How to design a dating app

Dating brand Hinge claims to be ‘designed to be deleted,’ so confident its users will find true love on the app – but what are the design tricks needed to resuscitate romance online?

“Hinge is for people who want to get off dating apps. That’s why we’re focused on one thing: getting our members out on great dates,” explains Nathan Roth on the rebrand for dating app Hinge (tagline: Designed to be Deleted).

As chief marketing officer for the company, Nathan is well-placed to explain the intriguing mission statement being presented to users, along with Lucy Mort, Hinge’s head of design. The aim behind the rebrand is to remind daters that the end goal of dating both IRL and online is probably to find someone and put one’s phone down for a bit – but how can an app be reworked exactly to bring romance back into 21st century life?

We’ve broken down the redesign into its various components with behind the scenes insights from the Hinge crew, demonstrating how good UX is crucial for millennials to stop scratching that hookup itch and have one less app on their smartphones.

Animating l’amour

“The team at Hinge is particularly proud of the new illustrations,” says Nathan. “There are roughly 60 individually crafted characters that represent the diversity of our community.

“Each illustration gives a sense of their personality, style, and hobbies, and we hope they’ll inspire our members to be themselves – because that’s the surest way to find a great

first date.”

Lucy Mort agrees, saying that adding the ‘humanised’ and diverse illustrations to the new look will “communicate that everyone is welcome on our app.”

It doesn’t just stop with nicely drawn characters though, as Hinge’s in-app animations “are gracefully smoothed out,’ Lucy continues.

“They’re meant to help users to focus on each other – and not on a dazzling interface,” she stresses.

Who’s your Type?

“A bold, serif typeface helps give prompts the same visual weight as photos, celebrating our users’ unique answers,” says Lucy on the app’s font of choice.

“The serif type adds a specialness to a user’s words, helping to inspire their writing. This is contrasted with a smaller, modern san serif for the prompt, creating an editorial aesthetic that makes browsing, reading and commenting on answers enjoyable. Basic information meanwhile is displayed in a smaller font size as this information has less of an impact on compatibility.”

Picture perfect

The importance placed on text reflect’s Lucy’s view that photos need to be less of a focus for dating apps in the 2020s.

“We’ve realised that the best dates come from personality compatibility, and prompt answers from our users are one of the best ways of getting to know someone’s personality at a glance.

“Our emails are also fully redesigned, many using photography that feels authentic to real-life experiences and not overly glossed or edited.

“We also really pared down our communication style to make it easy for people to engage with those and not overwhelm their inbox.”

Got no game

Dating apps are all about the likes – and that’s maybe where it all goes wrong for users, jumping from one person to another as the ego boost goes to their head. In solution to this attention deficit, the Hinge team introduced fading alerts into their interface, along with a lot more space for love to run free.

“The new profile layout with added spacing reinforces our ‘content liking’ system,” explains Lucy, “leading to likes that feel more conversational and less transactional.”

Tim MacGougan, Hinge CPO, believes that the better the user experience, the more of a chance love can come through.

“Our approach has been to be really effective at setting up great dates,” he says, “with a belief that people will be naturally attracted to that experience.”

“The alternative might be to get really good at convincing people to open the app, with a belief that good dates will naturally occur. We think we’re solving the harder problem, but the one that ultimately provides a better experience to our users.

“As such, we don’t send lots of push notifications, and we don’t try to encourage users to like people that they aren’t actually interested in through game-like interactions, or dole out dopamine hits of empty validation. So far, our strategy seems to be working. Every time we get better at helping our users go on more good dates, we grow faster.”

So there you have it – a well-designed dating app that finds users true love, and which isn’t being bled to death by one

too many of Cupid’s arrows. Who said UX can’t be sexy?

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