Research

To design an app that solves a problem that users face and help them accomplish their goals faster, we did a competitor and user research. Looking at apps that were already there helped us define patterns and gave us insight on how we can differentiate. Interviewing users was the most helpful part of our research since it revealed the usability problems that we have to solve.

Before diving into research, we started off by just pouring out initial ideas on what would make the weather app cool and different. A lot of our initial brainstorming explored the concept of connecting the weather app to other accounts and having it sync with your calendar in order to remind of weather changes that affect your personal activities. The research that followed, however, made is cross out all initial ideas. The problem that we had to solve was in the essentials, the core, of any weather app.

What do current weather apps offer to their users? The weather apps that are available to download from the app store such as The Weather Channel, WeatherBug, and Weather Underground, offer daily and future forecast, local weather and historical data, report of how the weather affects health and sport activities, road conditions, and radars. The apps consist of multiple pages and users have to scroll and navigate to access the information.

Interviewing users gave us a very good idea of what they need. The interviewees were asked a total of 7-8 questions to better understand when and why they check the weather, what information is of high priority for them that they want to find right away, and what appears to be unnecessary information. Our findings showed that for the mainstream user, daily activities are the main incentive for checking the weather. What matters to users is daily weather at a specific location. They prefer "more about today in a small overview versus a large overview for every day". There is a need for carefully chosen content for display. A lot of information and features such as radars, detailed data, and repetitive information is often left unnoticed. Another finding to point out is that synchronizing the weather app to other accounts or a personal calendar did not appeal to any of the users who we interviewed. One of them pointed out that "a weather app should be only about the weather and nothing more". Learning from the users helped us a lot. We concluded that instead of having more features, we should start removing existing ones, get rid of the clutter, and make the weather app very minimal, displaying only the information that the user cares about.

Based on the information we collected, we used sticky notes to group some of the features that our users had in common and established a few defined personas. The "compulsive peeper", "the objective dude", "the planer", and the "mediocre bustandard". Things that all four have in common are:

> want to know the weather today
>
> do not like weather notifications
>
> looking for weather at a specific location
>
> frustrated with weather details that are unnecessary
>
> hourly weather for today has highest priority
>
> want to know whether it is going to rain or not

Scenarios are a powerful tool to give all a say. Writing them gave us a better understanding of how and why people use weather apps and helped us define the requirements for ours. Each of the use cases we wrote focused on people who lived in different cities in the US that have specific climate characteristics. The location people occupy greatly influences which weather information they care about. The residents of Northwest America only want to know whether it will be rainy or not because it rains during 3/4 of the year. But people in Mexico or Florida might just want to know if it will be mild or burning hot outside, they do not need to see that there is 0% chance of rain.