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Client Story » Product Development

Improving student mental health with a mobile app



First Step Consulting®

Client

We worked with an elite higher education institution which enrolls more than 25,000 students each year.

Situation

The university has long been providing dedicated mental health support and wellbeing services to its students. They were now ready to launch a mobile application as well. The challenge was to develop an app that students would actually enjoy using.



Action

A team of prominent academics from the university's Department of Psychology had already established how a smartphone application can help students combat mental health challenges based on scientific evidence. Thanks to their support, we determined the core requirements and limitations of the app.

Through extensive user research, we then explored what may encourage students to use a mental health app and how they feel about popular wellbeing apps. Our team analysed user segments in detail, visualised user needs and behaviours in an empathy map and ran ideation workshops with students.

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Action

This made it possible to identify what additional features our app should have to boost engagement. One of the features, for example, has been added to help users form positive mental health habits as they earn rewards by completing simple daily actions. The app also allows users to anonymously form support communities and join group meditation sessions.

After validating our ideas, we designed a distinctive visual identity and user-friendly interfaces for the app in close collaboration with students. We produced an interactive mockup in the process whilst conducting many rounds of iterative usability tests.

Once the design was ready for development, one of our partners, which is a mobile app agency, joined us to code the app following an agile methodology. Our consultants devised a launch plan in the meantime.



Result

The app has been downloaded by nearly half of the university's current students. It has thousands of active users and a remarkably high DAU/MAU ratio.

There has been an over 30% drop in the number of students visiting the Student Counselling & Mental Health Service at the university.

Importantly, most of the students who regularly use the app report lower levels of stress, anxiety, fatigue and sleep disturbance. This is based on a survey periodically conducted by the university to measure subjective mental wellbeing among its students.



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