MADISON AUDITION HUB

ACT I
What is the problem?

The community theater family here in Madison has become a home for many non-professional actors, directors, writers, and other artists that love it.

Talent comes from all over the city, through many different ages, lifestyles, and experience.

However, a constant challenge that was found is the recruitment of performers for the shows we put on.

Currently, in Madison, there are 40 active performing arts groups, including groups for specific populations, like children, LGBTQ+, opera, and others.

While some companies are more well known than others, and some put on shows more frequent than others, there all use very similar avenues to promote their auditons.

Companies will use e-mail lists, websites, and Facebook events to promote their auditions.

This method currently relies on the performers' abilities to keep track of each resource, because if they don't check the right place at the right time, they can miss out on auditioning for their favorite show and not even know it.

This leads to a question I am hoping to solve:

How do we create a **central location** for Madison and Madison-area performing arts companies to **advertise** and **manage** their auditions, while giving performers a **central location** to **search** for, **learn** more about, and **show interest** in individual shows?

ACT II
What is our solution?

Vision

The Madison Audition Hub is a web application where potential performers can go to find audition information for opportunities all over Madison. It will allow production companies thhe ability to promote their auditions as well as help manage them. This will allow for the ability to pre-register for auditions, rediucing the ammount of in-person paper work needs. It will also give companies a better sense of how many performers to expect at the venue, and can plan accordingly.

Goals

1. This application will reduce the amount of time it takes for a theater company to create, post, and manage an audition event.
2. This application will deliver audition dates, times, and details to potential performers more comfortably and quickly than before.
3. This application will help make the process of the audition quicker by reducing the amount of in-person needs for registration.

Essential Features

1. Create auditions listings with all information needed by those looking to audition
2. Listing of all auditions in the area with the ability to sort in various ways
3. Quickly share audition information to social media
4. Ability to "RSVP" to auditions, sharing your name and gender to the directors
5. Auditionees can fill out their audition form/application beforehand, reducing the need for paper forms
6. Monitor the number of RSVPs for an audition date in order to plan for the number of expected attendees

Users

The users of this application will include the performers who wish to find auditions and directors and producers who wish to share the information about their auditions. For the performers, this application will deliver the information to them in a centralized way, tailored to their preferences, including e-mail digests. For producers and directors, this application will speed up the audition process. It allows for a lot of the paperwork to be done ahead of time, reducing the amount of rush and wait time for forms to be filled out. This application will also deliver an easily promotable place to direct those interested in auditioning that might not use social media.

Value

Having a single reliable place to check for information is extremely helpful. By reducing the number of locations one needs to check for auditions, this will make this website an essential tool for those interested in performing. Also, by getting the chance to pre-register for an event, this application will make the process much less painless and quicker, while also fostering a commitment to attend. It will also ensure the accuracy of the information, as many times, a calendar of conflicts is needed. It is incredibly easier to enter this information from home rather than remembering to bring one's calendar with them to the audition itself.

ACT III
Research, research, research

	MadStage	backstage.	Meetup
About	MadStage is an informational website that displays listings for various theater and performance productions and auditions in the Madison, WI area. They include a simple form for productions to submit their events to be displayed as well.	Backstage has served is a resource for performers to find work while helping talent-seekers move their projects forward. With 100,000+ members, it is a powerful network of entertainment professionals who leverage our unlimited submissions, best-in-class casting tools, and more performance roles than any other casting service.	Meetup is a platform for finding and building local communities. People use Meetup to meet new people, learn new things, find support, get out of their comfort zones, and pursue their passions, together.
Advantage	Provides all the information of all upcoming events in one place.	Not only can actors and performers search for gigs, the companies them-selves can scout performers through their database.	Mobile-friendly. Has a WIDE variety of events for various interests, many within the local community. The site is easy to read and responding to events is simple.
Heuristic Evaluation	No search function. Extremely text heavy. No breadcrumbing of where you are at. The website has a lot information and is organized into each part of the website, but the heavy text and no filterning make's it tough to find anything, especially with a lot of information. The site's look and feel does not appear updated from the 90's.	The website is extremely clean, however the listing of menu items at the top don't feel to have any sort of order. You can still view listings as a non-member, but membership is needed to take advantage of any of it.	Groups and events are limited to those the users create. If there is a lack of that interest in your area, it won't appear (i.e. there are no theater related groups). Messaging feater feels a lot more primative (think old version of Facebook messager) than what many are used to in other apps.
Customer Reviews	There are no published reviews of the website, however word of mouth reviews have shown a highted unawareness of the website. Those who do know of it (whom tend to be of the older age range) say that the website does need to be updated to a more modern look, but like how the information is all there. It is also difficult to navigate for some people.	Sitejabber shows the website with mostly positive reviews, with an average rating of 3.85/5. They feel it's value is worth the price, and the tech support behind the site is extremely courteous. Users and companies found a lot of success on the site. The negatives come from those who might have been scammed by fake postings.	Reviews from my research appears to be mixed. While there are many who were successful with finding groups, many have found problems with the users themselves, with harrassment, bullying, etc (not uncommon in today's age of social media). The issue here is that it can cause real-life implications as harassers can find out what events you are attending. Most negative reviews I've seen seem to be around the moderation of groups and users.

Survey to the Community

Actors, where do you go to find out about auditions?

1. Facebook - 4
2. Theater Company's Website - 2
   General Local Theater Website - 2
3. E-mail List - 1
   Word of Mouth - 1

Production, where do you go to promote your auditions?

1. E-mail List - 4
   Theater Location's Website - 4
   Word of Mouth - 4
2. Theater Company's Website - 3
   General Local Theater Website - 3
   Facebook - 3

Please describe how you feel about the availability and accessibility of audition information in your area.

"Once you know where to go, such as madstage.com, it is relatively easy. I just don't think that all opportunities are posted there. And, on Facebook, if you are not a member of a group it is difficult to know all that is upcoming."

"Sometimes it takes some digging through to find the time or day or location."

"Having a central location where ALL theater companies post announcements, and use consistently, would be ideal. That would be a monumental achievement if it were to come to fruition."

What would you say is the most difficult part of filling out audition forms?

"Noting conflicts, especially if the rehearsal schedule starts a month or more after auditions"

"Filling out conflicts"

"Duplicating info when auditioning for companies you have worked with before. I understand the purpose, but there has to be some mechanism for them to capture and keep the info so you don't have to reinvent the wheel."

Interview with a Stage Manager

Most "how do you..." questions we asked production team members in our survey were answered with "Our Stage Manager decides how that is done" or similar, however, no Stage Managers answered our survey. So I tracked one down and interviewed her.
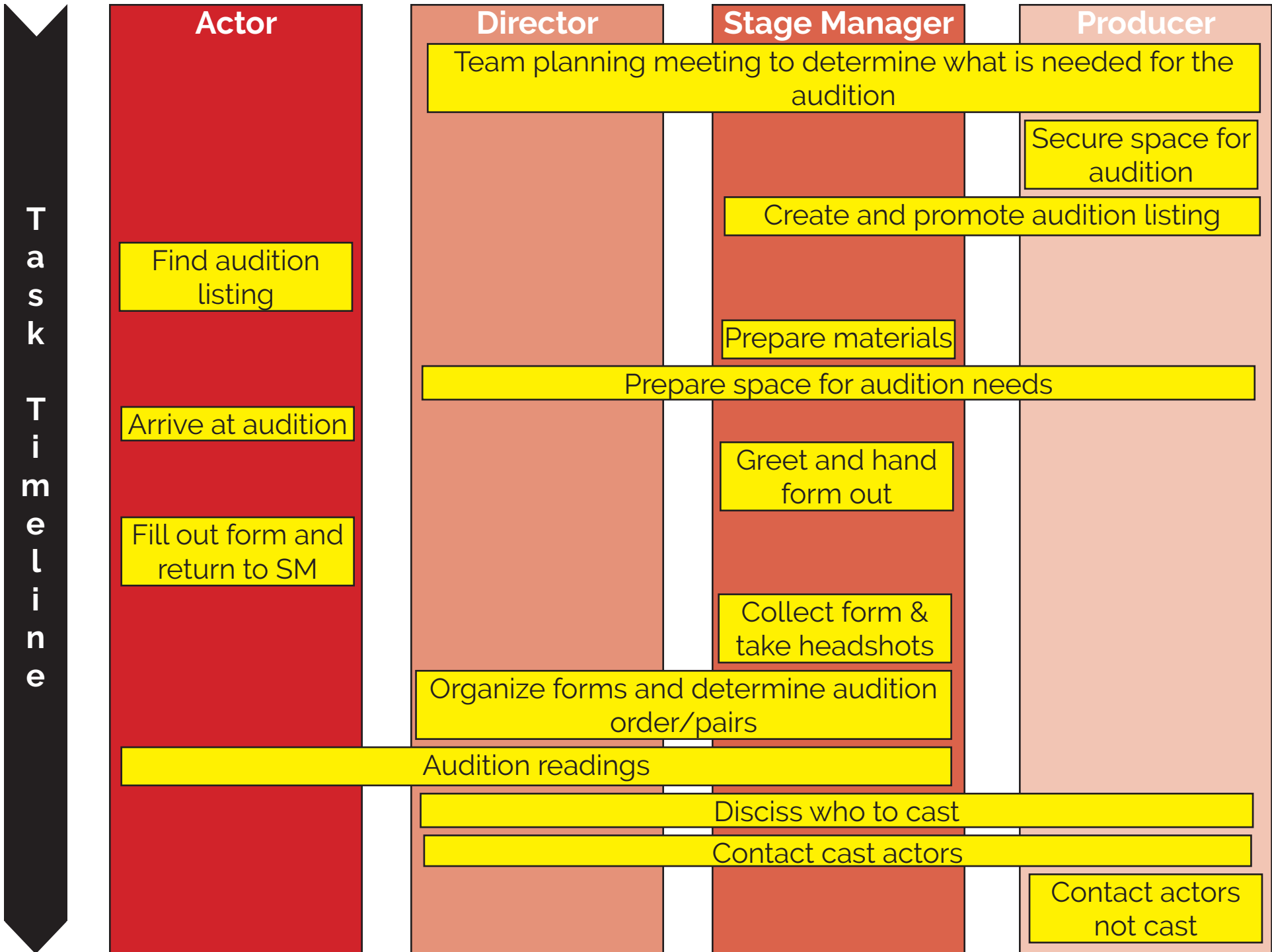
Favorite Aspects:	Frustrating aspects:	How the process begins	Typical Day
Friendlieness Person-to-person interaction Organization Energy	My interviewee showed her frustration with the local directors preferring familiar faces for roles and not willing to take risks on new actors.	A lot of collaboration with the production team on how they want things to go and what they are looking for.	Very hands-on rol, from posting the audition notices, preparing materials, assisting actors with said forms, reviewing and processing paperwork, and contacting those cast and not cast

Unusual Event	Strange Exception
The biggest issue arises when it comes to over or undershooting expected numbers, especially if overshooting with new actors that need help through the process.	One strange exception is productions where there are multiple directors casting from the same pool of actors for a production (play festivals, etc). This can bring a lot more chaos to the process.

Pain Points

The biggest pain point identified as the organization and processing of paperwork, especially if the predicted number of attendees ended up being less than who showed up. Things can get out of hand quickly, and thinking on the fly to adjust the process is a highly needed skill in these situations.

A more humorous pain point, but still valid, is that of handwriting or omitted information. Being unable to read the handwriting on the form can cause issues when needing to contact that person or determining information. Also, unless someone catches the omission, there are moments with actors forgetting to fill out certain parts of the form, especially date/time conflicts.

Task Timeline (vertical arrow, top to bottom)

Actor	Director	Stage Manager	Producer
	Team planning meeting to determine what is needed for the audition		
			Secure space for audition
		Create and promote audition listing	
Find audition listing			
		Prepare materials	
	Prepare space for audition needs		
Arrive at audition			
		Greet and hand form out	
Fill out form and return to SM			
		Collect form & take headshots	
	Organize forms and determine audition order/pairs		
Audition readings			
	Disciss who to cast		
	Contact cast actors		
			Contact actors not cast

ACT IV
Meet Mark and Alyssa

Mark, 26

Single male living in Madison, WI for 2 years
Originally from St. Louis, MO
Office Coordinator for a local non-profit company
No roommates (except his cat, Chewy)
Loves Theater, Video Games, and Reading Drama Novels

"I love this show! It's been a while since I've been so attached to a character. I need to make sure everything is perfect for this audition!"

Theater Experience - 7 years (Experience in Madison - 1 year)

Actor ●●●●●
Director ●●
Producer ●
Stage Manager

Mark is always trying to find auditions for but he won't act upon it until he knows specifically where to go for info.
Once he has it, he's very proactive with that source.
Mark didn't know how to get involved in Madison until he overheard two actors chatting about an upcoming audition.
He found out about an e-mail list and a Facebook group that posts about upcoming auditions.

Electronic Media Usage

Mark mostly uses of the internet at home and owns a smart device. At work, he'll browse the internet between tasks but his days are usually busy with projects that prevent him from doing so. He checks his e-mail three times a day: before work, at lunch, and after dinner. Mark's main use of internet browsing is to keep connected to what's happening around town and to search for new theater opportunities. He does have trouble finding specifically what he is looking for when searching for new opportunities.

Social Media Usage Frequency

Mark uses social media to keep connected with friends. While sometimes he'll be pointed out to a Facebook page from a website, he doen't usually cross digital media platforms. Recently, Mark has been contemplating shutting down his Facebook account for personal reasons.

A Day in the Life

| 12 am | Sleep | AM Routine | | Work | | Errands | Dinner | Leisure | PM Routine | 12 am |

Mark tries to keep a set schedule post-work of commitments (bill pay, groceries, appointments, etc.), then dinner, then leisure activities (video games, reading, etc.). He's willing to switch these sections around as needed but makes sure that there is intentional "leisure" time.

Touch-Points

Mark will interact with **e-mails** sent about the auditions, **websites** of the theater companies, and **Facebook** groups and events.
Mark is a pretty confident person, so he doesn't reach out prior to auditions.
Mark mostly interacts with the **Stage Manager,** who checks him in, collects his form, and tells him what he is reading.
The **Producer** is a presence in the room but there's no direct interaction unless he gets the part and receives a phone call.
The **Director's** interaction is simply to watch and evaluate his performance.

Motivations

While excited to act in any show possible, Mark's excitement increases when it is a show he recognizes. His "leisure" time usually ends up being used to prepare for the upcoming audition.

Frustrations

Mark had trouble figuring out where to find out about auditions in Madison. When he asked the actors talking about auditions, he gained knowledge of where to go, though there are more spots than those he was told about.

Behavior

Mark's favorite part about auditions is meeting and interacting with other people. Mark expresses that the audition form that they have to fill out is the most boring or tedious part of the process. He feels it "sucks the energy" out of the process, even if temporary.

Influencers

Friends - They tend to give Mark suggestions on good shows as well as share their experiences with certain directors, whether good or bad.

Boss/Job - One thing that pevents participation in shows is work commitments. Mark needs to ensure nothing conflicts

Future State Scenario

Mark has been wanting to audition for a new show. So, after returning home from work and eating dinner, he sits at his computer and opens Facebook to see if there are any new event postings about auditions, or friends talking about new auditions. On his friend's page, he sees a post with a link for a new website for Madison-area auditions. Curious, he clicks the link and the page opens.

Mark sees a welcoming page with a list of shows looking for actors as well as buttons that allow him to filter and search for specific types of shows. Mark has been wanting to do another musical, so he clicks the filter button labeled "Musicals" and the list shortens to just shows with a blue "musical" label on them. Within the list, Mark spots one of his favorite shows, "The Drowsy Chaperone", which is auditioning next week. Mark clicks on the show name and the page displays the information about the show, audition requirements, and dates of the audition and the show.

Mark then clicks on the button that says "Pre-Register for Audition". Mark is brought to a page that says "Actor Info", which is a form for him to fill out his name, contact info, acting resume, and more. After filling out the form, Mark is given the option to save the info for later, so when he comes back to register for another audition, he doesn't need to fill this part all out again. Mark clicks the save info button and creates a username and password to associate to his account.

Mark continues with the second page of the form, being asked production-specific questions such as voice range, dancing experience, and audition song info. The next page asks for his date conflicts with rehearsals and show dates. Mark is easily able to bring up his Outlook calendar and import his work and appointment schedule. Since there are no major conflicting dates, Mark is allowed to move on to the last page. The last page asks Mark to submit a headshot picture, which he chooses to import one from the photo library on his computer.

Mark submits the form and receives an e-mail with the audition info, including a link to add it directly to his outlook calendar. A week later, Mark receives an alert on his phone that the audition event begins in one hour. Upon arriving at the venue, Mark greets the Stage manager, Allison, and gives his name. With a couple clicks on her end, Allison states that he's "all checked in" with no additional information needed and directs him to take a seat until auditions begin. Mark now spends the time mingling with other actors and getting to know them before the Allison announces that the Director is ready to see them and brings everyone inside the auditorium.

Alyssa, 32

Partnered female born and raised in Madison, WI
Grad Student at UW-Madison
One roommate (not partner)
Loves Theater, Reading Mystery Novels, and Photography

"My goal is to be as organized as possible. Things can change in the moment so the more organized I am, the better."

Theater Experience - 10 years (Experience in Madison - 10 years)

Stage Manager ● ● ● ● ●
Producer ● ● ●
Director
Actor

When producing, Alyssa needs to ensure all of her bases are covered. She needs to make sure that the theater company is posting to their website and e-mail lists about the audition. She also posts an even listing on Facebook and uses the RSVP numbers to determine how many people to expect. When Stage Managing, she greets auditioners as they arrive and collects their paperwork. She employs excel to organize the information and a notepad to track who has read for what parts and scenes already.

Electronic Media Usage

Alyssa mostly uses of the internet at home and at school. She owns a smart device and is constantly checking her social media and making updates. Except for when she is working, she is surfing the web constantly. She has notifications turned on for her e-mail, so she never misses a message. Her role on the theatrical team is one of constant communication between the production team, technical teams, and actors to ensure that everything is going smoothy, and is usually very quick to answer a message.

Social Media Usage Frequency

Alyssa uses Social Media on an frequent basis, mostly for her work in theater but does post a lot on Facebook. She also loves photography, so she uses Instagram a lot, though she will share on Facebook as well.

A Day in the Life

| 12 am | Sleep | AM Routine | Work | Class | Errands | Dinner | Leisure | PM Routine | Sleep | 12 am |

Alyssa's day-to-day changes depending on her class and work schedule, which leaves breaks during the day to be able to work on more in-depth projects with her shows. This includes making postings, organizing schedules, and working on other tasks she needs to accomplish.

Touch-Points

Alyssa will interact with the **theater company** she's working with to ensure e-mails are sent and the website is updated.
Alyssa will answer e-mails with questions from **actors** if they have questions prior to the audition.
Actors will interact with Alyssa at the audition. She checks them in, collects their forms, and tells them what they are reading.
The **Producer** will interact consistently with Alyssa when she is stage managing to ensure everything is running smoothy.
The **Director** will let Alyssa know who they want to see when and what they want them to read for their audition.

Motivations

Alyssa enjoys finding new and efficient ways to do things. She loves a good challenge and will take on project that allows her to be creative with how she completes a task.

Frustrations

While Facebook currently gives a RSVP function, it can be very inaccurate to the actual ammount of people who show up. This would cause Alyssa to need to think on the fly with organization, especially when the numbers are underestimated.

Behavior

Alysssa's favorite part about auditions is meeting and interacting with other people. Organizing all of the paper forms causes her to be separated from the rest of the team and actors until she completes the work. She feels the personal interactions also helps with casting as they do need to keep personality clashes into consideration.

Influencers

Directors/Producers - While stage managing, how Alyssa will run the auditions will depend on who she is working with
Boss/Job/Classes - One thing that pevents participation in shows is work and class commitments. Alyssa needs to ensure nothing conflicts

Future State Scenario

Alyssa is stage managing a show here in Madison. At the first meeting with the producer and director, they decide to use the Madison Audition Hub to set up their audition. The director enters all the information about the show and requirements, and the producer sets up the dates of the audition. Together they decide on what to ask in the audition form and finally publish it. The link to the listing is sent out via e-mail and Facebook posts, while posting a link to register on the website.

48-hours before the audition, Alyssa is preparing materials for the readings. She logs into the hub and looks at the number of registrants. It looks like they have an even ratio of gender types coming in on day one, but a lot more males on day two. She realizes that on day two, the team will have to figure out the best way to fairly pair people. With this information, she contacts the director and producer to decide on a plan ahead of time.

Day one of auditions arrive. Alyssa sets up her laptop for check-in and a couple tablets on the front desk for walk-ins. Those who registered online simply walk in, check in with Alyssa, and go sit down and wait. The walk-ins are handed the tablet to fill out their form. Once the time the to begin arrives, Alyssa prints out the final attendee list. This prints out an excel sheet she and the rest of the team can use to track who has read and what they read. Day to goes just as smoothly, even with the plan they needed to adjust for.

After the final auditionees have left, Alyssa joins the producer and director to begin the casting process. Using their notes and the informational data in the application, they agree on an ideal cast, as well as backups in case certain actors do not accept their roles. Alyssa goes through the attendee list and checks off who is going to be cast and for what roles.

While checking off the cast actors, she notices a red exclamation point next to one of the names they want to cast. Clicking on this brings up a message stating that "This actor has critical conflict dates with mandatory dates. Please review before casting!" The team reviews the conflicts and realized that this actor would have conflicts with more than 50% of rehearsal dates. Given the severity, they decide not to cast this person, and adjust their cast as needed. The rest of the cast is fine.

Once the cast was set, Alysaa prints out three copies of the cast call list and the director, producer, and Alyssa divide and conquer to call of the cast actors. Luckily, no adjustments are needed to be made as they all accept. Alyssa then saves the report on her computer to be part of the production contact list. Finally, Alyssa sends an automated e-mail from the system to all those not cast of the decision.

ACT V
A user's journey

Scenario:
Mark is wanting to audition for a new show to perform in. He's looking for information on what opportunities are available.

Goals and Expectations:
- Discover a show to work on
- Learn information on audition details
- Increased excitement for involvement

One week before audition date | Day of audition

	Exploration	Discovery	Registration	Preparation	Pre-Audtion	Arrival	Paperwork	Down Time
Doing	Research and find auditions for shows releavnt to interests.		Indicate interest. Add to caledar.	Practice. Research show.	Receive a reminder day of.	Actor arrives at the audition venue.	Submission of information.	Waiting for audtion to begin.
	Websites and Social Media / Talking with friends / E-mails from mail lists		Website RSVP / Calendar Note	Practice with friends / Website Research	E-mails from group / Calendar alert	Stage Manager greets and hands out forms	Paper audition form / Stage Manager takes photo	Casual interaction with other actors
Thinking	"What do I want to audition for?" "Where can I find opportunities?"		"Do I need to register ahead of time?" "When do I need to be there?"	"What should I know about this show?" "Are my skills up to par?"	"Where do I need to go?" "What time do I need to be there?"	"If I have any questions, this is who I go to."	"Do I have all my information?" "Does anything conflict for dates?"	"Who else is here?" "I'd love to network with others while we wait."
Feeling	"There are so many different places I can look for info!"	"This show is perfect for me!"	"I can't wait to audtion!" "I should prepare in the mean time"		"I hope I'm ready for today."	"I'm as ready as I'm going to be." "This seems like a friendly group to work with."	"Ugh. I need to fill this out again?"	"Just waiting makes me a little nervous"
Expereience	😲❓❓	🤩	😊	😊	😅	🙂	😒	😅

Pain Points

There are many places one can go to for listings, but not everyone advertises in the same place and method.

Audition forms are seen as tedious, especially with people who audition frequently.

Opportunities

We can give a central, reliable place to find audition listings.

Could we add functionality to assist in calendar event creation and reminder alerts?

If we allow the ability to fill out the audition form online and prior to arriving, it could make the check-in process shorter and relieve the tedium.

Design Requirements - Mark

Data
- Display the show name and associated labels of an audition in the list of events
- Display the date, time, and location of an audition directly in the event listing
- Display the user's saved information when filling out audition registrations

Functional
- Filter audition events by the user's criteria
- Fill out audition forms to register for an audition ahead of time
- Import pictures to be used as a headshot in the form

Contextual
- Automatically fill audition forms based on information the user has saved
- Display specific questions in the form based on what the production wants
- Display an entry for date conflicts based on requirements set by the production

Design Requirements - Alyssa

Data
- Access to informational data of actors whom have pre-registered for the audition.
- Display number of registered actors for an auditon
- Connections to the company's social media channels for easy sharing

Functional
- Create an audition listing
- Export roster of attendees to an excel format
- Confirm attendence of those who have pre-registered.

Contextual
- Display the correct theater company logo with the audition listing
- Set specific questions for the audition form based on the show's needs
- Indicate registrants who's date conflicts are a problem

Additional Requirements

Business: There is no budget and will have to rely on fundraising and donations to fully fund.

Brand:There is no "brand" associated with it, but having a look and feel that is uniquely "Madison" or "Wisconsin" is desired.

Technical: Ensure current web standards, plus the backend needs a robust database to track all of the shows and auditionee data that is collected in an easily accessible and secure way.

Partner/Customer: The application needs to be able to be used by a wide spectrum of technical knowledge of users.

ACT VI
What's next?

Design

Our next step is to mock-up, design, and prototype what this application would look like.

This would include designs for both the performers looking for auditions and the administrative side for production companies to create audition postings.

We want to ensure all the requirements for both ends of the experience are met, so we will be collaborating very closely with production companies and community members.

Test

Once an initial design is complete, we plan to do user testing with community members to ensure we are on the right track.

For performers, we want to ensure the information is accessible and understandable by all.

For production companies, we want to make sure the process to add and manage audition events is easy and understandable by all technical levels.

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