By

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A few of us here at Blink are big fans of Share-Now, formally Car2Go, the point-to-point carsharing service that operates the iconic blue and white SmartCars in several cities worldwide, including here in Seattle (you can typically find three or four outside our office on any given morning). I have found Share-Now to be useful for a variety of reasons, whether it's getting to a nearby client meeting without having to call a taxi, or grabbing a car when I don't feel like taking a cramped bus home from work. As a carless resident of Seattle I make frequent use of the Share-Now service, sometimes using it four or five times a week. This frequency of use has allowed me to become very familiar with Share-Now's website, mobile app, and in-car interfaces. While all three of these touch-points have generally gotten the job done for me in my day-to-day use of Share-Now, I always walk away from the experience feeling like there are additional opportunities for improvement. Here are a few of the ideas that have crossed my mind at one point or another during my use of the Share-Now service. (I excluded the Rent-a-Ferrari idea, as another designer described it as 'unrealistic.' Sigh.)

Indicate the current trip length (and cost!)

This one is pretty simple. So simple, in fact, that I sometimes wonder if it isn't intentional. Why, Share-Now, do you not tell me how much time has elapsed on my current trip? With the absence of email receipts, and the typical 12- to 24-hour gap between a trip and when the trip shows up in my "Recent Trips" log, I often have only a vague idea of how long my Share-Now trips actually took (and therefore, how much they actually cost me). I realize there may be some business logic behind the decision to not show your users how much of a 'tab' they are accruing during a trip, but at the same time, as a user this is very important information. If you are stuck in traffic and trying to decide if you want to attempt the winding side street route home, it helps to know how much has been charged on your current trip. Even if there was a business decision behind the omission of the current trip cost, at a minimum show me how much time has elapsed!

Automated receipts from trips

In addition to Share-Now, we Blinkers are also big fans of Uber. Not only is Uber ridiculously handy as an alternative to driving (Parking downtown? No thanks!), but the overall Uber experience is usually pretty delightful, including the digital experience. Uber lets you request a driver, get fare quotes, enter your destination and forward it to the driver, and your ride receipts are automatically emailed to you. That last one is pretty neat—for client meetings and other consulting work, these email receipts are super handy. Everything I need for my expense report is right in my inbox and I don't have to go digging around on Uber's site or app to get what I need. The email receipts also serve as a nice reminder of my experience, showing a nice little map of the trip I took, a cost breakdown, and information about how far I went and when the trip started and

ended.

Share-Now absolutely should do this. The current process of locating Share-Now trip information and receipts is a bit inefficient. For example, you can view a breakdown of your trips right from the smartphone app, but to use this for an expense report it would need to be captured with a screenshot and then sent to yourself via email or Dropbox. Even then, the receipt screen doesn't actually include the Share-Now logo or anything identifying it as a Share-Now receipt, which may or may not cause issues for someone's expense report, depending on your accountant.

You can also access information about past trips from the Share-Now website, but this experience has several issues of its own. For example, all of your account information is displayed via accordions within a modal window on top of the rest of the Share-Now website. In order to get a receipt for a trip I took last week (which was coincidentally last month, since it's currently the first week of October), I have to log-in, and then open the "Rentals" accordion section and use a timespan selector to go back a month. Or wait… maybe it's the "Statements" accordion section. Or I guess it could be the "Minutes" accordion section? Wait, what's the difference between these anyway?

You get the point. I'll spare you the play-by-play of locating a receipt for a specific Share-Now trip, but suffice to say, it is neither efficient nor intuitive, and involves opening more rows in accordions (yes, accordions within accordions), and downloading a PDF statement of each individual trip for which I need documentation. How much time and effort could be saved by simply emailing me a receipt with this information as soon as I end my Share-Now trip? Everything I need could be right there in my email inbox waiting for me. Not only would this be more convenient and more efficient, it would also be more empathetic giving me what I need before I know I need it.

Estimate trip costs when a destination is entered

I have mentioned Uber a few times already and I am going to mention it again. Uber allows you to enter your destination address and provides a fare estimate before your trip even starts. This is very handy when I am evaluating my transportation options, and actually it often serves to remind me of the value that Uber provides compared to traditional taxis.

I wish Share-Now would allow me to do the same. When it comes to things like client meetings or heading home from work, I sometimes wonder how Share-Now would measure up in terms of cost compared to my other transportation options. A quick trip cost estimate, either via the smartphone app or the in-car console whenever a destination is entered, would help drive home the value that Share-Now provides (it's almost always cheaper than most other options, except for the crowded bus), and it would be handy to know before I start a trip. Bonus points if this could tie-in with Google Maps traffic data for accurate estimates!

Destination forwarding from app to car

Every Share-Now has a touchscreen embedded in the central console. This screen is what you use to enter your verification pin number when you get in the car, report the condition of the car when you start a trip, and accept all the "fine print" associated with operating the car. This in-car touchscreen is also used to operate the radio, and comes with GPS & mapping functionality, which is great because Seattle streets can be very confusing for someone who doesn't drive very often. Unfortunately, I have attempted to use the Share-Now in-car GPS by entering my destination a grand total of once. Why? Because it's one of my most frustrating digital experiences in recent memory.

Here's what the current experience looks like if you want to use the in-car GPS system to get directions (keep in mind that once you get in the car, you are being charged by the minute, so it's important that you are able to enter your destination quickly so you can actually start… you know… getting there):

1. Tap the appropriate button to access the destination address screen
2. Use the finicky touchscreen keyboard to (slowly and clumsily) enter the full address of where you are going – street name, number, city, etc.
3. ???
4. Get directions

Did you notice that third step? I actually couldn't figure out how to get from the destination-address-entering screen to the show-me-how-to-get-there screen. After spending about three minutes entering my destination address using the clunky touchscreen keyboard, there was no way to actually submit the address to load the directions because my the address I wanted wasn't one of the ones that were auto-suggested. I tried hitting the back button, which ended up clearing the address I had just spent three minutes entering. Remember, this whole thing is on a timer, charging me by the minute! Bummer.

I think this experience could be improved. The first step should probably be cutting the clunky touchscreen out of the process wherever possible. For users that have reserved the car from the Share-Now app beforehand, you could further develop this app-to-car ecosystem by allowing them to enter their destination in the app as well, and then forwarding the address to the in-car console. So if I am the type of user that finds and reserves a Share-Now via the app beforehand, my experience becomes more seamless as I reserve my car and enter my destination at the time of reservation. Then, as soon as I get in the car, the GPS loads my directions. How magical!

Unfortunately, this destination forwarding feature wouldn't be useful for those Share-Now users that prefer to randomly grab a car on the street without first using the app. Until the in-car touchscreen is dramatically improved, this will continue to be a slow, clunky experience.

Make the login process more human

One of the quirks with the Share-Now iPhone app is that it logs you out every ninety days, at which point you need to log back in and grant it privileges to access Share-Now's data. While I understand that there may be a legal or security-based need for this process, it could be handled better. As luck would have it, a colleague here at Blink knew I was creating a post focusing on Share-Now and happened to experience his password reset the day before and he was kind enough to grab some screenshots for me. In his email to me, he expressed his frustration that for him, this password reset "always seems to occur when I'm trying to quickly reserve a car."

Here's what the current process looks like. When you open the app, you see a login screen where you would typically see your location on a map and any nearby available cars:

Something to note about this screen is that for Share-Now, you don't have a username, you log in to the service with your email. That isn't indicated here though, so my colleague ended up entering the wrong information, bringing him to this second screen:

Whoops. Well, it's easy enough to see that the login failed, but it doesn't tell you if it was your username (ahem, email address) that was entered wrong, or your password. There's also no offer for help, like "Forgot Password?" This is basically a dead-end, and you are probably out of luck if you have forgotten your login information. Fortunately my colleague remembered that username actually means email, and managed to login, bringing him finally to this screen:

I wonder how much of the general population knows what an API is. I would bet it's not a very high percentage. This whole screen just feels

awkward to me as a user — I am using your app, why do I need to authorize it to access your own data? Regardless, there is probably a reason that Share-Now needed to include this step, but the way it communicates to users could be dramatically improved. Why not use this as an opportunity to show a little bit of personality, and be empathetic to the fact that you just dropped your users onto a login screen when they were expecting to see the map screen that is usually displayed here? A little empathy can go a long ways.

A better driving experience

Share-Now is already providing one of the most unique services out there — the concept of renting cars on-the-fly is pretty amazing, and I love people's reactions when I explain to them how the Share-Now system works. As such a big fan of the service, I hope to see their offerings mature and improve, and would be thrilled to see any of the concepts I have proposed actually be implemented. Until then, the current Share-Now experience still offers me enough value to continue driving the little cars around town, though I won't stop thinking about how it could be improved. I certainly hope Share-Now knows they have some big fans here at Blink, and we would be thrilled to help improve this one-of-a-kind service.

> *Tristan is a proud member of the interaction design crew at Blink. In his off time he can be found sipping a cortado at Caffé Fiore in Queen Anne or taste-testing local IPAs in Fremont & Ballard.*