professional experience has to be easy. Professionals simply select their type of service offering¹³ and share some info about their business to get started. I also designed a streamline process for businesses to claim their listing (populated via Yelp API) though an invite link. Pros are free to view projects and only prompted to sign up for monthly credits upon applying to a project.¹⁴



All in all, the web app required over 95 pages of design to demonstrate the states and decisions needed to help customers and professionals be well informed and successful with their projects.



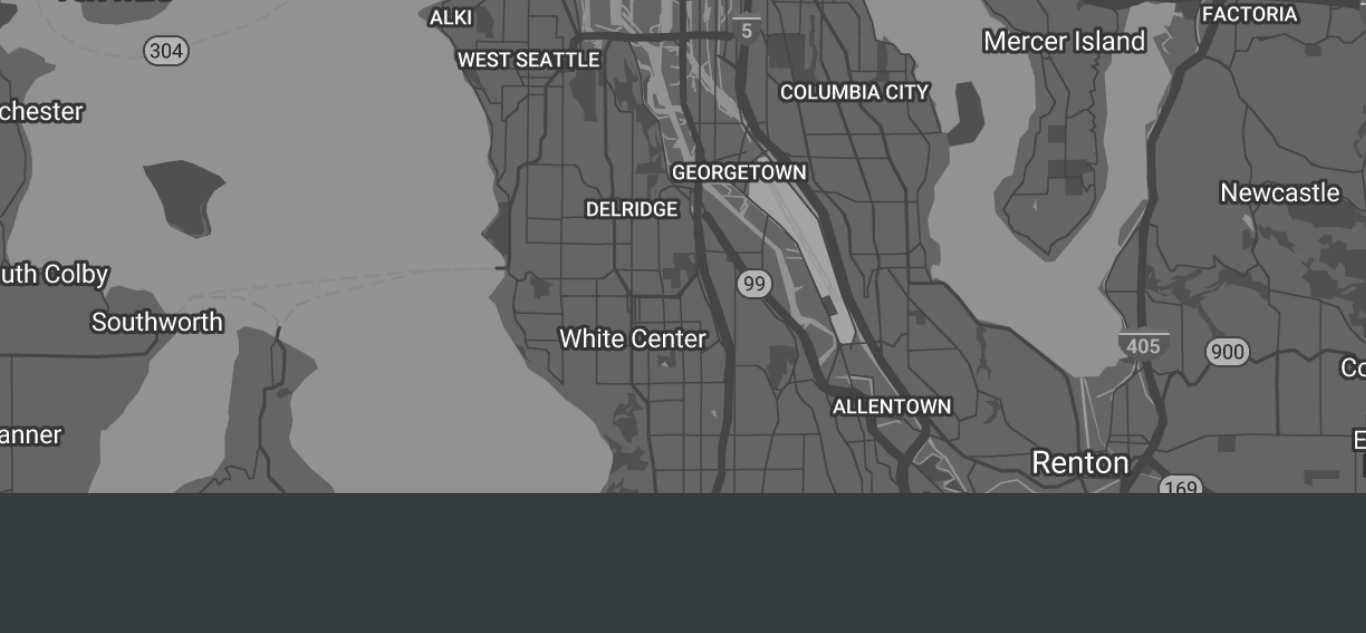
The results

Passion sometimes isn't enough

Everyone involved with Daniel's project put the customer and professional experience first every step of the way. Inventing this project gave us the freedom to research and ask "what would be best for the customer here." In the end, although we were unable to help Howl with some of their development needs, the work we completed went a long way with investors. Looking forward to seeing Howl be successful in their next round of funding and development.

Want to check out the prototype?

HOWL ON INVISION



HOW CAN I HELP?

Thanks for checking out my work. I'd love to learn about what you're doing!

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